



Newsletter 68

Week beginning 11th July 2021

# CERES KEMBACK and SPRINGFIELD

Charity No: SCO1471

Website: [www.ckschurch.org](http://www.ckschurch.org)

INTERIM MODERATOR: Rev Bill Hunter 01337 832717

[whunter@churchofscotland.org.uk](mailto:whunter@churchofscotland.org.uk)

LOCUM: Rev Jane Barron 07545 904 541

[JBarron@churchofscotland.org.uk](mailto:JBarron@churchofscotland.org.uk)

SESSION CLERK: Simon Weller 01334 652056

[simonweller@btinternet.com](mailto:simonweller@btinternet.com)

---

## PRAYER

Lord, let your love fill our hearts and minds, that we may love the world with the great love that you have for the world;  
that we may love you with all our heart and mind and soul and strength, and our neighbour as ourselves.

Amen.

---

## WORSHIP

Sunday Worship, led by Rev Jane Barron, is held each week at 11.15 in Springfield Community Church. Social distancing is carefully maintained. Places are available most Sundays, but in order to make sure of one of the twenty-four seats, please phone 01334 652 056.

A zoom service is conducted every Sunday at 10.00 am by the Rev. Bill Hunter with the congregation at Howe of Fife. All are welcome. Joining details are:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/2794034482?pwd=MzRRcHpSd29TWUN1QkdMNXp6MnRsUT09#success>

Meeting ID 279 403 4482

Passcode: 5963

Season of Pentecost

Sunday, 11th July, 2021

Ceres, Kemback & Springfield Parish Church

Musical Welcoming Kate Doig & Sheena Sturrock

Call to Worship

Laudate Omnes Gentes, Laudate Dominum

Welcome and Notices

Hymn 189 Be still, for the presence of the Lord

Prayers of Approach & The Lord's Prayer

A Musical Reflection:

Kate Doig & Sheena Sturrock

Amos 7 vv 7 - 15

Hymn 358 The great love of God is revealed the son

St Mark 6 vv 14 - 29

Hymn 363 We have a gospel to proclaim

Prayers of Thanksgiving and for Others

Hymn 608 Spirit of truth and grace

Benediction

A Musical Sending Out

Kate Doig & Sheena Sturrock

---

Prayers of Approach

15 Christian churches and organisations across the country, including the Church of Scotland, have co-signed the letter calling for prayer.

Scottish Christians have been continuing to answer the call to pray at the same time each week, and the Moderator of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland, Lord Wallace, is taking part alongside them.

Let us pray:

God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,

You adopt us as Your children

And include us within Your purposes.

May we find our place in the world and purpose for our lives

As we respond to Your gracious initiative in Christ.

Lord, in Your mercy,

Hear our prayer.

God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,  
You adopt us as Your children  
And offer to us forgiveness.  
May we know the healing power of forgiveness  
And offer forgiveness according to the measure that we have been forgiven.  
Lord, in Your mercy,  
Hear our prayer.

God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,  
You adopt us as Your children  
And make known Your intention  
To gather together all things in heaven and earth.  
May our lives on earth reflect the life of the world that is to come.  
Lord, in Your mercy,  
Hear our prayer.

God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,  
You adopt us as Your children  
And make known to us the word of truth.  
May we always speak according to the truth  
And may our words reflect the One who came to us full of grace and truth.  
Lord, in Your mercy,  
Hear our prayer.

God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,  
You adopt us as Your children  
And seal us with the promised Holy Spirit  
May we rediscover our place in the world and renew the purpose of our lives  
As we receive the gracious gift of Your Spirit.  
Lord, in Your mercy,  
Hear our prayer.

Signed by:

Lord Wallace, Moderator of the General Assembly, Church of Scotland

Most Rev. Leo Cushley, Archbishop of St. Andrews and Edinburgh, Roman Catholic Church

Most Rev. Mark Strange, Primus, on behalf of the College of Bishops, Scottish Episcopal Church

Rev. Dr David Miller, Moderator, United Free Church of Scotland

Rev. Neil MacMillan, Moderator, Free Church of Scotland

Rev. Paul Whittle, Moderator, United Reformed Church (Scotland)

Rev. Martin Hodson, General Director, Baptist Union of Scotland

Rev. Mark Slaney, District Chair, Methodist Church (Scotland)

Rev. Thomas R. Wilson, Chair, Congregational Federation in Scotland

Lt. Col. Carol Bailey, Secretary for Scotland, Salvation Army

Adwoa Bittle, Religious Society of Friends (Quakers)

Rev. Ruth Turner, District Superintendent, British Isles North District, Church of the Nazarene

Pastor Chris Gbenle, Provincial Pastor, Province of Scotland, Redeemed Christian Church of God

Bishop Francis Alao, Church of God (Scotland)/Minority Ethnic Churches Together in Scotland (MECTIS)

Rev Fred Drummond, Director, Evangelical Alliance (Scotland)

Homily Truth and Power - Don't Mix them up!

My Grandpa was on HMS Royal Oak in the First World War and as a man of that generation he was very good with his hands ... he was always showing me how to do things ... whittling wood was one such, and one day he gave me a pen knife to my parents' horror!

Another thing he gave me was a plumb line ... I vaguely remember a piece of thick string attached to a small heavy object ... I can hear him saying, Now Jane ... this is called a plumb line ... the weight at the end keeps the string absolutely straight and it's a good way for measuring the straightness of things ... and this is how you must live your life ... to be straight as a dye, and always play a straight bat ...

As you can see it worked, because as you all know, I'm perfect !

When we come to stories like this on a Sunday morning I often wonder why the church isn't packed to the rafters with people wanting to hear a good story ... In fact it's such a good story steeped in good storytelling shockers as would rival the greatest soap opera ... Phil and Kat from Eastenders not to mention Deidri and Ken from Coronation Street could barely compete with the sheer human licentiousness going on in Mark's story - and that's saying something especially for the Mitchell brothers - I know that and I don't even watch Eastenders! To-day's story harnesses the key themes which make for the best John Grisham thriller - always offering visceral commentaries on what's going on in society - and the worst of seventies' indulgences - remember Dallas and Dynasty?

... this morning we've been subjected to a pot pourri as theologian Douglas Hall writes, of sexual lust, seduction, greed, political ambition, scandal and murder ... which he goes on to write has proved, an endless inspiration for artists, writers ancient and modern ... Titian, Caravaggio and Gustave Moreau among others

painted the scenes from Mark's story ... Oscar Wilde wrote a famous play about it called Salome and you may recall Richard Strauss used this as a basis for his very successful opera, and included a scene with Salome kissing the severed head ... Ken Russell and Billy Wilder incorporated it into films and possibly no other aspect, from the Passion of Christ, has provided greater stimulation for the artistic imagination ...

There's a danger here, though as with any great storytelling, that the real meaning is overwhelmed, lost even ... I wonder out of the hundreds of millions of people who went to cinemas around the world to watch the Lord of the Rings trilogy know that the reason J. R. R. Tolkien wrote his epic work was to bring hope to millions of

people who weren't attending church in the time when Nazis were swarming across Europe ... how many knew it was written as a story of hope to mirror and parallel the Gospel hope which Tolkien knew millions were missing out on by not attending church ... most people I suspect believe the Lord of the Rings is simply a marvellous fantasy highlighting themes of good and evil through the creation of the most colourful characters ranging from the elves and the hobbits to the orcs and dark wizards ...

If we're not careful we'll leave church today thinking the same, this is a fantastic story and either miss entirely, or be left in wonder at its meaning ... and of course there's a theology in here which bears scrutiny ... a theology which speaks to the human condition, and in turn, to us ...

I'd like to suggest to you that two great themes here are truth versus power ... truth versus power played out in the struggle between John the Baptizer and the puppet King ... and in examining these themes it's worth noting that human beings are complicated creatures, and often not clear cut ...

We may like to cast Herod as the evil character, the out and out villain but he's more complicated than that ... for example at the beginning of the story we're told that he likes to listen to John the Baptist ... yes the forces of lust and power seeking are in him but there's also something in him that yearns for the things John talks about ... Douglas Hall says remember when Paul writes, I find that when I want to do what is good, evil lies close at hand ... I delight in the Law of God in my inner self but I see in my members another law at war with the law of my mind making me captive to the sin that dwells in my members. Wretched man that I am! (Romans 7 vv 21 - 24) Paul knows he yearns to be a good man after Christ, but that sometimes he's not ...

And then there's John the Baptist ... on the face of it isn't he the good guy, the doomed hero who falls prey to the evil puppet king Herod? Oh it were that simple ... Douglas Hall draws our attention to the fact that both mother and daughter, Herodias and Salome are fatefully drawn to John ... why does Mark go to such lengths to

describe their attraction to John? They're quite obsessed if we look at the text ... and remember this is scripture, so everything we're reading and everything in it is messaging ... it's a constant immersion in the laws governing human nature and human behaviour ...

I've come across a few theologians over the years who wonder at Herodias and Salome both being so taken with John and it's worth considering how heroic, how attractive John made himself ... he wouldn't be the first person to fall prey to his own charm ... he was clearly charismatic and drew crowds to him ... his reputation as a powerful man who had a lot of influence went before him ... Herod admired him for his eloquence and his ability to turn heads and make people think ... John wouldn't have been the first charismatic leader to make the most of his strong personality and ability to attract people in numbers ... Perhaps I'm reaching, but if John had been an unattractive figure would the women, depicted as they are have been so obsessed?

I offer the view that Douglas Hall's critique of John the Baptist is less about de-riding his character for the sake of it, and all about pointing to a truth, which we can all fall victim to which is that none of us are perfect and we all are shaded with dark and light .... John was working for God, he was promoting Jesus ... if John can fall prey to the temptations of power so can we all, and I think Paul knew that and fought against it ... I'd like to share with you a story from my own experience ...

Over the years I've worked with many congregations ... and I can say the following because as you all know, I am plumb line perfect - not!

I came across someone who ran a Bible Study group and several other things in congregational life ... a pillar of that church and what is sometimes called a Senior Elder- a position which doesn't exist in the Church of Scotland ... she ran the Study Group, she worked hard for the church ... if we'd been paying her by the hour we couldn't have afforded her because she did so much for her church ... and that was part of the problem ... perhaps here we glimpse what may have crept into John the Baptist's thinking ... because exerting such influence, having such power, knowing people are looking to you and enjoying the position these bring can draw a person, even a person of faith into the darkness of entitlement and awful assumption ... because this person began to influence others, and in tight knit groups would question others' behaviour and would often be rude and unfriendly to new people she thought didn't fit in what was rapidly becoming her church ... We had a conversation about just whose church the church is ... and it doesn't belong to one person or a small coterie of gatekeepers ... its open for everyone ... those born and bred, those off the street ....it is the Church of Jesus Christ who constantly chose the company of outcasts and so-called misfits ...

We're all made up of dark and light ... if a writer, be it soap opera, Shakespeare or Gospel creates a one dimensional character which is only good or bad we know it's fiction ... we all fall prey to shades of grey and sometimes worse especially when we're tired, feeling a loss of identity, when we're frightened and when we think we've found a purpose in life and grab it a little too enthusiastically which tips into what we see today in both Herod and John ... truth and power can get awfully confused, and it can happen to any of us, either at home, at work and in congregational life ...

Thank God for great stories of faith ... yes they show us how to live well with and by the power of the Holy Spirit ... they also hold uncomfortable mirrors and ask us to have the courage to look at ourselves ... these mirrors are held up as opportunities to see where truth and power are working in our thinking and in our doing ... these mirrors may be uncomfortable but they're meant kindly, and by the healing power of Spirit may gentle the storms out of us, exorcise those devils out of us, and as Paul prayed allow us to let go of the wrong things ... to let go, and as they say, Let God .... Let go, and let God ...

Amen .... and thanks be to God for the power, the gift and even the uncomfortable the mirror that is the Gospel ...

---

## **INTIMATIONS**

We have been granted permission to open Ceres and Kemback churches for worship, and it is hoped to hold weekly services in Springfield, and fortnightly services in Kemback and Ceres from later in August. Three volunteers have come forward to help prepare Ceres, and two for Kemback. More help would be make opening much easier.