

St Augustine's Dumbarton



the new look

Issue 50 March 2011

£1.00

Wanted



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Do you know any of the above persons? Police in Blackpool and other far-flung European destinations are anxious to know their whereabouts. Approach them with caution!

*From
Kenny...*



It doesn't seem any time since Christmas, and here we are preparing for Lent! It was with deep regret that I didn't manage to get out the February issue of the Magazine, and my apologies that some of the material here is rather dated.

The massive array of bugs that have been flying around didn't leave me untouched, and I had a rather depressing February trying to fight off the germs and trying to get going again! Thank God for Lemsips!

However, it wasn't just the bugs and my inability to do much that was depressing! Some of the news stories in the paper and on the telly have made for a rather depressing start to the year. All we seem to be seeing are redundancies and more redundancies, cut-backs to services affecting the poorest and most disadvantaged, and bankers collecting their bonuses again.

However, enter David Cameron, with big talk about the "Big Society", and how "we are all in this together". Aye! Right!

The Big Society is an interesting concept. Basically, we are being asked to take on board the social welfare and care within our local communities. We have to take power into our own hands and start being Community again. We need to look after our own patch, but where is the money going to come from to do this?

There will certainly be plenty of potential volunteers, as tens of thousands of Local Authority workers will be on the dole. Add to that those in the building sector who are facing massive job losses, and those working for various charities that can no longer function without funding, so they are facing unemployment too! We need to pay all these folk benefits, but we'll cross that bridge when we come to it.

Carers-R-Us who meet monthly in St Aug's were going to fold last week, and have been saved basically because I told them we will continue to support and back them free of charge. That's just one group! In effect, the Big Society is just mince, if all that it

does is cut central budgets and tell us to take responsibility, without the wherewithal to do it.

However, we have what we have, and we need more than ever, as a Church, to respond to need in our community. Our Community Hall will possibly have to become even more a gift to our community rather than a source of income, and churches throughout the land will need to face up to that reality and the fact that Christians are going to be called on more and more to volunteer and help fill the gaps created by the withdrawal of services.

I suppose The Big Society will help us all to re-evaluate our faith in practical terms and respond to need in our communities in ways that we have never thought of before. It will certainly be asking individuals to give up more of their time to keep the boat afloat in many of our towns and cities!

Are our parishes ready for that challenge? Certainly the Diocese are going to be challenging parishes, that are no more than Holy Clubs, to get involved in their communities, and I will probably take a part in that. However, there will be the temptation in St Augustine's to pat ourselves on the back and point to all the various ways we are already deeply involved in care in the community. However, we will need to look again at our life and mission and ask if we could do better.

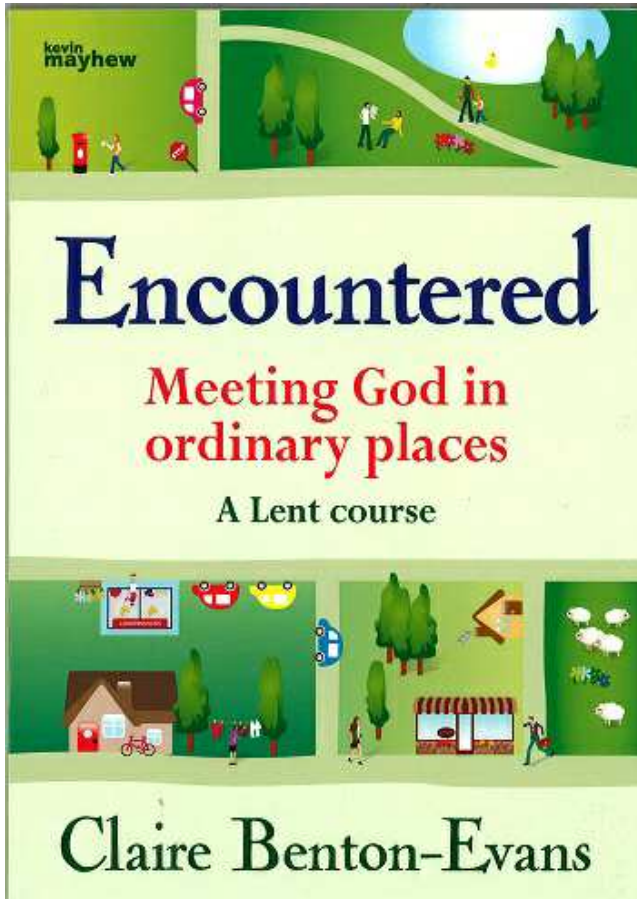
The Church in Society Diocesan Action Group will be encouraging us to map out our community to try to identify needs that are not being met, and try to respond to these. That will be an interesting exercise, and one that we will embark on in the spring after the Scottish Election and the dust has died down a bit after Council cuts have been finally made!

Anne Tomlinson is coming for a day during Lent, (April 3rd), when we can look at what we have done since our last meeting with her, and start to plan a bigger and better future. It is important that as many of us as possible can stay on in the hall on that Sunday.

It is easy to become "comfortable", and I feel that, as a parish, we have become a little too "comfortable" of late. Facts have to be faced. Attendances are down and newcomers are not committing, our hall is working well, but could be better, much better, and financially we all think we are OK. However, as a parish, we are indeed all in this together, and we need to make plans for our future, and see how we can be most effective in this Big Society!

Kenny

Lent Course 2011



This year we will be looking, through Lent, at a delightful wee book called “Encountered”. However, this is a wee course with a difference with lots of input from the participants, on a “show-and-tell” basis.

We make the correct assumption that God reveals Himself to us in the ordinary, every-day things we do, and it’s through the “ordinary” that God still speaks to us as Jesus did in the Gospels.

The sessions, which last for an hour, need a wee bit of preparation on your part before you come, it will be well worth your time.

As Jesus met fishermen on the shore going about their daily life, still he meets commuters in the rainy car park of the Park and Ride, offering them a Starbucks and a bacon roll! At this ordinary time in an ordinary place, Christ still comes to meet us, quietly, where we are.

If you have never come to a Lent Group before, why not give it a try? It can actually be fun and we can always learn something about our faith or where God is to be found in our ordinary lives!

The weekly sessions are self-contained, so it doesn’t matter if you can’t come to them all or even only one!

Sessions are to be held on Tuesday evenings in the hall, at 7.30pm, beginning on 15th March. All are very welcome!



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THE SCIENCE DELUSION

On 4th March it will be 60 years since I was confirmed. This was a big festive event with more than 80 candidates- confirmation in the Lutheran Church in Germany is seen as a social event, a coming of age.

During the service each candidate was given a Bible verse as a kind of motto for his or her life. Mine was: "I will not let you go unless you bless me" (Genesis 32, 26). It has been a good companion to me: whenever there was doubt, I stuck to it in the belief that God had put his finger on me. And moments of doubt there have been many.

In the Guardian last Saturday (5/2/2011) Mark Vernon wrote in Face to Face: We live in an age intolerant of doubt. Communicating uncertainty is nigh impossible across fields as diverse as politics, religion and science...And yet, at the same time only a fool believes the future is certain. "And who doesn't fear that most shadowy figure of our times, the fundamentalist- with their deadly steadfast convictions?"

The tremendous success of science, and the transformation of our lives by technology, screens us from many of the troubling uncertainties that our ancestors must have been so practised in handling.

Critics of religion like Richard Dawkins are wrong when they want to replace faith by science, because science is nothing else but a belief with good reason In his book, the God Delusion, Dawkins criticises religion as an irrational delusion which needs to be replaced by science.

Do we really have the chance today to make faith superfluous through science? Of course, nobody would want to go back to a time before the enlightenment. We mistrust superstition, but science and our knowledge of the universe is limited and we learn to welcome the unknown. No scientist can e.g. do all experiments himself which are behind the theories of modern physics. Each Theory explains a fraction of the world but only under the condition that we believe in its truth There is no final definite proof. All science is an edifice of hypotheses, suppositions, something assumed for the purpose of argument.

That is quite a lot: it means following Kant's call to 'have the courage to use reason'. The knowledge of serious science is never absolutely true but a combination of diverse observations and conclusions. This demonstrates the rationality of scientific methods but is not completely different from faith.

It is a well reasoned faith, but not certain, not absolute: that would be a science delusion. The so called 'verificanism', the idea that you can prove truth, has

failed, according to all theory of knowledge, only the theory of 'falsifiability' by Karl Popper, the idea that you can refute, disprove an opinion has a chance.

But how can we call knowledge what can later turn out to be false. Theories explain the world, but only under the condition that we believe in their truth. The capability to learn is the advantage that science has over faith. Science does not replace faith but replaces it with a different kind of faith.

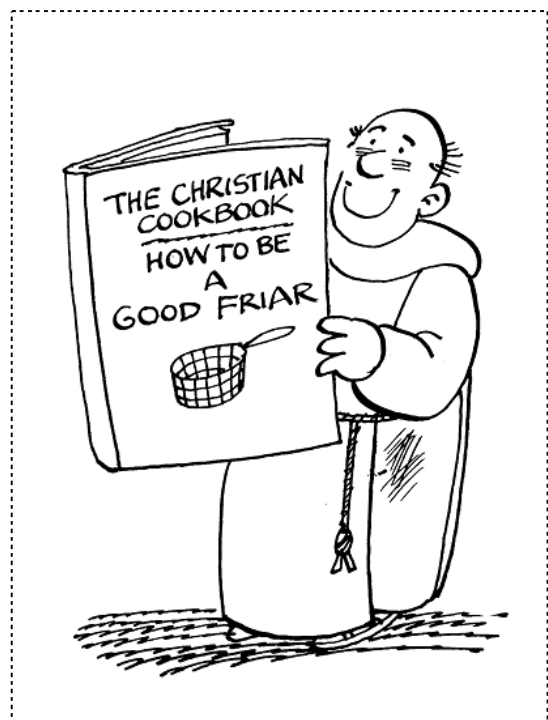
Dawkins' confronts a naïve kind of belief in science with a naïve kind of faith. And it may well be that the certainty that faith can offer keeps human beings from wanting to know more.

Mark Vernon quotes his physics tutor, Carlos Frenk, who is one of the world's leading experts on 'dark matter'. He has a poster on his office door, reading: 'Dark matter- does it exist?' "He has forged a career out of navigating the terra incognita of the cosmos".

In religion, the parallel is called 'via negativa', or negative way, essential to theology as 'falsifiability' is to science because of the subject matter : God- False gods must be exposed, idols must be smashed, a negative process, known in religion as 'entering the cloud of unknowing'.

But finally, when an individual can no longer say no to the true God, they find what is known as faith. Religion must rely 'on the fullness of human experience: evidence can't take you very far because the divine is darker even than dark matter.

Brigitte Williams (based on: Mark Vernon, Guardian 5/2/2011, and on Peter Finke, Wissenswahn (Science Delusion) Publik-Forum 3, 10/2/2010)



Christian Aid Coffee Morning

Saturday March 5th at Riverside from 10-12
Home baking, raffle, table top sale . Entry £2

Lent Lunches

These will take place on Thursdays during Lent from March 17th to April 14th from 12 to 1 pm at Riverside hall. Lunch of soup, bread and cheese and tea/coffee are available for a measly £2.

We are responsible for making the soup and serving on April 7th with Dalreoch UF. If you can make soup or help, please see Tim.

Parish Walks

MARCH 12TH

LOMOND SHORES - DUCK BAY VIA
CAMERON HOUSE

APRIL 16TH

LUSS VILLAGE WALK AND PILGRIMAGE FIELD

MAY 7TH

ABERFOYLE - LOCHAN SPLING

JUNE 11TH

KIPPEN

JULY 9TH

OVERTOUN - REOPENED PATHS

AUGUST 13TH

GARTOCHARN - LOCH LOMOND

SEPT 10TH

CROFTAMIE - KILLEARN

OCT 8TH

STRATHBLANE - LENNOXTOWN

All walks are fairly level and from 3 to 6 miles. Dogs, weans and friends, under control, are welcome. We usually start at 1.30 pm and share cars. Details will be posted each month. For more information contact Rosemary or Tim. Put the dates in

your diary now! Hopefully The Lord will give us plenty sunshine to enjoy this year!

Amnesty International

The local group have sent 191 cards to prisoners of conscience in 30 countries. We wish to thank St Augustine's for hosting one of the sessions and the support of church members, also Kenny for providing the excellent cards of local scenes.

Perhaps, some day we will meet some former prisoner wandering around Levensgrove Park looking for the vista which cheered him up in a lonely cell !

Circle

There is good news this month, inasmuch as Janet Rae has been given funding to continue for another year. This will include training Social Work students and perhaps expanding into other areas of need.

Circle, and their work in St Augustine's, is therefore going to grow a bit, and it is being proposed that they may take over the Upper Room in church, with access from the side door in the High Street.

I'm hoping Janet will give us an update in the near future!

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St James the Least of All..

Here the elderly Anglo-catholic Rector, Eustace, continues his correspondence to Darren, his nephew, a low-church curate recently ordained...

The Rectory

St James-the-Least

My dear Nephew Darren

The disasters you inflict on church life are made the worse because they are so well meaning. I appreciated your concern when you heard one of our parishioners had slipped on a gravestone. Your desire to help was entirely commendable; sending your own church's health and safety officer to give us some advice was kindly-meant. But the thousand page report was not welcome. If we implemented your officer's suggestions, life would become unbearably safe.

St. James the Least has survived perfectly well for the last 600 years without gutter cleaning inspections, path degreasing and electrical safety certificates, so I think we may survive a little longer without them. As far as I am aware, the only disaster to hit us was when Bonnie Prince Charlie's soldiers stabled their horses in the nave – which I suspect a few of our oldest members still clearly remember.

The shock the sidesmen, we do not yet trust women in this role, sometimes get when switching on the lights occurs only occasionally, is relatively mild and soon over – and if it happens when preparing for the 8am Service, helps to wake them up. The fact that the weight of Duke of Clumber's marble sarcophagus is slowly detaching the south aisle from the rest of the church is very slow – and the pews in that area are used only once a year when his relations visit from America to commemorate his death at Agincourt – which is probably just beyond remembrance of the oldest of our congregation.

Leaks from the ceiling in the north aisle are solved with the row of buckets – and even you must concede that the fungi on the oak beams look really rather attractive when the sun catches them. The sapling growing out of the spire is certainly an issue – although it looks so attractive in Spring when in blossom. As for our fire extinguishers, they were serviced when my predecessor-but-two was in office, and I have the certificate to prove it.

Do thank your health and safety officer for all his work and tell him we will bear his recommendations in mind. Also tell him I was so sorry he slipped and broke his leg as he was entering your own church last Sunday. If only he had been encased in bubble wrap, it would never have happened. Perhaps you could put that on the agenda of your next health and safety meeting.

I hear your Bishop has introduced staff appraisal for all the clergy who work for your Diocese, including yourself. It seems a very dangerous innovation; as far as I am concerned, ministry is only successful when parishioners, and Bishops have no idea what the clergy get up to.

I imagine that he will look at the number of services you take in a year. Funerals can only be increased if you resort to murder, which is likely to be frowned on – although I have often been sorely tempted during endless vestry meetings. Perhaps if you take a flask of water wherever you go and if you find a baby unattended, you could resort to a spontaneous baptism. That would get your numbers up, even if returning mothers may marvel at the highly localised and brief shower that seemed to have taken place over the pram.

He is bound to want to see congregations increasing. Get your youth group to make cardboard cut-outs to place strategically in the pews, or maybe some of the local dress shops could loan you their mannequins for the day – preferably clothed, or it may make newcomers think that nudity is an essential part of worship at your church. That would be a shame if it discouraged them, but even worse if it encouraged others. With the electronic equipment your church has, holograms projected around the church would surely not be impossible; that way, it would look even more lifelike if the equipment made their heads appear to droop in sleep during the sermon.

Visiting targets are easily increased. Compile a list of when parishioners will be out and call on those days; a card through their letterbox will prove to your Bishop that you were there. Should they happen to be in, mention that you are collecting for the fabric fund or that you want to discuss their prayer lives and they will immediately find a reason why they must excuse themselves for an important appointment. You are then free to move on to clock another visit.

And that brings me to your prayer times. There is a fine line between silent meditation and peaceful sleep. If you learn to take those 15 minute post-lunch naps in a kneeling position, they can then be logged as devotion, thus increasing your daily total. Trying to prove the effectiveness of your prayer life by claiming coincidences as miraculous answers may be a little presumptuous; you could just mention such things and then adopt a look that says you are far too humble to take any credit. That way, you earn double points.

But you must record everything you claim – because next year, further imagination will have to be applied to quantify another year of breathless success.

Your loving uncle,

Eustace

ROTAS FOR MARCH 2011

Sunday March 6th

11am Eucharist.

Readers: Tim Rhead & Evelyn O'Neill.
Intercessions: Margaret Hardie.
Chalice: Vernon Perrin & Janette Barnes.
Sidespersons: Ronnie Blaney & Margaret Swan.

Sunday March 13th

11am Eucharist.

Readers: Maggie Wallace & Gavin Elder.
Intercessions: Linda Macaulay.
Chalice: Barbara Barnes & Tim Rhead.
Sidespersons: Linda Jenkinson & Vernon Perrin.

Sunday March 20th

11am Eucharist.

Readers: Morag O'Neill & Janette Barnes.
Intercessions: Margot Rhead.
Chalice: Maggie Wallace & Margaret Hardie..
Sidespersons: Chrissie Ashman & Roberta Mailley

Sunday March 27th

11am Eucharist.

Readers: Linda Macaulay & Barbara Barnes. .
Intercessions: Evelyn O'Neill
Chalice: Sharon Rowatt & Janette Barnes.
Sidespersons: Roberta Mailley & David Ansell..

Flower Rota

Only one week in March for flowers, then none for the season of Lent.

Wk ending March 5th.

Linda Macaulay & Moira McGown

ROTAS

At the moment, we are rather thin on the ground for Sidespersons. This is an important duty, very often the Sidesperson is the first welcomer a visitor meets. I'm sure most of us could do this. Any volunteers welcome. Please speak to Maggie or Kenny. There is always room for more volun-

teers for Rotas. If you would like to read lessons, lead intercessions or be a sidesperson on a Sunday, please speak to Kenny, Tim or Maggie. There isn't a test or an audition. Just be able to speak clearly, be yourself and smile!

Pentecost target for Growth Strategy

PENTECOST will see the launch of **Glasgow & Galloway's Growth Strategy**. It's a framework that will lead to each charge setting itself a **Mission Action Plan (MAP)** for growth in six **Areas**:

- Prayer and spirituality*
- Learning and discipleship*
- Missional leadership*
- Numerical growth/welcome and integration*
- Imaginative outreach into local communities*
- Children and other young people.*

The aim is to have facilitators in each region to help individual churches draw up their own plans. But the scope of the Strategy is not confined to congregational level.

There will be changes at diocesan level too in areas such as recruitment, finance and communication.

Action Networks will be aligned to the six growth areas. And—importantly—regional growth funds will be available too.

The Strategy working group consists of a representative from each of the seven regions, together with Ministry Development officer Revd Dr Anne Tomlinson and the Dean, Very Revd Ian Barcroft.

DIOCESAN Synod will meet in Bishop Court, Holy Trinity & St Barnabas, Paisley, on Saturday 5 March, 9.30am-5pm. This is the annual meeting of diocesan clergy and lay representatives. Please remember Synod in your prayers

May Casey

It is still difficult to write anything following the tragic death of May in February. She will be greatly missed and all we can do is assure Cha, Cheryl, Steven and the family our support and prayers.

A beautiful lavabo and jug have been bought in her memory, and will be blessed shortly at the 11am service. May she rest in peace and rise in glory.



Some Pics from the Christmas Party on this page, not particularly doing justice to the decorum of Ricky or Gavin! Baby John sleeps through it all, and one little girl wonders what Santa has brought!

On the next page, Mad Hatters at New Year practicing for the March Event maybe, and some dreadful Scenes from the Scottish Night at the end of January!





Smile-Lines

What now?

Today, I was in the bathroom at a popular coffee chain. Someone had written "What Would Jesus Do?" on the wall. Another person had added, directly underneath: "Wash His hands." Then a third person wrote, "And your feet."

What the teacher says and what the teacher means....

If you have ever wondered what the teachers think of your child....

Your son James has a remarkable ability in gathering needed information from his classmates. (He was caught cheating on an exam.)

Karen is an endless fund of energy and viability. (your hyperactive monster can't stay put for five minutes.)

Fantastic imagination! (He's one of the biggest liars I have ever met).

Margie exhibits a casual, relaxed attitude to school, indicating that high expectations don't intimidate her. (The lazy thing hasn't done one assignment all term.)

Sue is a real athlete, with superior hand-eye coordination. (The little creep stung me with a rubber band from 15 feet away.)

Nick thrives on interaction with his peers. (Your son needs to shut up and start working.)

Your daughter's greatest asset is her demonstrative public discussions. (Classroom lawyer! Why is it that every time I explain an assignment she creates a class argument.)

John enjoys the thrill of engaging challenges with his peers. (He's a bully.)

An adventurous nature lover who rarely misses opportunities to explore new territory. (Your daughter was caught skipping class in order to wade in the fish pond.)

Beautiful

The English test had only one question: "Write an essay on 'The Most Beautiful Thing I Ever Saw.'" One of the students finished his essay in less than a minute. It read in its entirety: "The most beautiful thing I ever saw was just too beautiful for words." He got the only A in the class.

What? When?

What do we want? PROCRASTINATION!
When do we want it? NEXT WEEK!

So you think English is easy?

Read on:

1) The bandage was wound around the wound.

- 2) The farm was used to produce produce.
- 3) We must polish the Polish furniture.
- 4) The soldier decided to desert his dessert in the desert.
- 5) Since there is no time like the present, he thought it was time to present the present .
- 6) A sea bass was painted on the head of the bass drum.
- 7) The insurance was invalid for the invalid.
- 8) They were too close to the door to close it.
- 9) After going out after having done some sewing, a sewer fell into a sewer.
- 10) Upon seeing the tear in the painting I shed a tear.

What children think about angels

My angel is my grandma who died last year. She got a big head start on helping me while she was still down here on earth. - Ashley, age 9

Some of the angels are in charge of helping heal sick animals and pets. And if they don't make the animals get better, they help the child get over it. - Vicki , age 8

What I don't get about angels is why, when someone is in love, they shoot arrows at them.
- Sarah, age 7

Dear God...

A little boy's prayer: "Dear God, please take care of my daddy and my mummy and my sister and my brother and my doggy and me. Oh, and please take care of yourself, God. If anything happens to you, we're gonna be in a big mess."

Hymns we sing?

The Laodicean church is described in the Bible in the book of The Revelation as being lukewarm. If the Laodiceans were to have a hymnal, suitable for their conviction, here's a list of some of the hymns it may contain:

Just as I Am, with Lots of Excuses
Make Suggestions to Me, My God and King
My Hope Is Built on Nothing Much
Not My Life - Let Me Be
O Come, All Ye Wishy Washy
O Come Let Us Ignore Him.
Oh, for a Couple of Tongues to Sing
Part of the Way with Jesus
Pillow of Ages, Fluffed for Me

Fishy

The minister greeted a young lad at the church door one Sunday morning, and was impressed when the lad explained that though his father was going fishing, his father had insisted that his son come to church that morning. "And why is that, my boy?" The lad replied, "Dad said he didn't have enough bait for both of us."

Criticism

People like criticism - just keep it positive and flattering.

'Wait Till I Tell You.....'

Janette looks back on the festive season at St. Aug's and on a more peaceful January.

THE SHOW MUST GO ON - AND SO MUST THE PARTY!

Well, it started at the end of November - the 2010 big freeze! Remember the disruptions, the closures, the cancellations and the breakdowns? However, down at St. Aug's (as well as at DPT) nothing fell apart - except Roberta who's still sporting a stick! Oh, and TBag got a season ticket for the Paisley Hospital, Barbara was put on numerous anti-biotics and Chrissie missed the New Year with a bad back which was probably the result of Kenny sweeping her off her feet at the Christmas Party! Happily all are now recovering and the stick will shortly be consigned to the recycling.

It was a time for sensible people to take refuge in their homes, after stockpiling food and all the salt in ASDA. The St. Aug's stalwarts ignored the warnings 'do not travel unless your journey is strictly necessary' and got on with things, as did the DPT folk who went ahead with their Panto at which nobody in the cast missed a night. All difficulties were overcome in an effort to create a festive and lively Christmas atmosphere. In the interests of Health and Safety, our Council was attempting to close halls and venues and anything else they could get away with. But foolishness prevailed and we survived. At St. Aug's we got ready for our Christmas Party and Carol Singing which was to be held in the Church. With fingers crossed we gritted the decking, prepared the food, lit the candles and waited. Would anyone come? Oh, yes they did! Along they came - Friends, Hall Users, Weans and all those desperate for a good night out.

The party games were contested and the buffet consumed. Then Santa, looking a bit like Ricky arrived with Gavin, who had become transformed into a big elf complete with traffic cone headdress. Presents were distributed and some told Santa what they were hoping for at Christmas. In spite of the cold weather, many of the attendees actually came in party clothes while others retained the 'bulky look' with two semmits!

Then the lights were dimmed and the Carol Singing began around the tree with the illuminated crib as centre piece. The Christmas story was narrated in broad Scots between the singing. Then Sharon got the children involved in their very own story and they listened eagerly, clutching their candles. It took Linda Jenkinson until mid January to get the grease stains off the red carpet but for the atmosphere it was worth it.

Yes, our Christmas Party 2010 was an excellent event in spite of the weather.

MR INCREDIBLE TO THE RESCUE!

While rehearsing the music for the Christmas Party, St. Aug's had a visit from a thief in the night who entered at the back of the Church and ran off with one of the group's mo-

bile phones. Flash! Wham! Pow! Enter Mr. Incredible - official super hero - that was what it said on his TShirt! Out into the High Street the chase ensued until the villain was captured, sorted and the phone retrieved. See Mr Incredible live - only at St. Augustine's!

LOST AT HOGMANAY.

Alarm bells were ringing in the posh district of Kirktonhill at Hogmanay when a taxi full of desperate Golden Girls seeking the new Rectory before midnight knocked on the doors of perfect strangers in an effort to be found. It took a mobile phone call to pinpoint their exact location and a relieved taxi driver to do the rest. All this before any alcohol was consumed! Kenny and Linda were having open house at the Rectory and fortunately other parish guests experienced no such difficulty. Soon all were sipping bubbly as the old year slipped away in the never ending deep freeze. There were party games to win and as usual, those organised by Fran involved a selection of hats. The headgear in which I was supposed to look like a numpty was a hat actually worn by Fran when on the chalice the following week! Kenny tested our intellects with a quiz designed for Baby Boomers. It was unfortunate that the participants were either War Babies or Pre War babies so David Ansell answered all the questions. A delicious supper of Chicken Curry or Chilli was served by Linda accompanied by more bubbly and a selection of mouth-watering puddings. At the appropriate moment Kenny played First Foot and everyone exchanged good wishes for the new decade. By then the company was merry enough to tackle the Karaoke but no new contenders for the Music Group were identified. Happily, no complaining neighbours came knocking on the door. Then it was time for everyone to depart into the frosty night with 2011 well and truly welcomed.

NEW DINOSAURS FOUND.

In January a new species of dinosaur, the size of a parrot and with a single claw, was found deep under the earth in China. Two more dinosaurs came from the Sky - the Sky Sports Desk and caused a bigger stushie than the Bankers' Bonus Row. These two prehistoric males have brains that are incapable of recognising the intellect of women of the 21st century. They believe that the offside rule is a male only secret and a woman exists only 'to make her man's tea'. That'll be right!

THE PANDAS ARE COMING.

Our esteemed First Minister is terribly excited just now about the arrival from China of the Giant Pandas. He is trying to get them over in time for the May Elections since he needs all the votes he can get! But a local gossip has informed me that these two magnificent creatures had an acclimatising visit here already at Hogmanay and were housed in an enclosure at the back of the Christie Park in the Vale.

They are on a breeding programme and it's important that they have peace and quiet. However, it didn't take long for the Vale folk to discover that they had foreign visitors and they started visiting them every morning to throw in the remains of their previous night's Chinese 'cairry oot'. Then one morning Mr Panda awoke early and called out assertively to Mrs Panda who was, as usual, fixing her mas-cara. 'Breed, breed' he shouted, thumping his chest with his big paws, 'Breed!' Just at that a wee Valewumman hit him with a pan loaf!

HOW TO PUT THE FUN IN FUNERALS.

According to reports in the press, many people are shunning the traditional funeral and organising a celebration of the life of the deceased with balloons, bright colours, clowns, bubbles and a request to the mourners to turn up in fancy dress. Hymns are out in favour of pop songs. I've yet to witness a Fun Funeral at St. Augs but since Friends' Members will jump at any chance to wear fancy dress, the day may not be too far away when Roberta will be haunting the Charity Shops for an outfit to mourn and enjoy a sausage roll in. Other popular funeral music is 'Will You No' Come Back Again' and 'I'm No' Awa' Tae Bide Awa'. What with that and the push for euthanasia we'll soon be pre-booking the event to fit in with everyone's social life and vying with each other to have the jolliest undertakers and the best après-burial party!

WDC BUDGET CUTS

At a recent meeting in the Burgh Hall, our councillors explained their plight of having to make cuts to many council services because of the recession. Paper hankies were provided. Then they asked us to help them manage the budget and select our favourite cuts by ticking the appropriate boxes. They should have had a phone-in on an 0800 number!

Welcome to Strictly Local Government! Power to the People! We, the attendees played the game, struggling with whether to shut some Vale Toilets, reduce next year's Christmas lights, charge for school milk and cut nursery staffing schedules etc. However, we were taking too long so smiling councillors came round our tables to offer assistance. My main interest was in the new Leisure Trust which is being set up to include the Denny Civic Theatre but was obviously not on the evening's agenda. The councillor's answer to my question on its future was 'Oh, you're getting a nice new one!' Aye, he was wearing rose coloured spectacles and is a prime candidate to write next year's Panto!

HAVE YOU BEEN HACKED?

Phone hacking is constantly in the news just now and is becoming a 'must' for A list celebrities, MPs and anyone of any importance. Amongst St. Augs people who are in hacking danger is Maggie - Trustee, Alternative Lay Rep, Soup Kitchen Commander, Hall Organiser etc., etc. Indeed, an initial attempt failed when the hackers opted for late afternoon when she was in full flight on an end of day blethering and organising session -their equipment simply overheated and went into meltdown. Incidentally, the best time to ring

Maggie is three minutes before 'Neighbours' on a weekday - a quick answer is guaranteed!

A TASTE OF SCOTLAND

St. Auggie's tribute to the Bard and evening of patriotic partying was well up to standard on the last Sunday of January. Besides it helped us to forget Andy Murray and his unlucky green shirt! Our entertainers, Myra and Lennie kept everyone singing right up to the now traditional 'Star o' Rabbie Burns' at which the chorus is delivered from a height by those who can make it onto the chairs!

Linda was compere for the evening and although she did not attempt any Burns- speak, she made sure that there was a nice bottle of Scotch for the toasting and pouring onto the haggis. The old adage 'if you can't stand the heat - stay out of the kitchen' applied as soup, haggis, neeps and tatties were served with frightening rapidity. Friends' Exec members, kitchen section, will have no problem if they end up at the bad fire - they'll just arrange an event and cook something! All who ate said the meal was delicious and appreciated the hard work that went into providing it. The raffle of donated prizes was predominantly chocolates which means there are a lot of would be serious dieters in the important months prior to Spring. Get them out of the house and you won't be tempted! A healthy profit of £249 was realised and an excellent evening's entertainment had by all.

LOOK FORWARD TO.....

An early Spring with a little help from your Friends - your Friends' Executive have finally managed to organise a meeting and have come up with some sparkling ideas for future events. The Sexagesima Soiree at the end of February will only be a warm-up for The Mad Hatter's Tea-Party in March! God only knows what Fran will be wearing! She has plenty of choice!

Janette

Mad Hatters Tea-Party!

Sunday 20th March, 4 pm, you are all invited to a Mad Hatter's Tea Party in the Community Hall. There will be games, riddles, plenty of sandwiches, stolen tarts, and even a March Hare Treasure Hunt.

If you can, come dressed as a character from Alice in Wonderland. List in the hall.

Website

Morag has taken on the responsibility of updating the Parish Website with news and forthcoming events. If you would like anything highlighted, please see Morag!

This will keep our presence online a bit fresher than it has been of late, and we are grateful for her input.

Visit www.staugustinesdumbarton.co.uk

OPEN SILENCE

ST Mary's Cathedral is to open its doors to people of all faiths and none for an hour of silence. The Open Silence is an invitation to anyone who would like to experience spending up to an hour in stillness with others on a Sunday night.

Revd Cedric Blakey, Vice-Provost, explains: "It is an opportunity to be still and to draw breath. It aims to cultivate a knowledge of oneself and of God. "The Open Silence is not a service; there will be no hymns, no readings, or spoken prayers. But there will be a brief introduction and short guidance that may help some to become comfortable and centre their thoughts.

"There will be opportunity for those who wish to move around to explore different styles of silent prayer in the special space that is St Mary's Cathedral. Participants will be able to sit on chairs, pews, kneel on the heated floor or even lie down."

Christians of all denominations will be welcome, as well as those from other faith communities, and those who feel they have no faith." Cedric added: "Some may be drawn because they are experienced in meditation, and some because they have never tried it. "Some may have been attracted by the BBC series 'The Big Silence' and would like to try meditation for themselves."

Those wishing to come to The Open Silence should arrive between 7.45pm and 8pm (though the church will be open before the service of choral evensong 6.30-7.20pm and some may value just listening to, or joining in with, that experience of musical worship).

Booking is not required. There is no admission charge but a donation will be welcome to help cover the costs of this event.

Further information about silence and about prayer will be available. The Open Silence will take place 8-9pm on three Sunday evenings: 13 March, 17 April and 15 May. For more details e-mail office@thecathedral.org.uk or phone 0141 339 6691 and ask for Cedric Blakey.

Rectory Party

We know it's probably not the done thing to do during Lent, but we are having a Parish Party in The Rectory on Saturday 9th April. Linda and Kenny sometimes entertain foreign students on the HOST programme, young people who are studying in our country and far from home who want a taste of Scottish life and scenery!

They have a young American coming during this weekend and he so desperately wants to meet folk.

So, can you come to the celeidh? Bring your own poison and be entertain or even just entertain? All are welcome!

Parish Day

Anne Tomlinson is going to be with us on Sunday 3rd April for our latest Parish Day. It is going to be an important day for us and your attendance is really necessary if it's going to be successful.

Some of you may remember a big fall-out last year when we were discussing where we were going in the Parish during a Lent Group! We fell out because it was important stuff and it mattered to us!



Where are we going? Why have numbers fallen? What can be done better? What new stuff do we need to contemplate, and what needs to be revisited?

Anne always brings a fresh approach and an entertaining one, and we are lucky to bag her for a Lenten Sunday!

If you do nothing else in your Lenten discipline, then please do this. Stay on after the service, have a soup and sandwich lunch, and help us to plan for the future! We will be finished by 4pm. We are all in this together!

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Bishop's Lent Appeal 2010

Mercy Ships

When retired art teacher Pat Duncan gave a talk last year to our Galloway Regional Council, she could scarcely have dreamed every member of the diocese would soon be encouraged to support the charity she loves.

Mercy Ships, an international Christian charity that provides free medical and humanitarian care to some of the world's poorest people, including The Gambia, is the choice for 2011's Bishop's Lent Appeal.

Faith-based volunteers from over 40 nations give up their time to bring hope and healing to thousands of people, serving on board the *Africa Mercy*, the world's largest charity hospital ship.

Pat (59), from Twynholm, near Kirkcudbright, is one such volunteer. She has volunteered aboard the *Africa Mercy* three times as a dining room steward and launderer. She spends her time back in the UK fundraising and spreading the word about the work of Mercy Ships.

In the next few weeks the *Africa Mercy* will arrive in Sierra Leone to begin a 10-month outreach - as the country celebrates its 50th year of independence. An advanced team have already spread the word across the country to let people know the ship is coming. Recently pre-screening days have taken place to arrange surgeries for over 7,000 people.

The *Africa Mercy* has been converted from a Danish rail ferry to a state-of-the-art hospital ship, with six operating theatres, X-ray facilities, a CT scanner, a pharmacy and a laboratory. As well as housing 450 volunteers, the vessel has capacity for 78 in-patients with four wards and a small intensive care unit.

Pat says she is 'aching' to join the team again in October when she'll start her next three-month stint aboard the ship. She said: "Mercy Ships is an incredible organisation, I feel like it is my mission from God to help others who are less fortunate and give them the chance for a better life. It is my faith and belief in God that keeps me coming back to help others."

"We work alongside people who are experts in their field - mariners, nurses, engineers and surgeons - and they all come motivated to do their absolute best, not because of financial remuneration as there

isn't any, but because they are passionate about what Mercy Ships is doing," she added.

"Living and working on the *Africa Mercy* is a completely different way of life. There can be moments of great sadness when we cannot help a patient but there are also so many moments of joy when lives are saved."

In addition to the dramatic transforming surgery on board the *Africa Mercy*, medical and dental teams establish land-based field clinics carrying out free vaccination programmes, dental care, minor operations and medical screening, as well as supporting the training of local doctors and nurses. Mercy Ships also runs education programmes in hygiene, nutrition, basic health care (including AIDS prevention) and microenterprises to generate income for the poor.

Over the last 30 years Mercy Ships has treated more than 230,000 people in village medical clinics, performed more than 41,000 surgeries, 205,000 dental treatments and completed over 1,000 community development projects focusing on water and sanitation, education, infrastructure development and agriculture.

Sierra Leone is one of the world's least developed countries. According to the World Health Organisation, there are only two doctors per 100,000 people. The physical conditions at most medical facilities and hospitals are inadequate for even the most basic of care.

Without access to quality health care, many people are needlessly suffering and dying from curable medical conditions. As a result, almost one in five Sierra Leonean children die before reaching age five.

For more information contact Susie Hope, Fundraising Manager Scotland, on 01899 830 475 or visit www.mercyships.org.uk.

Lent Boxes will be available to take away before Ash Wednesday, (9th March), and we hope you take one and return it on Easter Day.

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Gambia Update

After Kenny's visit in November, there was an interesting proposal on the table. GETSuk, who provide us with the admin needed to run the school in the Gambia, in the person of the magnificent Helen Touray, were just about to take over a new site close to London Corner. The project already had a Nursery Block, and a Skills Centre and Women's Project up and running.

There was the suggestion that if we took over the Nursery aspect of this project, Sunrise, then GETSuk would build a Lower Basic School, (Primary), on the extensive grounds available. This was a very tempting offer and Kenny was extremely impressed by the plans and the commitment of the GETS people he met.

However, after a meeting in Bristol in January it became clear that we would have to raise £15,000 to complete and upgrade the Nursery Block, but also that GETSuk were no-

where near finding the money to begin building the proposed Lower Basic element. With no clear plans on the table we reluctantly withdrew.

The school in London Corner is running well, with a complete change of staff following Kenny's visit. The new Teacher-in-Charge, Sulayman Saïdy, is a young energetic man with lots of experience and enthusiasm. It is a joy to read his reports, and soon we will hopefully be able to hook up with him for Skype conferences. (If you don't know what Skype is ask your children!)

Our resources are at last being used properly, and little nig-gles have been ironed out.

Fran is visiting in March, with Faye, and Linda and Kenny hope to visit in May to negotiate things like salaries and terms, although proper contracts are now all drawn up! It would be lovely to build a brand new school, but unless a fairy godmother turns up.....



Friends of St Augustine's
Mad Hatter's Tea Party
St Augustine's Community Hall
Sunday 20th March at 4pm.

St Augustine's Scottish Episcopal Church

High Street, Dumbarton G82 1LL

01389 734514

www.staugustinesdumbarton.co.uk

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Tel: 01389 602261 Mobile: 07734 187250

Treasurer: David Rowatt (dsrowatt@blueyonder.co.uk)

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Lay Representative: Tim Rhead (trhead@hotmail.com) (01389 761676)

Alternate Lay Representative: Maggie Wallace (maggiewallace@blueyonder.co.uk)

Fabric Convener: Margaret Hardie and her Team

Project Development: Fran Walker (fran_walker@hotmail.com) Tel:- 01389 761403

Trustees: The Rector, Margaret Wallace (01389 757200), Barbara Barnes

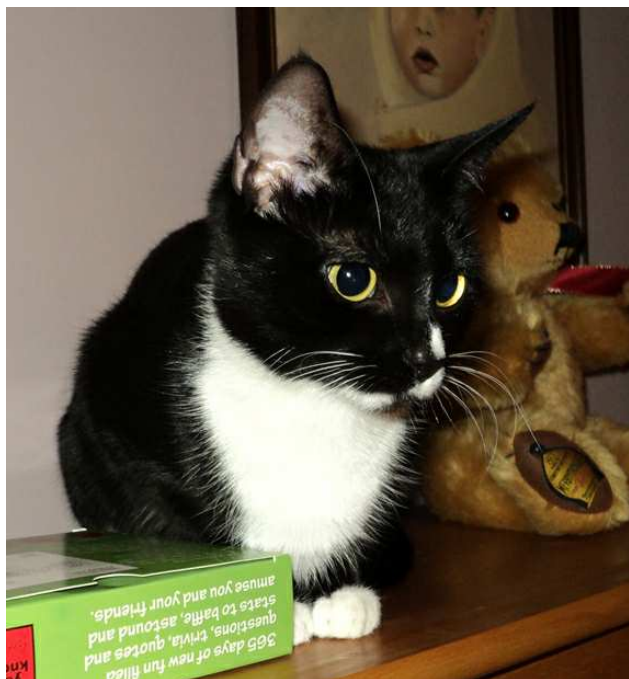
Other Vestry Members: Barbara Barnes (barbarabarnes78@yahoo.co.uk) (01389 755984), Margaret Hardie (mghardie@blueyonder.co.uk) (01389 767983), Janette Barnes (01389 761398), (Janette.Barnes@btinternet.com), , Roberta Mailley (01389 731863), Anne Dyer, Linda Jenkinson (01389 761693), Gavin Elder, Margaret Swan, Rosemary McLeay, Shadrach Shame.

Regional Council Representative: Roberta Mailley (01389 731863)

Child Protection Officer: Barbara Barnes

Friends of St Augustine's: Linda Macaulay (01389 602261) (lindamacaulay@btinternet.com)

New Rectory Cat



The Rectory has a new family member in the shape of Sushi, otherwise known as the WC. (Wee Cat or Wild Cat depending on what she's up to!) She was rescued by Janet Rae who found her living in someone's toilet, and was being used simply for breeding. At around a year old, she has already had a litter, but Linda has put a stop to that shennanigans!

Archie, Peanut and Truffle have greeted her with varying degrees of warmth and she's settled in just fine! She's even had a stand-up with the moggie who rules Helenslee Cres and came away with her head held high.

One little quirk though! Linda has her palm cross on the kitchen windowsill, (for meditation as she washes dishes), but herself has taken to stealing it and using it to cover up her food bowl when she's not eating.

"Holy Cat!" as Robin once said to Batman!