

Leaflet



Greenbank Parish Church
Braiburn Terrace, EH10 6ES

No 625 April 2013

Pulpit Diary

Apr 7

- 9.30am First Sunday Service led by World Mission
10.30am Morning Worship (Start of third term for Springboard and Spectrum)

Apr 14

- 10.30am Morning Worship

Apr 20

- 4.00pm Families@4

Apr 21

- 10.30am Morning Worship

Apr 28 Stewardship Sunday

- 10.30am Morning Worship

May 5

- 9.30am First Sunday Service led by Help the Homeless
10.30am Morning Worship

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

email: alisonswindells@blueyonder.co.uk

Rev W. Peter Graham

Youth Minister: Rev Bill Stone
email: billstoneiii@gmail.com

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

Minister's Letter

Dear Friends

Christ is risen! He is risen indeed!

Every Easter these words are spoken in greeting by Christians all around the world as we celebrate Jesus' resurrection.

There is a story of a meeting which took place in Communist Russia in the early 1920s. The Communist leader Nikolai Bukharin was sent from Moscow to Kiev to address an anti-God rally. For an hour he abused and ridiculed the Christian faith until it seemed as if the whole structure of belief was in ruins. When eventually he stopped speaking there was silence.

Then questions were invited. An Orthodox church priest rose and asked to speak. He turned, faced the people, and gave the Easter greeting, "Christ is risen!" Instantly the crowd rose to its feet and the reply came back loud and clear, "He is risen indeed!" After the suffering and sorrow of Good Friday, and the empty darkness of the following day, Easter Sunday stands as a constant reminder that the darkness, the silence does not last forever. A stone rolled away, an empty tomb – and God opens the door to new light and new life. The German theologian Jurgen Moltmann states the significance of Easter in a single sentence.

"God weeps with us so that we may someday laugh with him." For Moltmann, the great span from Good Friday to Easter Day is a summary of human history, past, present, and future.

In all our lives there are the dark times, the times when God seems silent, the times when we doubt that we will ever laugh again, the times when the circumstances of human life hold us so tightly in their grip that we can scarcely breathe, the times when body, mind and spirit seem to be under attack from within and without, the times when to us God seems totally absent. The Easter story is the story of a God who



in Jesus Christ has travelled to the darkest of places, and who is with us there still, a God who weeps with us. But that is not the whole story. In the Greek Orthodox tradition, the day after Easter was devoted to telling jokes. . . . They felt they were imitating the cosmic joke that God pulled on Sa-

tan in the Resurrection. Satan thought he had won, and was smug in his victory, smiling to himself, having the last word. So he thought. Then God raised Jesus from the dead, and life and salvation became the last words.

Recently I was speaking to a colleague who was worshipping in an Episcopal church. He described how when a member of that congregation died the priest would tell the congregation of the death, always finishing with the words "May they rest in peace... and rise to glory".

This is the hope that lies at the heart of Easter: not simply that we should rest in peace but also that just as Christ has risen so we too shall rise. This is the hope that invites us to respond not in silence but with our own joyful affirmation of faith in the risen Christ, Light of the World.

Christ is risen! He is risen indeed!

May that Easter hope fill all our hearts

With warmest wishes

Alison I Swindells
Minister

PS: *Jesus, Light of the World* is the theme of our first ever Families@4 (Greenbank's Messy Church) celebration on Saturday 20th April. While this event is primarily for families with children of primary school age, all are welcome to come along and join in the crafts, activities, and worship, then share a meal together. More details elsewhere in this *Leaflet*!



A Celebration of Celtic Christianity – Sunday 19th May, Princes Street Gardens

In recognition of the 1450th anniversary of Columba landing on Iona, the Church of Scotland Heart and Soul 2013 will be inspired by Celtic Christianity, with all the richness of its themes: hospitality, pilgrimage, journeying, deep peace – healing and wholeness, creation and its care, celebrating the good earth, contemplative prayer, Trinity, representing Christ to the world, inclusive community, Christ in the stranger's guise, rhythm of the seasons, prophecy, soul-friends, being 'on the edge'. This year Sunday 19th May also coincides with Pentecost on the church calendar.

It's exciting to see Princes Street Gardens hosting the celebration of the life of the Church. Do look at the website (www.heartandsoul2013.org.uk), put the date in your diary, and on 19th May go to Princes Street Gardens and enjoy the music and drama.



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.**

The Church of Scotland

Ministries and Mission Contribution 2013

Every congregation contributes to the cost of the ministries and mission work of the Church of Scotland. Figures have been released to show how our contribution of £146,157 will be spent in 2013. This shows how we are enabling the sharing of the gospel and supporting other congregations.

In 2013 congregations will contribute £47 million. This is a lot of money. Where does it go and what does it do? The money each congregation gives goes in two directions – to the Parish Ministries Fund and to the Mission and Renewal Fund.

Perhaps it is easier for us to think of a £10 note. £8.60 of that £10 will go to the Parish Ministries Fund to

- enable ministries in every part of Scotland, including ministers, deacons and parish workers;
- provide spiritual leadership and pastoral care in schools, hospitals and care facilities;
- provide additional ministry support to some of the most marginalized areas of the country;
- recruit, train and support Ministries personnel to support the whole church.

In 2013, the cost of a Parish Minister at the top of the scale is £39,895. This amount includes stipend along with employer's national insurance and pension contributions.

The remaining £1.40 of each £10 note will go to the Mission and Renewal Fund. This covers

- planning the General Assembly and ensuring the Moderator represents the Church;
- providing social care services in Christ's name to further the caring work of the Church to people in need;
- accompanying partners around the world on our shared Christian journey;
- providing central day-to-day work in administration, finance and legal matters;
- resourcing congregations – elder training, safeguarding, stewardship and mission;
- contributing the Church's opinion in public debate and on issues affecting Scotland.



Have you looked at the website yet?

www.greenbankchurch.org

Book Review

Speaking Christian

by Marcus J Borg

SPCK 2011, 256 pages, £9.99, ISBN 978-0-281-06508-0

Speaking Christian is a bold attempt to meet the needs both of those for whom the traditional language of Christianity has lost its meaning and of those who have never understood it in the first place. Marcus Borg identifies two major obstacles which make it difficult for many people to understand the language of Christianity. One is what he defines as the “heaven-and-hell” understanding of Christianity, which emphasises the next world and what we must do to get there. The other is the reduction of rich, poetic and transformative language to its literal and factual meaning.

Not all will agree with Borg’s analysis of the problem facing modern Christianity. Is he right to generalise from his own North American Lutheran upbringing and its effect on his own religious development to say something more widely relevant? Are people as naïve and unthinking as he sometimes implies? Are we as burdened by the baggage of the past as he suggests? While not accepting all of Borg’s negative criticisms of a traditional understanding of Christian language, his helpful insights into the meaning of words and phrases commonly – and often thoughtlessly – used are to be welcomed. With him we may learn to move beyond a restricted understanding to something wider and richer.

Borg illustrates his argument by the frequent use of Biblical quotations and reminds his readers of the wealth of meaning underlying particular words and ideas, a wealth that narrow understandings of Christianity have lost. For instance, the phrase “born again”, so often associated with a specific type of Christianity, has been reinstated as a meaningful and central concept for all Christians; salvation (another loaded word) is shown to embrace a wide range of meanings including liberation from bondage, return from exile and rescue from peril, as well as recovery of sight, the healing of wounds and making whole; and sin is recognised as being one of several biblical ways of describing the human condition rather than the only one.

Borg notes that some have tried to change the Church’s language, but he rightly prefers to recover the lost meaning of words and phrases from the Bible as well as in the ancient creeds. For this we must be grateful. Marcus Borg has succeeded in restoring to familiar words and ideas a freshness, a vitality and a power that could change and revitalise our faith. In his concluding words, we can rediscover that Christianity is simply about loving God (as known in Jesus) and changing the world.

Peter Graham

Monday Bible Study Group

The group will meet on April 8th, April 22nd, May 6th and May 20th at 7.30pm in different homes.

We will be studying “Women of the New Testament” and new members are always welcome. Please contact me for more information (email gilliansweetman@hotmail.com).

Gillian Sweetman



ENOUGH FOOD FOR EVERYONE IF

IF what? See page 7!

Combined Church Service

To celebrate the beginning of Christian Aid Week, a combined Service will be held in Fairmilehead Parish Church on **Sunday 12th May 2013** at 7pm. The Speaker will be Mary Mulligan, the Churches Development Officer for Christian Aid.

Spring Fair

The Spring Fair will be held in Morningside Parish Church Halls on **Saturday 25th May 2013** from 10am to 2pm. There will be the usual stalls of Baking and Preserves, New and Nearly New Articles, Indoor, Outdoor and a large selection of bedding Plants, Books, DVDs, CDs and Jigsaws, Fairtrade Goods, Tombola and Raffle, Craft Stalls and Activities for the Children. Refreshments will be available with Soup and Filled Rolls at lunchtime.

Donations for all the stalls and prizes for the Tombola will be gratefully received, as will used plastic carrier bags for the Plant stall.

Forth Valley Chorus

The Forth Valley Chorus have kindly agreed to present a fundraising concert in Greenbank Parish Church on **Friday 25th October 2013** at 7.30pm.

The choir is a ninety strong female chorus who perform an exciting and varied programme of jazz, swing, gospel and irresistible *a capella* harmonies.

They recently represented the UK in Denver in the International Sweet Adelines Barbershop Championships.

For further information please contact

David Ferguson, Pamela Jack or John Mowat

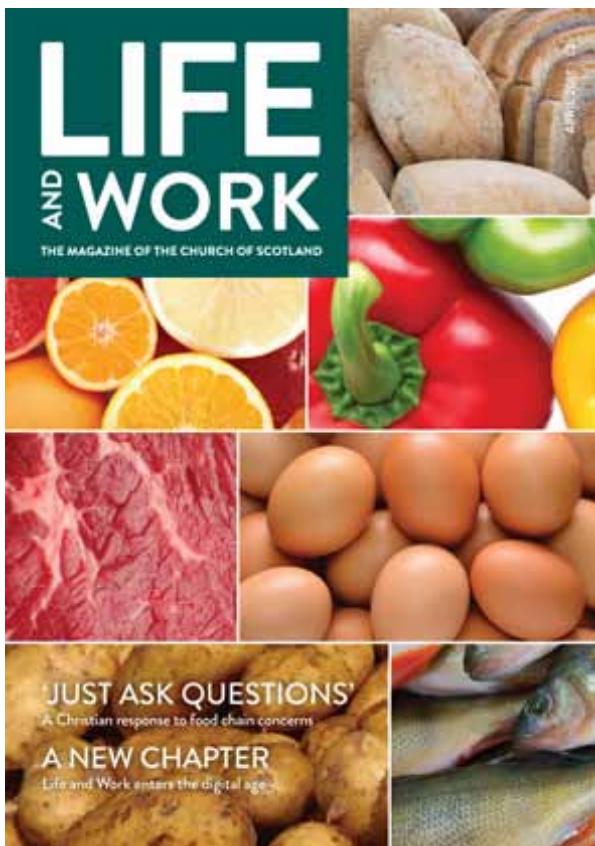
BAGs Pie and Ale Tasting 2

BAGS (Blokes at Greenbank) is a group for men aged 18–118 who have any connection with Greenbank to come and enjoy a time of fellowship and to get to know other men in the area. Last year our events were very well attended and included quiz and curry nights, cheese and wine tasting, football and BBQ, hog roast nights, etc.

A programme is in the course of being prepared for this year but is likely to be very similar to last! Our next event is on **Thursday 18th April at 8pm in the Centenary Hall** and is the return of *Pie and Ale Tasting*, which was our first event and had well over 60 attendees. There is a donation of £5 at the door, and to help with catering it would be great if you could add your name to the list which will be appearing outside the Church Office. We look forward to seeing you.

Kenny Htet-Khin

Life and Work: April Issue



Just Ask Questions'

Thomas Baldwin offers a Christian response to the horsemeat scandal.

A New Chapter

Lynne McNeil highlights a landmark moment in the development of Life and Work.

Out of Africa

The story of a Nigerian refugee who is now part of the Church of Scotland congregation in Malta.

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



Learning Anew

Jackie Macadam learns more about a new course bringing together science and religion.

Realising a Dream

Anthea Bircham describes how a wild notion to create Perthshire's answer to the Kon Tiki succeeded against the odds.

Songs of History

Jackie Macadam reports on an unusual historic find with strong Scottish connections.

Surprised by Joy?

The Rev Dr Doug Gay reflects on the possibilities of post-Easter worship.

The Holy Within Us

The Rev Scott McKenna offers a fresh perspective on a challenging passage of Scripture.

A Child of the Industrial Revolution

John R Hume reflects on the history of Bourock Parish Church in Barrhead.

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

Online from 25th March (at www.lifeandwork.org) Journey through Holy Week, with a daily reflection from the Moderator, the Rt Rev Albert Bogle.

The Darkling Thrush

by Thomas Hardy

I leant upon a coppice gate
When Frost was spectre-gray,
And Winter's dregs made desolate
The weakening eye of day.

The tangled bine-stems scored the sky

Like strings of broken lyres,
And all mankind that haunted nigh
Had sought their household fires.

The land's sharp features seemed to be
The Century's corpse outleaned,
His crypt the cloudy canopy,

The wind his death-lament.

The ancient pulse of germ and birth
Was shrunken hard and dry,
And every spirit upon earth
Seemed fervourless as I.

At once a voice arose among

The bleak twigs overhead

In a full-hearted evensong

Of joy illimitated;

An aged thrush, frail, gaunt, and small,
In blast-beruffled plume,
Had chosen thus to fling his soul
Upon the growing gloom.

So little cause for carolings

Of such ecstatic sound

Was written on terrestrial things

Afar or nigh around,

That I could think there trembled through

His happy good-night air

Some blessed Hope, whereof he knew

And I was unaware.

(An old favourite, but worth revisiting as March 2013 draws to a close!)

Morlich House Coffee Morning

Saturday 27th April
10 am to 12 noon

Morningside United
Church Hall,
Holy Corner

Baking, Plant and Gift
Stalls

Tickets £2 available from
Anne Oxbrow

Food for thought... and for Sale

"Best Buy this Month" is a Kilo of delicious Kilombero Rice for £3, on sale from the **World Mission Committee** at Greenbank Church after the Morning Services on Sunday 7th April and on

"If I get a fair price for my rice my children can go to high school"



the following Sundays. You will have learned from the World Mission article in the March leaflet of the 90 Kilos Rice Challenge. Now everyone who purchases this Kilombero rice will help to enable a young person in Malawi to have secondary education.

Incidentally Edinburgh University Catering Services now serve only Malawi rice in all their Restaurants. Perhaps Kilombero rice is contributing a degree of nutrition to the students' education here also!!

We, in Greenbank, as well as other Churches, Schools and Organisations, have taken up this Rice Challenge which has been organized by Just Trading Scotland (JTS). JTS, from being run entirely on a voluntary basis, became an established Company in Paisley in 2009. Since then, it has greatly developed and has formed strong

links with the National Smallholders Farmers Association of Malawi (NASFAM). JTS sees trade and, more importantly, FAIR trade as the way out of poverty, especially for smallholders, as they have little chance of accessing global markets. JTS aims to offer their suppliers access to western markets, instead of being prey to unscrupulous dealers who would take advantage of the smallholders' desperate need for some income to cheat them with false promises and unfair dealing. In Malawi, the urban population is about four times better off than the farming community which makes up 85% of the population, but who toil away on small family farms, sometimes with only a hoe as a tool. This is why we are very enthusiastic about this Rice Challenge and hope you will help us achieve our 90kg target, with the greater purpose of improving the lives of the Malawi farmers and their children,

On **Sunday 7th April** the 9.30am **First Sunday Service** will be led by the World Mission Committee in conversation with John Ferguson, who has worked in Malawi and who has just returned from another visit there. Please do come along!

We are also, of course, always grateful for your continued support of the **One World Stall**, which will be held next after the Service on **Sunday 28th April**.



Wanted – more good quality household goods

Thanks for the great response to my appeal last month for good quality household items for Fresh Start. The next Fresh Start collection is on **Sunday 14th April**, after the Service (table in Main Hall).

See www.freshstartweb.org.uk to find out about Fresh Start and their work. Or see me on a Fresh Start Sunday.

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).

Alison Ambler

Families@4 – Greenbank's Messy Church

(See page 6.) Our first event is on 20th April 2013 at 4pm. If anyone would like to help families with craftwork that has already been prepared, please contact me.

Gillian Sweetman
(Email gilliansweetman@hotmail.com)

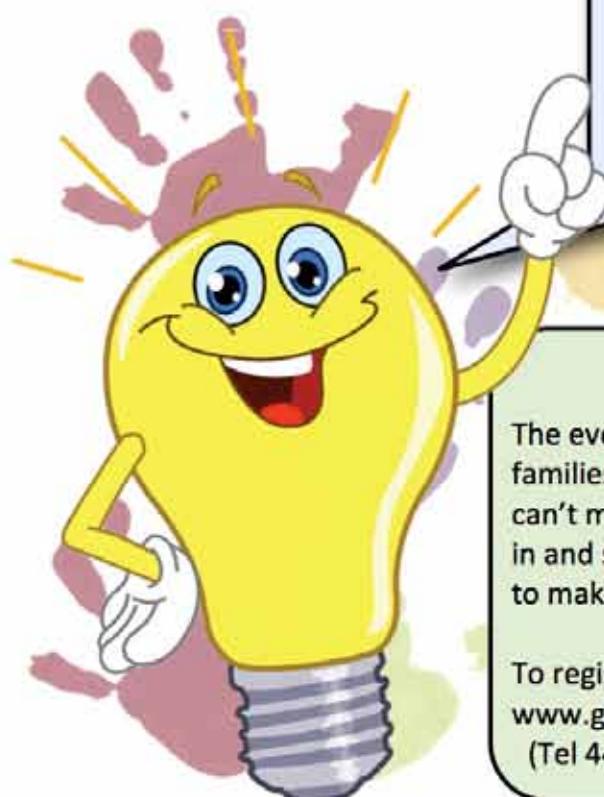
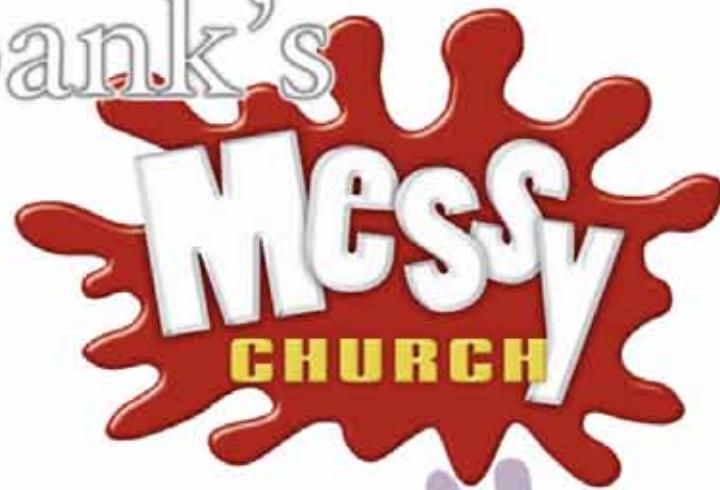
New Members Lunch – Hermitage Room

On Sunday 28th April there will be a light lunch (12 noon to 1.00pm) to welcome new members and people who have recently started worshipping with us. It gives an opportunity for new members to meet their Elder, District Visitor and other new members informally. There will be short presentations about the Church and an opportunity for a tour around the Church buildings. Invitations for new members will be through their Elder, but if you have recently started worshipping with us and would like to come please contact the Church Office (Tel 447 9969, Email greenbankchurch@btconnect.com).

Gillian Sweetman

Families at Four

Greenbank's



You're Invited!

Saturday 20 April 4pm—6pm

Greenbank Parish Church, Braidburn Terrace

There will be:

crafts & activities

songs & stories

dinner for everyone!

The event is free—donations are invited

Don't Forget!!!

The event is for children at primary school and their families. Children must bring an adult with them. If you can't manage for the whole thing, feel free to just stop in and say hello, or even come late! We'll look forward to making a mess of the church hall with you!

To register for Messy Church, visit the Church website at www.greenbankchurch.org or contact the Church Office (Tel 447 9969).

Congregational Register

omitted

Crèche Rota

April

- 7 Valerie Macniven
- 14 Lorna Htet-Khin
- 21 Hazel McLachlan
- 28 Alison Ambler

May

- 5 Shona Murray



Welcome Teams

April

- 7 **Roger Bland**, Eileen Campbell, Richard Dunbar, Clifford Hastings, Chris Horne, Doris Laing, Enid Mowat, Robin Nimmo, Keith Winton
- 14 **John Ritchie**, Eric Brown, Stewart Coghill, Ralph Davidson, Susan Inch, Gill Sweetman, Ian Thomson, David Easton, Susan Jackman
- 21 **Stuart Sanders**, Moira Davidson, Stuart Macmillan, John Murison, Rachel Cadell, Jenny Wright, Sandy Cameron, Carrie Reid, Moira Land
- 28 **John Rutherford**, David Allan, Richard Denison, Kenneth Htet-Khin, Caroline Kehoe, Anne Kinnear, John Mowat, Jean Roynon-Jones

May

- 5 **Ian Thom**, Keith Clark, Ray Dely, Catherine Hardie, Elizabeth Htet-Khin, Anne Oxbrow, Isobel Thom, Kay Ellis, Charles Black, Greig Scott

Coffee Rota

April

- 7 Clifford Hastings (D61A)
- 14 Scouts
- 21 Ian Thom (D56)
- 28 Margot Fergusson (D11)



May

- 5 Charles & Susan Black

Material for the May *Leaflet* should be delivered to the Church Office or to the Editors' pigeon-hole in the Main Hall by Sunday 14th April, or sent by e-mail by 9am on Tuesday 16th April to greenbankleaflet@googlemail.com

Flower Rota

Provided by

Delivered by

April

- | | | |
|----|--------------------|----------------------|
| 7 | Rona Sommerville | Joan & Sandy Cameron |
| 14 | Jill Powlett-Brown | Janet McAinsh |
| 21 | Ishbel Emery | Margaret Mack |
| 28 | Liz Gordon | Fiona Watt |

May

- | | | |
|---|----------------|--------------------|
| 5 | Caroline Kehoe | Catherine Ferguson |
|---|----------------|--------------------|



ENOUGH FOOD FOR EVERYONE

Tax

 we stop big companies dodging taxes in poor countries, so that millions of people can free themselves from hunger.

Too many unscrupulous businesses and individuals manage to avoid paying the taxes they owe in developing countries. They're dodging millions of pounds every day.

Yet taxes are the most important, sustainable and predictable source of finance. The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development estimates that developing countries lose three times more to tax havens than they receive in aid each year. That money could help millions of people to escape from hunger. We can help stop this tax dodging if our government steps up to close the international tax loopholes.

Aid

 we make the right investments to stop people dying from hunger, and help the poorest people feed themselves.

The UK government has committed to spending 0.7% of its national income on aid. We must make sure they keep this promise.

Land

 we stop poor farmers being forced off their land, and use crops to feed people, not fuel cars.

The poorest farmers are losing their land to giant corporations. These companies don't care that the land is already being used by local people to grow food. Stopping them would help millions of people get enough to eat.

Transparency

 we force governments and big corporations to be honest and open about their actions that stop people getting enough food.

Transparency and accountability are vital in the global food system. Decisions that can affect millions of people are made behind closed doors, without the participation of those affected. Corporates and governments must be more transparent about their affairs so that citizens can hold to account powerful players in the food system.

Some difficult sayings of Jesus

My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?

As Jesus hung dying on the cross, he declared his agony and called for help. According to Matthew and Mark, he cried out, *My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?* For every victim crucifixion, a most barbaric form of execution, would cause acute and prolonged physical pain, exacerbated by difficulty in breathing. In addition, at this point Jesus had just been deserted by his disciples and rejected by his own people: those who were at the cross were only there to mock him. The earth was darkened at an unnatural hour. He had been rejected and mocked by the people he came to help and even by nature. Jesus was nearing death. Above all else, beyond the shame, the torture and the pain, was this: Jesus felt that he had been abandoned by God.

To feel abandoned by God is the ultimate form of forsakenness. It is sheer hell. So Jesus cried “Why?” Why had he been abandoned, cut off, plunged into an abyss of horror and aloneness? It is very difficult, if not impossible, to grasp what this experience meant to Jesus. However horrendous his physical agonies, the spiritual torment of not being able to feel consciously communion with his heavenly Father, to hold fast to the certainty that God was operating through him, must have been unimaginably distressing. He who had lived in such close harmony with God and had proclaimed him to be a God of grace was deserted at his time of greatest need. How could what was now happening to him be dismissed as a mere mishap, a human misunderstanding? Was it not ultimately a rejection by the God whom Jesus had dared to call “My Father”? At his baptism the heavens had been torn open: but now the heavens remained firmly closed. On the mountain of the transfiguration God had spoken, *This is my Son, the beloved:* here, at the hill of Calvary, the heavens were silent. Why is there no voice from heaven? Why must Jesus die in such solitude with this desperate question on his lips? *My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?*

This cry from the Cross is a quotation from Psalm 22. Mark gives it in the Aramaic form in which Jesus would naturally have spoken. It is highly significant that, in his time of direct suffering, as in the period of fierce temptation, Jesus’ mind should have been so saturated with his Scriptures that they should have sprung to his lips. Down through the centuries many attempts have been made to soften the harsh significance of Jesus’ words, to reduce their shocking effect. It has been suggested that around the time of Jesus Jewish rabbis would often refer to the whole of a psalm simply by giving its first line, just as we would give a song title to refer to the whole of a song. While Jesus is recorded as uttering the opening cry of desolation, it is claimed that he would have had in mind the whole psalm as an expression of faith. Psalm 22 certainly moves from the sense of anguish and abandonment of its opening section through sorrow and grief to hope and redemption, to exultation and joy.

Comforting as this may be, it fails to take seriously the suffering of Jesus. Jesus had considerable experience of suffering. He did not evade other people’s suffering but faced their sicknesses and needs. Nor did he flee from his own suffering, though he did not seek it either. He was hurt when people rejected him, when the Sadducees engineered his execution, when Judas betrayed him, when his disciples forsook him. His death was the culmination of his suffering. There he hung on the cross, gaped at and mocked by his enemies, deserted by his friends. His cry of dereliction expressed his godforsakenness. At the very least, on the cross Jesus had to struggle to hold on to God, who had not preserved him from death.

That Jesus asked “Why?” has made him the more effective support of his people. He was no visitor from another planet, avoiding too much involvement with this world of ours: he was totally involved in this world and in the human lot. The fact that Jesus entered into the depth of darkness on the cross means that he is able to identify sympathetically with the darkest of human situations.

Jesus never failed in obedience to God, yet he dared to ask “Why?” He did not curse God like his neighbour on the cross. But he questioned God. And that is consolation to all who have cried out “Why?” in moments when they have felt abandoned and cut off from God. None of us may ever feel the utter desolation that Jesus felt. The closer you are to anyone, the more terrible the separation is. But we are permitted to share in a small way in the darkness Jesus knew. It is all right to ask “Why?”. To call out to God “Why have you forsaken me?” implies the possibility of someone being there, even if hidden and silent.

We dare to believe that in the cross of Jesus God has entered into our experience of darkness. A God who remained majestically isolated in heaven, impervious to our suffering, would not be a worthy or credible God in our suffering world. Christ is able to share with us the pain of desertion, the loneliness of suffering, the darkness of depression, the bewilderment of circumstances, and the agony of death, because he has been there. But, by being there, he did more than tell us how it feels. In ways beyond our understanding he not only shares our pain and enters into our suffering: he transforms it by his love and brings light into our darkness and life out of death. There is no depth of dereliction known to human beings which Jesus has not plumbed and so he is uniquely qualified to be his people’s sympathiser and helper in their most extreme need. If we feel like crying out to God, Why have you forsaken me? we can reflect that this is what Jesus cried. When we cry out of the depths to God, he who called out of the depths to God on the first Good Friday knows what it is like. But there is this difference: no one was there to strengthen him — he is with us now to strengthen us.