

Leaflet



Greenbank Parish Church
Braidburn Terrace, EH10 6ES

No 635 May 2014

Pulpit Diary

May 2 (Friday)

9.15am Pram Praise

May 4

9.30am First Sunday Service
led by Help the Homeless

10.30am Morning Worship

May 11

10.30am Morning Worship

May 18

10.30am Morning Worship

May 25

10.30am Morning Worship

May 30 (Friday)

7.30pm Pre-Communion Service

Jun 1

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
referenced 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

During an early Easter break this year Sean and I visited Salford Quays in Manchester. We wanted to see the Lowry Centre and the Imperial War Museum which are both situated in the heart of this development. BBC and ITV also have offices and studios there and often broadcast from the quays outside.

Paved walkways and pedestrian bridges over waterways connect different parts of the development and there are new high rise and low rise housing developments. When we visited on a beautiful sunny day we were amazed at the extent and nature of the regeneration which has taken place there.

Salford Quays is near the end of the Manchester Ship Canal. It used to be part of the Manchester Docks. At their height these docks were the third busiest port in Britain. But in the 1970s the docks began to decline. They were closed in 1982 with the loss of 3,000 jobs. By the following year plans were underway for one of the first and largest regeneration projects in the United Kingdom.

Although we did not have time to visit it, the centre of Manchester has also been redeveloped, following the IRA bombing in 1996. In that bombing, although there was no loss of life, many were injured. Extensive damage was caused to a number of buildings and several had to be demolished. Many small businesses never recovered and a lot of people suffered hardship as a result. But now once again it appears the city centre is bustling with life.

These new developments in Manchester stand as reminders that out of pain and heartache and loss, good and new things can and do emerge. That is not to belittle the suffering that was endured by thousands of workers who lost their jobs in the dockyards and their families, nor the anxiety of those



whose businesses collapsed in the wake of the bombing. But it is to recognise that it is possible with vision and hope to move forward into a new future.

And perhaps there is a message here for the Church. Recently I was at a consultation held by Edinburgh Presbytery when we were reflecting on the way forward.

At that consultation the challenge which the Church has faced in recent years was described as a "tsunami of secularism". And it is true that numbers have fallen dramatically and many congregations are having to make difficult decisions about the future. There is much pain and grief as buildings which contain precious memories are having to close because there is no money to carry out essential repairs.

Yet as the Church celebrates Easter, her message is one of hope. The hope of new life lies at the heart of the Gospel. Beyond the darkness of the cross and empty tomb is the light of Easter Day. The risen Christ who has borne the suffering of the cross, invites us to follow him through the darkness into the life that awaits beyond. This is not a promise that the Church will avoid pain and suffering. It is, rather, a challenge to the Church to walk the way of the cross in company with Christ and one another into the new dawn that awaits. We do not know what the Church will look like in 20 years' time or even 10 years' time. Yet we can know in the Church's life the joy of Christ as together with him we journey through even the most difficult of days and the darkest of places.

May this Easter hope infuse all our living and our dying.

With warmest wishes,

Alison I Swindells
Minister

Heart and Soul

Princes Street Gardens, Sunday 18th May

Join the thousands of people expected to come to this year's celebration. The theme for 2014 is "HandS Across the World". It will celebrate the life of the Church through the lens of its international heritage, relationships and partners.

The event will have activities for children, varied events and performances, congregations showcasing their life, work and witness and exhibitors displaying information and resources. It culminates in the closing worship with the opportunity to praise God in the open air in the centre of the capital.

For further details please visit www.heartandsoul2014.org.uk.

Gillian Sweetman
Mission and Service

Banner Group

The Banner group has reconvened to create new banners on the theme of Autumn/Harvest.

Any member of the congregation with an interest in sewing is welcome to join us. Our next meeting is on **Monday 5th May** in the Main Hall at 2.30 pm. For further information please contact

Val Smart

Curry Lunch



After Church on Sunday 25th May 2014

**Enjoy a social lunch with friends old and new
(and save cooking on Sunday)**

Curry Supplied By "The Clay Oven"

Individual Ticket: £6

Family Ticket: £15

Children's Drumsticks Ticket: £2

**Available From Social Committee or
telephone Elizabeth Htet-Khin**

Summer Bookstall 25th May

There will be an opportunity for you to buy your summer holiday reading, recent titles from the Cornerstone Bookshop, and books recently reviewed, at the last Bookstall before the summer break on **Sunday 25th May** in the Main Hall. We will also be taking orders for the COSY guide to ethical living, price £3.

Please come and browse. If there are any books on religious topics that you would like to see please contact us.

John and Joan Ritchie

The Braid Bowling Club

How many of you have driven or walked past the wire netting on the south side of Cluny Gardens near to the western entrance to Blackford Pond and wondered about the interesting old building behind the tennis courts? This is the clubhouse of the Braid Bowling Club.



Situated in the lee of Blackford Hill, the Braid Bowling Club is in a most attractive setting and has one of the best playing surfaces in the City of Edinburgh. The Bowling Club has a long and interesting history. The club, along with the neighbouring Braid Tennis Club, was founded in 1890 by the trustees of the Gordons of Cluny who were in the process of developing what is still known as the Braid Estate. In August 1908, the club hosted one of the first Home Internationals when the English team was captained by the celebrated Dr W.G. Grace.

The Club is keen to recruit new members. Qualified coaches are available to help and the Club has shoes and bowls, including junior sets suitable for 10–12 year olds, for those who would like to try their hand. Full membership costs £130 for the season but only £10 for under-25s. There is no joining fee.

There is a sliding scale of membership for those joining during the course of the season. Fuller details concerning membership can be had from the Club Secretary John Thompson (Tel 261 4694, email thompsonrj@talktalk.net) or from Men's Match Secretary Eric Melvin (Tel 447 5578, email eric.melvin@btinternet.com).

The Club runs a full set of internal and external competitive fixtures but also enjoys informal play throughout the season which runs from the third weekend in April to the third weekend in September. In addition there is a programme of activities run through the autumn and winter months including a strollers' group and a whist club.

More information, which includes details of our very informal mixed-play sessions, held at 2pm on the first Sunday of the month from May until August, can be found on the Club's website – www.braidbc.co.uk.

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

Our Lenten Journey

with the Rev Bill Stone

Our journey through Lent began in the mountains. Their imposing beauty promises adventure and demands risk taking. Long ago God invited Abraham and Sarah to leave their home and travel to a new land. What risks are we being invited to take today?



Next week we found ourselves in the desert—a place where it is very difficult to sustain life. Long ago, in a dry and barren place like this, God provided Moses and the wandering Hebrews with water from a rock. Where are we invited to find or provide nourishment in unexpected places?

On the third week of our journey we visited green pastures—a place of safety and rest. From what are we invited to rest this Lent? How can we make our church a place of safety and rest for all?

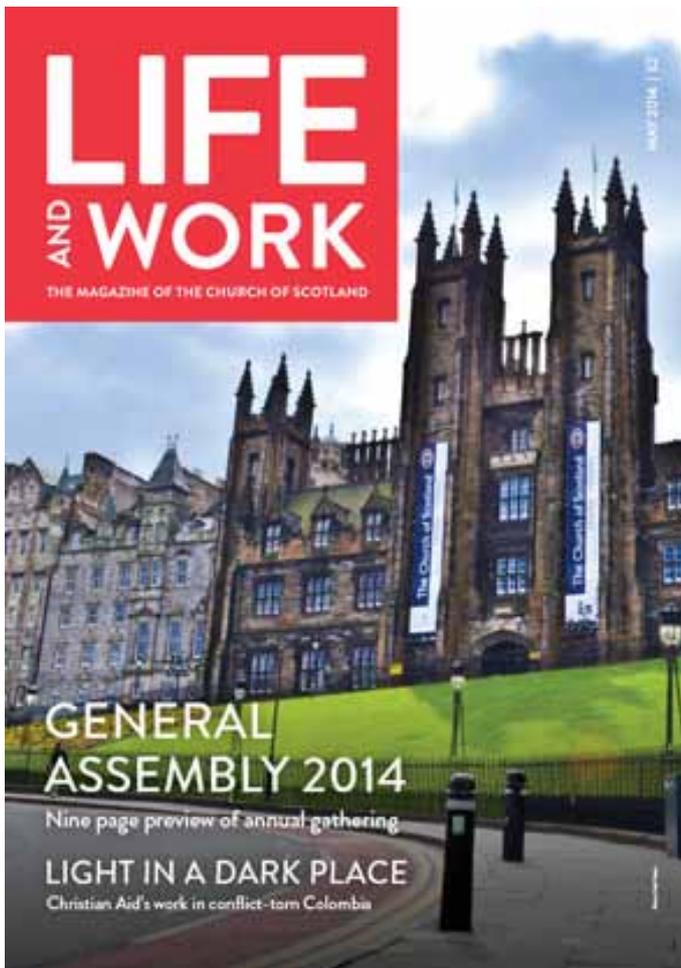


The penultimate stop on our journey was in a valley of dry bones. Long after we die, our bones still carry the marks and stresses of life. What stresses and burdens are you being invited to release?

On Palm Sunday we arrived at the Golden Gate—the doorway into Jerusalem—and we remembered Jesus' triumphal entry into the city. Jesus was given a king's welcome, but his power and kingdom were unlike any known before. How are we being invited to continue this revolutionary ministry today?



May Issue of Life and Work



General Assembly 2014

Reports to the Assembly
Preview of *Heart and Soul*
Assembly and Fringe Timetables
A new Moderator-Designate

Christian Aid Week

Light in a Dark Place: a report on the work of a Christian Aid partner in Colombia

The Big Question: What is your church doing for Christian Aid Week?

A Month in a Life: Mary Davidson, co-ordinator of the Christian Aid book sale at St Andrew's and St George's West, Edinburgh

'Someone To Talk To'

Jackie Macadam meets the Scottish chaplain working with women in Kenya's prisons.

Supporting Student Ministers

The Principal of New College, Edinburgh, the Rev David Ferguson, highlights the hardship now faced by ministry students.

God Over Mammon

John R Hume reveals the connection between an Angus parish church and one of Scotland's great inventors.

'We Would Like to See Jesus'

The Rev Dan Carmichael highlights the importance of encounter in worship.

Everything is Spiritual

The Rev Dr Martin Fair considers Acts 6: 1-7 and explains why everyone has a gift of ministry.

Plus news, letters, reviews and crosswords, all for just £2.

Online: Visit www.lifeandwork.org for the latest news and exclusive features.

Guild – Mad Hatters Morning

On 1st April the Guild hosted a *Mad Hatters Coffee Morning* in aid of the MS Therapy Centre Lothian. Much fun was had by all and a collection which raised £210 was sent to the Centre.



MEGA MAKERS!

Holiday Club 2014: 4th to 8th August

We need your help!

By the middle of April the organisers of Greenbank's Holiday Club start to get twitchy about gathering together materials for all the activities planned for the event. This year's theme will involve a lot of invention and to encourage lots of problem solving and inventing we will need to provide a large quantity of reusable material. What my grandchildren call "Grandma's junk."

Please start collecting for us now. We can use egg boxes, cardboard, paper, bubble wrap, kitchen roll and toilet paper tubes,



yoghurt cartons, string, cereal boxes, shoe boxes, plastic bottle tops and any other small objects you think might be of use.

A container will be provided in the main hall for you to leave your contributions.

Thank you,

Alison Reid

Gardeners' Question Time

In aid of the Open Door

Friday 30th May at 7.30pm

Morningside Parish Church Hall, Braid Road

Tickets £8, including refreshments from the Open Door or at the door on the night

Stalls will include Plants, Home Baking, Raffle and Quiz

Have you a thorny garden issue?

We would welcome questions for the expert panel, either to the Open Door (no later than 23rd May) or at the event.



Guild Notes

The Guild outing this year is to Hopetoun House on *Wednesday 14th May*. Would any Guild members who wish to go and who have not already booked please contact Edith Armit to add their names to the list? Those who have not already made private arrangements for transport are asked to be at the church at 11 am sharp so that we can make up carloads.

We shall have lunch at Hopetoun followed by a tour of the House. The cost of the tour is £8 (concession) and £9.20 if under age 60. The cost of lunch will be met individually and depends upon what each person wishes to eat.

The first of our summer coffee mornings takes place on *Tuesday 3rd June* in the Main Hall at 10.30 am. Contributions to our SLA commitment can be made at this meeting.

Kathleen Patrick

Book Review

Messy Church – Fresh Ideas for building a Christ Centred Community

By Lucy Moore

ISBN 978-0-85746-145-2

Bible Reading Fellowship 2012 (First published 2006) £8.99

One Church in Portsmouth found that they had fantastic facilities with two halls, kitchen, toilets and church all interlinked. They felt that there was a lack of opportunity for the children of the parish to encounter God. After much thought "Messy Church" was born. Their principles for Messy Church were:

- To provide an opportunity for people of all ages to worship together.
- To help people of all ages to feel that they belong to church and to each other.
- To help people to have fun together.
- To give people a chance to express their God-given creativity.
- To invite people into an experience of Christian community.
- To introduce people to Jesus through hospitality, friendship, stories and worship.

The book starts with the section on "Concepts and Considerations" and includes an interesting overview of Messy theology and a theological reflection on the feeding of the five thousand. The second part of the book provides themes for 12 Messy Churches and practical information including food, activities and the worship time.

In starting Messy Church at Greenbank this book has been invaluable. It makes clear that each church will be different but the outline for planning the sessions is clear and concise. Although we are blessed by many people with "God-given creativity", the craft ideas have been easy to use or adapt. With Bill Stone to lead the worship and Joan Fraser to lead the music we have probably had less need for these ideas.

The estimate given from the book is that 100,000 people now come to Messy Churches. You can find out more from the website, www.messychurch.org.uk.

Gillian Sweetman



Winners of the Bank of Scotland Community Award for South Central Edinburgh

Did you know that as well as providing 44 registered day service places for older people, *The Open Door* provides:

- A **Community Centre** used by many of the people from south Edinburgh. Within our centre there are meeting rooms to hire from as little as £10 per hour, or advertise your event or small business from our large front shop window, for as little as £25 per week or £40 for two consecutive weeks. We are on Morningside Road, opposite a bus stop and traffic lights so you have a captive audience for your promotion.

- A **Coffee Shop** where a warm welcome awaits you; being a community cafe means all profits go to providing our services, in particular our Good Neighbour Club, for the active older person. We receive no statutory funding for this group which costs around £20,000 a year to provide. Prices in our coffee shop are kept intentionally low to promote inclusion.



- Wednesday afternoons are all about **Music and Song**: Martin gently plays guitar while others listen, join in or sing along. If you play or would like to learn a few chords why not come along and join Martin on Wednesdays, 2pm–4pm.

- Although our aims include supporting older people we are here



for everyone and it is a pleasure to watch children chatting and having fun while they learn to **Sew**, gently guided by Ruth Watt. If you know anyone who would like to join this merry group why not tell them to come along on

Wednesday and Thursday afternoons, 3.30pm–4.30pm.

- **Help and Advice**: giving assistance on a range of topics, from finding a plumber to care support. If you know someone who could do with a bit of help or if you yourself would like a little advice why not pop in or telephone us?

Sound like a place you would like to support? There are many ways to do so: Visit our coffee shop and enjoy the friendly atmosphere, become a “Friend of The Open Door” – the annual subscription of £24 goes a long way, join our 200 Club or perhaps you would like to volunteer. I look forward to meeting you.

Many thanks,

Sandra Dixon, Manager

420 Morningside Road, EH10 5HY (Tel 447 9757,

www.theopendoor-morningside.org.uk,

email theopendoor@morningside.org.uk)

christian
aid

Spring Fair

Morningside Parish Church Halls (foot of Braid Road)

Saturday 24th May 2014, 10am–2pm

Stalls: Home Baking & Preserves; New & Nearly New Goods; Books, DVDs, CDs & Jigsaws; Indoor, Outdoor & Bedding Plants; Fairtrade, Food & Crafts; Tombola & Raffle with excellent prizes.

Craft Stalls: Jewellery; Breadshare; Glasslights; Phoenix Trader; On-Chair Massage.



11am–12 noon: Aileen Paterson, author of *Maisie of Morningside*, will entertain the Children.

12 noon–12.30pm: Flower arranging by Eleanor Watt.

Project by Morningside Heritage Association – *Morningside in the Great War*.

Refreshments: Coffee, Tea, Juice, Biscuits. Soup & crusty bread.

Donations for the Stalls and Prizes for the Tombola will be gratefully received.

Admission free!

Please come to the Fair and be welcomed by the Morningside Youth Pipe Band

Christian Aid Week

11th to 17th May

Please will collectors come to the Main Hall at Greenbank Church before or after the 10.30am Service on **Sunday 11th May** to pick up their collecting bags with their envelopes, etc? If this is not convenient for anyone, please contact me to arrange to get these before that date.

Pam Jack

(email pamelajacko6@gmail.com)

Christian Aid Week Church Service

The Christian Aid Week Church Service to celebrate the start of Christian Aid Week will be held in St Fillans Scottish Episcopal Church, Buckstone Drive, on Sunday 11th May at 6.30pm.

The Speaker, Crispin Longden from the Christian Aid Office, will tell us about the work of Christian Aid.

Everyone is encouraged to attend this Service; it should boost the knowledge and confidence of those among us who are Collectors for Christian Aid Week.

Friendship Club – Reminder

Outing on Saturday 10th May

We meet outside the Church at 12.15pm. The bus will leave promptly at 12.30pm and return at around 5.30pm.

Congregational Register

Omitted from the on-line version of the Leaflet

Welcome Teams

May

- 4 **Stuart Sanders**, Moira Davidson, John Murison, Rachel Cadell, Jenny Wright, Sandy Cameron, Carrie Reid, Moira Land
- 11 **John Rutherford**, David Allan, Richard Denison, Caroline Kehoe, Anne Kinnear, John Mowat, Jean Roynon-Jones
- 18 **John Ritchie**, Eric Brown, Stewart Coghill, Ralph Davidson, Susan Inch, Gill Sweetman, Ian Thomson, David Easton, Susan Jackman
- 25 **Ian Thom**, Keith Clark, Ray Dely, Catherine Hardie, Elizabeth Htet-Khin, Anne Oxbrow, Isobel Thom, Kay Ellis, Charles Black, Greig Scott

June

- 1 **Alan Armit**, Edith Armit, Louise Coghill, Iain Davidson, Hugh Cowan, Susan Black, Malcolm Watters, Nora Kellock, Elizabeth Mackay

Coffee Rota

May

- 4 Richard Denison (D59B)
- 11 Catherine Hardie (D66B)
- 18 Anne Oxbrow (D23) & Janet Walker
- 25 Chris Horne (D37)



Spectrum and Springboard

Offerings in 2013

The Offerings collected at Spectrum and Springboard during 2013 totalled **£915**.

As is the custom, the members of Springboard and Spectrum 3 were asked how they wanted the money to be used. This year, Spectrum 3 again chose to sponsor a child through Plan International and then nominated that the balance go to support CHAS (Children's Hospice Association Scotland). Springboard chose to allocate amounts to Mercy Ships, Sightsavers, The Yard (Edinburgh adventure centre for children with disabilities) and the RNLI.

£12 per month has been paid to Plan International, £296 to CHAS, £175 to Mercy Ships, £150 to Sightsavers, £100 to The Yard and £50 to the RNLI. In addition, the Spectrum 3 Lunch held in March 2013 raised £510 which was donated to The Sunflower Garden. Thus, in total our young members must be congratulated for having raised **£1425** for charities during 2013.

Already in 2014 the Springboard and QII Lunch raised £700 which has been donated to St Catharine's where the young people are supporting their work with the homeless. The ongoing regular offerings from everyone attending Spectrum and Springboard will ensure that there will again be a healthy sum to be donated to other nominated charities at the end of this year.

Crèche Rota

May

- 4 Liz Foster
- 11 Alison Ambler
- 18 Carrie Reid
- 25 Vivien Hutchison

June

- 1 Lorna Htet-Khin



Flower Rota

Provided by

Delivered by

May

- | | | |
|----|--------------------------------------|--------------------|
| 4 | Caroline Kehoe | Catherine Ferguson |
| 11 | Innes Family | Liz Foster |
| 18 | Marjory Thomson | Fiona Kelly |
| 25 | Rosemary McCulloch/
Ruth Johnston | Susan Black |

June

- | | | |
|---|----------|------------------|
| 1 | Ina Weir | Charlotte Tucker |
|---|----------|------------------|



World Mission Service

The World Mission Committee led the 9.30am Service on 6th April and explored the subject of Slavery.

The transatlantic slave trade involved the forced removal of between eleven and perhaps as many as twenty five million slaves from the continent of Africa to the Americas between the fifteenth and nineteenth centuries. Britain was heavily involved and the profits made helped to finance the industrial revolution. The trailer for the film *Twelve Years a Slave* was shown, depicting a graphic and shocking example of the horrors of slavery.

Slavery is against the law in most countries but it is estimated that today the number of slaves across the five continents is between eleven to twenty five million.

The congregation heard the story of a girl from the Philippines who applied for domestic work overseas. Mira paid a sum amounting to four months salary to an agency to secure a job in the Middle East. Mira worked sixteen hours a day as a nanny and a maid. She was allowed to eat the leftovers but when the family went out for a meal, as they did quite often, she got nothing. At first Mira was paid £100 per month but when the family moved to the UK they stopped paying her. Mira ran away and approached Kalayaan, a charity which helps migrant domestic workers in the UK. Kalayaan said that Mira was an example of a modern day slave. There was no happy ending to Mira's story as eventually she was forced to return home without any of the money owed to her.

Charities such as the Anti Slavery League do a huge amount of work but more needs to be done by Governments and by us as Christians. We can emphasise that slavery is intolerable and press our elected representatives to do more.

One World Stall

The next One World Stall on **18th May** is the last until September.

John Ritchie

Some Prayers of the Old Testament

“It Ain’t Necessarily So” is a popular song with music by George Gershwin and lyrics by his brother Ira. In their opera *Porgy and Bess* this song is sung by the character Sportin’ Life, a drug dealer, who expresses his doubt about several statements in the Bible. In one verse he refers to the story of Jonah:

Oh Jonah, he lived in de whale,
Oh Jonah, he lived in de whale,
Fo’ he made his home in
Dat fish’s abdomen.
Oh Jonah, he lived in de whale.

Even if this does sum up what has been claimed as the best known incident in the Old Testament, many people would react with Sportin’ Life’s comment, *It ain’t necessarily so*. But this is to miss the point of the picturesque tale of Jonah. In the carefully designed book of Jonah one incredible event follows another in quick succession. Through irony and humour Jonah is depicted as the embodiment of intolerance, bigotry and lack of human sympathy. He is rebellious, irresponsible and recalcitrant. He knows what is required of him but does not do it. He is everything that God’s messenger should not be. At best, he is a most reluctant prophet.

Jonah is summoned by God to go to Nineveh. There he is to proclaim God’s judgement on the people, regarded by strict Jews as the supreme example of Gentile irreligion. Knowing God’s readiness to forgive and dreading that the heathen may actually repent and be pardoned, Jonah boards a ship going in the opposite direction. A violent storm brings the terrified sailors to their knees in prayer. Although presumably not Jews, they take Jonah’s God more seriously than he does. When the captain suggests that Jonah also should be praying, Jonah admits that he is running away from his God and may be the cause of the storm. So they throw Jonah overboard. He is swallowed by a big fish and remains there for three days and three nights. The big fish returns him to dry land. Jonah now has no option but to go to Nineveh where, as he feared, his message of doom has an instantaneous effect and, instead of destroying the city, God forgives the people. The story ends with God trying to persuade Jonah that this had been the point of him being sent to Nineveh in the first place.

When in the belly of the great fish Jonah prays to God. (Some people think this prayer is a later addition to the book of Jonah, but it is an integral part of the tale and plays an essential role in the unfolding of the story.) It is an unusual prayer, not least because Jonah seems to be thanking God for rescuing him from the belly of the fish *before* the fish spews him up on dry land! In his prayer Jonah comes over as a much better person, a more religious and faithful one, than he does in the rest of the story. This may be because much of the prayer is made up from phrases found in the psalms. It is as if someone today were to compose a prayer by stringing together lines from well-known hymns.

Jonah’s prayer is mainly one of thanksgiving. However, it begins with a description of the trouble from which Jonah requires rescue. *I called to the Lord out of my distress... I cried,*

and you heard my voice. You cast me into the deep, into the heart of the seas, and the flood surrounded me... Jonah blames God for his plight, rather than accepting responsibility for his initial disobedience. It was the sailors, not God, who threw Jonah overboard! Then Jonah describes his feelings. He is remote from the Temple, and thus far away from the place where the Lord is present and where the Lord’s help will come. He emphasises the depths of his despair: *The waters closed in over me; the deep surrounded me; weeds were wrapped around my head at the roots of the mountains. I went down to the land whose bars closed upon me for ever...*

The wonder of God’s rescue is limited to a single short sentence: *yet you brought up my life from the Pit.* “The Pit” is a place of destruction, a dark and deep place where the dead are without strength, forsaken by the living, and forgotten by God. At the heart of the prayer is this claim of the Lord’s power to save from the depths of grief and despair. It recognises that the “swallowing” of Jonah by the great fish is already the sign of divine rescue, for he is no longer “at sea”, no longer at the mercy of the chaotic waters. For Jonah rescue means extraction both from the raging seas and from the threat of death.

Jonah turns away from what God has done and back to himself. *As my life was ebbing away, I remembered the Lord; and my prayer came to you, into your holy temple.* Jonah conveniently overlooks the fact that if he had remembered the Lord when he was at home and able to act in freedom he would never have been swallowed by the fish! Is Jonah admitting to turning to God when he has no other source of hope, in what is called “foxhole religion”? Nonetheless the prayer ends with the ringing affirmation, *Deliverance belongs to the Lord!*

As he addresses God in prayer Jonah undergoes a profound change of heart. He rediscovers the reality and presence of God. He experiences the grace and goodness of God in a new way. After all that he has been through, we may think he would be better equipped to understand and to show compassion to others. The transformation is short-lived, for when God shows a similar merciful goodness to the people of Nineveh, he is infuriated and upset. Jonah has not allowed his experience and fresh understanding of God and God’s ways to direct his feelings, attitudes and actions.

Jonah’s prayer may seem complicated. But underlying its complexity is the basic conviction of the whole story, the belief that God cares about all the peoples of earth. God loves Israel, the people of God, as personified in Jonah, but God also cares about the Ninevites, representing all the peoples of the world. The book of Jonah may serve as a rebuke to all reluctant missionaries, but it can also be a source of encouragement and help to those engaged in the difficult task of mission given by God to his people, not only twenty five centuries ago but even now.

For further reading

The prayer of Jonah is found in Jonah, chapter 2.

The story of Jesus about an unforgiving debtor is relevant: see St Matthew 18, 23–34.