

"FOR GOD SO LOVED THE WORLD THAT HE GAVE HIS ONE AND ONLY SON, THAT WHOEVER BELIEVES IN HIM SHALL NOT PERISH BUT HAVE ETERNAL LIFE."

JOHN 3:16






DEAR MEMBER/FRIEND OF THE WEST CHURCH,

At the time of writing this we are just days away from coming together in church and as the church to vote on the 'Basis of Union,' which is to take place on the 2nd of March. This is not, of course, a vote on the union as such between the congregations of the West Church and St Mary's, but only on the document which sets out what form, in an outward sense, the new church is to take (name, buildings etc.). Found acceptable by the session of both churches in an earlier vote this 'Basis of Union' is now to come before the congregations so that by casting their vote the whole church may indicate that it finds the terms stated agreeable and that it shall own them.

In the West Church this vote will take place following the celebration of the Lord's Supper (Communion), in other words the shared meal symbolising the church's union in Christ through union with him. It is a powerful reminder that Christian unity is to be seen not as an ecclesiastical stopgap or anything like that, but as the intended consequence of God's work in Christ.

But because such union doesn't arise from outward forms, and doesn't just come into being by vote, it is in the nature of things that there are questions still and uncertainties, perhaps also doubts, regarding the forthcoming union of our churches. What of the inner form of the church which makes for union and is spiritual?

Yes, what of it? The question must be asked, but care must be taken not to let it be an impediment to union or a confirmation of a



prejudice against it.

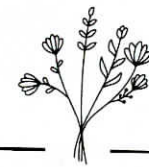
The thing to do, if intending this inner form, is in asking to then listen to what God is saying and apply oneself to it. It is after all God's word 'what does it'. And I mean really listen, which is not something that can be done apart from God's Word and without prayer. Here belongs the promise that if we ask, it will be given to us, if we seek, we will find, and if we knock, it will be opened to us. (Mt 7:7)

The church's unity is formed through Jesus Christ and is the work of God. In the account of Jesus' passion, cross and resurrection we read, strangely, that the gathering together was preceded by a scattering. "Then Jesus told them, 'This very night you will all fall away on account of me, for it is written: "I will strike the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock will be scattered." But after I have risen, I will go ahead of you into Galilee.'" (Mt 26:31-32) And so it was, in cross and resurrection and leading to the church as the one body of Christ.

Should not the experience in church of a 'scattering' be considered the prelude to the gathering that makes for unity? And should not the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ be known by faith as the very nerve of unity?

May we all entrust ourselves to his leading as we obey his call.

With warm greetings to you all in Christ Jesus -
THE MANSE FAMILY





GATHERINGS

- * **SUNDAY WORSHIP** - Sundays at 11am in the main space
- * **SPECIAL SERVICES** - World Day of Prayer, 7th Mar at 7pm
 - Guest preacher from 'Open Doors' (on God's call to care for the persecuted), 9th Mar at 11am

(Note: Ash Wednesday - beginning of Lent, 5th Mar)

- Short Lent Meditations, Thursdays at 6.30pm
6th, 13th, 20th & 27th Mar

(Note: Holy Week, 13 - 19 April)

- Palm Sunday, 13th Apr at 11am
- Maundy Thursday, Meditation with Communion
17th Apr, 6.30pm
- Good Friday, Walk of Witness (from the West
Church to Holy Trinity), 18th Apr at 12.45pm
- Easter Sunday, 20th Apr, 11am

- * **PRAYER MEETING** - Tuesdays at 8.15am - 9am in the lower hall
- * **MORNING BIBLE STUDY** - First and third Wednesday of the month,
10am - 11am in the lower hall
- * **EVENING BIBLE STUDY** - Second and fourth Wednesday of the month,
7.30pm at the Manse.
- * **MOTHER & TODDLER GROUP** - Thursdays at 9.30am in the hall
(during school term time)

MORNING BIBLE STUDY - PERSONAL ACCOUNT



ROWAN TRAIL

In September 2023 I began to attend the Bible Study which takes place twice a month, on Wednesday mornings at 10 am, at Haddington West. I did not know quite what to expect. Would I feel out of my depth? Would it be very serious? Would everyone else be able to quote chapter and verse? I need not have worried as everyone was so welcoming, each making interesting and valuable contributions.

We are currently a group of nine (Fraser having re-located to Orkney last year) led by John, our minister. The meeting begins with a prayer and by singing a hymn, unaccompanied by any instrument. At first, I found this a little daunting, but now think it helps me to concentrate on the words I am singing. Each member of the group reads a small section from whatever book of the Bible we are studying. We don't always have the same translation in front of us, so occasionally we find a different word in one translation helps us to understand it better. John poses questions and helps with background and everyone gets the opportunity to contribute. Currently, we are reading through perhaps the most difficult book of the Bible, Revelation. This requires John to make thoughtful preparation in advance, for which we are all very grateful, and we call upon the Holy Spirit to give us eyes to see, ears to hear and hearts to understand with wisdom and discernment so that we travel towards becoming more like Jesus Christ. We finish the session with another hymn and I leave feeling uplifted.

It is a joy to be part of a group whose members believe in a living Lord and who are trying to get to know Him better. There are always smiles and laughter. If anyone wishes to join us on the first and third Wednesdays of the month, please have a word with John. You will be very welcome.

EVENING BIBLE STUDY - PERSONAL ACCOUNT

MICHAEL THOMSON

I have never attended a Bible study group until joining the gatherings held at the Manse twice a month. In a warm, friendly, non-judgemental atmosphere a passage of the Bible is read, pondered on and usually gives rise to earnest and honest discussion on the meaning of the words.

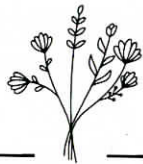
Dispelling my ignorance has been an uplifting experience. The depth of the faith, thinking and perseverance of the apostles has important lessons for us today just as 2000 years ago.



→ We would love to share in fellowship with you.
Please contact John (01620 822213) if you would like to join a group.

"BUT IF CHRIST IS IN YOU, THEN EVEN THOUGH YOUR BODY IS SUBJECT TO DEATH BECAUSE OF SIN, THE SPIRIT GIVES LIFE BECAUSE OF RIGHTEOUSNESS. AND IF THE SPIRIT OF HIM WHO RAISED JESUS FROM THE DEAD IS LIVING IN YOU, HE WHO RAISED CHRIST FROM THE DEAD WILL ALSO GIVE LIFE TO YOUR MORTAL BODIES BECAUSE OF HIS SPIRIT WHO LIVES IN YOU."

ROMANS 8:10-11



IN
REMEMBERANCE



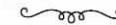
In recent months the following members of our church have been called from this life and laid to rest:

AILEEN BENNIE, died 19th Nov 2024, aged 88

JENNY WATSON, died 16th Nov 2024, aged 92

FIONA CUTHILL, died 1st Dec 2024, aged 92

ERIC THOMSON, died 2nd Dec 2024, aged 96



We remember with fondness their presence among us over many years and through changing times and the way they have added to the life of our church. We are grateful, and they are missed.

"WE WISH YOU NOT TO REMAIN IN IGNORANCE, FRIENDS, ABOUT THOSE WHO SLEEP IN DEATH; YOU SHOULD NOT GRIEVE LIKE THE REST OF MANKIND, WHO HAVE NO HOPE. WE BELIEVE THAT JESUS DIED AND ROSE AGAIN; SO TOO WILL GOD BRING THOSE WHO DIED AS CHRISTIANS TO BE WITH JESUS. CONSOLE ONE ANOTHER, THEN, WITH THESE WORDS."

1 THESSALONIANS 4:13-14,18



PRAYER

FRANCIS WILSON

Thinking of those among us who are afflicted by illness, unable for various reason to participate in the life of the church at the moment of long-term or are otherwise experiencing hardship and difficulties, and for the church - a prayer:

'Holy God, Father of mankind, we praise you for your faithfulness towards your people, that you are an ever present help in times of trouble. We pray that those who seek you through Your word and in times of prayer will experience this truth, being strengthened and encouraged, finding peace and hope as they grow closer to You, their Heavenly Father.

We pray for the members of the West Church family who are grieving for loved ones, may they know Your Comfort. We pray for those who are fearful for the future and for what it holds for them and their families, may You enfold them in Your Peace. We remember those who are suffering in physical pain and mental trauma, Loving Father, that you will give healing and strength for each day.

Creator God help us to look forward to springtime with hearts filled with love and hope as we see new growth and new life unfold before us.

Heavenly Father help us to place our trust in You as you lead us and our brothers and sisters from St Mary's in the new path that you have prepared for us.

Amen'



UNION OF THE WEST CHURCH WITH ST MARY'S CANDLEMAS

On Sunday 2nd Feb we met in St Mary's for 'Candlemas' - a service traditional in some denominations still which marks the presentation of Jesus to the Lord in the temple 40 days after his birth (Lk 2:22-35) and where he is acknowledged and confessed as the promised 'light for revelation to the Gentiles'. Symbolising Christ as the light of the world candles were lit and held. We enjoyed this coming together and the occasion of it as well as the opportunity to share lunch together after the service. The collection was in aid of the Moderator's Malawi Project and introduced by Rev Alison and raised £508.40.

FRIDAY MORNING GATHERINGS

Members of both churches have come together on an ad hoc basis on a Friday morning in a local café in order to spend time together socially and form friendships. After two successful meetings it is planned to hold a third one soon, perhaps, because of growing numbers and issues of acoustics, in a different location. Please look out for announcements.

BASIS OF UNION

Regarding the church's vote on the 'Basis of Union' - the document outlining what will happen once the union between Haddington West Church and St Mary's Church takes place - on March 2 after the service. Here is a reminder of the document by way of a summary of its key elements:



1. Name: The name of the new parish will be Haddington Parish (Church of Scotland). The church building will retain the name St. Mary's.

2. Transference of Property and Funds: The property and funds currently held in both churches will be held by the united church.

3. Place of Worship: St. Mary's Church will be the place of worship of the united church. Haddington West Church will be sold, let or otherwise disposed of.

4. Territorial Responsibility: The boundary of the united church will be the same as the two which currently exist for Haddington West Church and St. Mary's Church. They will be joined together.

5. Kirk Session: The elders of both churches and the minister will form the Kirk Session.

6. Congregational Management: This will be done by the Kirk Session.

7. Minister: The united congregation will appoint a minister and they will receive payment in the usual way.

8. The Manse: Haddington West Church's manse will be sold, let or disposed of and the one which is presently used by St. Mary's Church will be retained.

Please note that in the formal document, The Basis of Union, the date has been left empty. The reason is that this has not been finalised but is expected to be in the early Autumn. This does not need to be finalised for the vote to be binding. If you have any queries about the above, please do not hesitate to speak to Helen Gray, Rob Smith, Brenda Thomson or John Vischer.

AN ORKNEY UPDATE & THANK YOU

HANNAH CHEYNE

Our hearts are full and thankful as we look back on our time with you all at the West Parish Church.

We are now settled in Stromness, Orkney, where we feel God has called us to be. In July 2024, Fraser was offered a job as an energy support advisor with a charity called THAW. His job is to find practical ways to help people in fuel poverty. This often involves making home visits which take him around Mainland Orkney and across to the 'peedie' (small) Isles.

I stayed in Haddington to sell our flat and to continue working in Prestonpans. After five happy years teaching at Preston Tower Primary School, I am delighted to now be working at Firth Primary School in the village of Finstown. We thank God for His care, provision and timings.

Stromness is a very familiar place to us. My grandfather was from Orkney and grew up in Kirkwall (the 'big town!'). Previously, our family lived on the Isles of Sanday and Eday (dating back to the earliest records). When my grandpa became the manager of the Bank of Scotland in Stromness, my dad spent many happy years growing up in the lovely harbour town. Fraser and I, as well as my mum and dad, adore the Island and have visited countless times; yet we never expected God to call us on our very own Orkney adventure.

Whilst excited to start our new chapter, it has been a wrench saying goodbye to you all - our dear friends at the West Parish Church. We first visited the West in August 2022, shortly after we got married and moved to Haddington (from Edinburgh and Dunbar). We were overwhelmed by the warm and loving welcome we received! It was unlike any welcome we had ever experienced and we were so touched by your kindness.

We quickly realised that the West was to be our home whilst living in Haddington, and what a brilliant couple of years it has been. We cherish our time together - you have become such wonderful friends. Thank you all for your care, conversations, encouragement, prayers, baking, smiles... the list is endless! In particular, we would like to thank John, Elizabeth,

Anne and Paul for their loving friendship; and of course, Emily and Aaron - our dear pals, who blessed us with the privilege of being Godparents to our precious Godson, Moses.

We look forward to visiting and catching up with you in the future. Do let us know if you are ever up North as we would love to see you!



With many thanks and best wishes,

FRASER & HANNAH



FOR THOUGHT

On the cross and resurrection of our Lord

'Jesus did not die just to give us peace and a purpose in life;
he died to save us from the wrath of God.'

J BRIDGES

'Who delivered up Jesus to die? Not Judas, for money; not Pilate,
for fear; not the Jews, for envy; but the Father, for love!'

O WINSLOW

'All God's justice and all God's love are focused in the cross, so that it
teaches more of God and his truth than all space and time beside.'

A H STRONG

'Calvary shows how far men will go in sin,
and how far God will go for man's salvation.'

H C TRUMBULL



'It was not for societies or states that Christ died, but for me.'

C S LEWIS

'The best news the world ever had came from a graveyard.'

ANON.

'The resurrection of Christ, as the evidence of the sacrifice
of his death being accepted, and of the validity of all his claims,
is a much more decisive proof of the security of all
who trust in him than his death could be.'

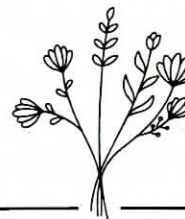
C H HODGE

'Jesus has forced open a door that had been locked since the death of
the first man. He has met, fought and beaten the King of Death.
Everything is different because he has done so.'

C S LEWIS

'We commonly say that all enter a certain house through one door,
not because all humanity enters that house but because no one
enters except through that door. It is in this sense that as all die in
Adam so do all those who live in Christ. ... Aside from the one
Mediator of God and humankind, the man Christ Jesus, there is no
other name under heaven whereby we must be saved.'

AUGUSTINE



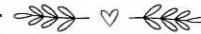
RESURRECTION HYMN (MISSION PRAISE)

STUART TOWNEND AND KEITH GETTY

1. See, what a morning, gloriously bright,
With the dawning of hope in Jerusalem;
Folded the grave clothes, tomb filled with light,
As the angels announce Christ is risen!
See God's salvation plan,
Wrought in love, borne in pain, paid in sacrifice,
Fulfilled in Christ the Man,
For He lives: Christ is risen from the dead!

2. See Mary weeping, 'Where is He laid?'
As in sorrow she turns from the empty tomb;
Hears a voice speaking, calling her name;
It's the Master, the Lord raised to life again!
The voice that spans the years,
Speaking life, stirring hope, bringing peace to us,
Will sound till He appears,
For He lives: Christ is risen from the dead!

3. One with the Father, Ancient of days,
Through the Spirit, who clothes faith with certainty,
Honour and blessing, glory and praise
To the King crowned with power and authority!
And we are raised with Him,
Death is dead, love has won, Christ has conquered;
And we shall reign with Him,
For He lives: Christ is risen from the dead!



**THE LORD BLESS YOU AND KEEP YOU;
THE LORD MAKE HIS FACE TO SHINE
UPON YOU AND BE GRACIOUS TO YOU;
THE LORD LIFT UP HIS COUNTENANCE
UPON YOU AND GIVE YOU PEACE.**