

Giving a fig

Heather Smith *reflects on* Luke 13:1-9

Sometimes things just take too long and waiting is almost unbearable. If you are keen on gardening you need patience. Take fig trees – they will not bear fruit until they are at least two years old, but some may not do so until they reach six. Luke's fig tree was planted in a vineyard, and patience is also required when it comes to vines – but not quite so much. They usually fruit at three years.

It's understandable to feel disappointed when, year after year, on returning to your lovingly planted and cared-for tree, you find nothing to reward your efforts. In the parable, the owner has had enough of waiting. The fig tree is just taking up space. But the gardener is wise. "Give it another year," he says, "I'll give it a bit of extra attention to see if it will come good."

Perhaps there are people in our congregations, workplaces or families who remind you of the fig tree – no fruit is forthcoming and you think they're not worth the effort. Some may be comparing themselves to the vines, laden with bunches of grapes much sooner, or to a strawberry plant that produces delicious red fruit in the first year. The wise gardener will give the late fruiters a little tender loving care, knowing that there is still hope. May we all act as wise gardeners to those around us. 🌿



Gracious God, give us patience to wait for fruit in ourselves and the perception to know when others need our care to help them flourish. Amen.

The chaplain's blog

by Marcus Bull

We are approaching exam season, and the second set of exams for the new specification GCSEs and A Levels in religious studies.

I have mixed feelings about these new exams. I think it's good that students have to do an in-depth study of two religions (rather than the thematic approach to moral issues that

used to be required). But I wonder how well the content we're asked to teach chimes with Christianity in the UK today. For instance, students are required to learn about heaven, hell and purgatory, as well as a literal interpretation of the creation story in Genesis.

They're often genuinely shocked to discover that their chaplain believes in science as well as religion. I often find myself telling them, "This is what you need to write in the exam, but it's not what I believe." GCSE RE is all very well, but what students need is an encounter with someone who lives the faith. That's my job as chaplain. 🌿

Letters from a medical student

by Tabitha Leask

Dear *Sunday Link*,
I got to see my first patient today. Don't worry, we aren't let loose on the wards alone just yet, but we have had some exposure to hospital life. Our consultant took us to see an elderly patient, who was recovering from an

operation for lung cancer and waiting to hear whether he could go home today.

It was amazing to find out more about his life, his story, and to hear what he hopes to do once he gets home. We also got a chance to practise the physical examination skills they have taught us which made it all seem much more real. I am excited to spend more time on the wards in year two, building on my experience and exposure to those who are in real need. Every day on this course, I feel the sense of God calling me to this profession more deeply. 🌿

“Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away.

Luke 21:33

Church of Scotland: Orphir and Stenness Parish

www.orkneycommunities.co.uk/ORPHIRANDSTENNESS

Interim Moderator: Rev June Freeth 721449

Locum Minister Rev Martin Prentice 851139

Session Clerk: Nicol 811242

Kirk Information There is a loop system. Adjust hearing aids to benefit. Switch off phones. They cause interference with the organ. Thank you.

A warm invitation is extended to everyone to meet in the hall at the back of the church, after the service, for a cup of tea or coffee.

Intimations

Tuesday: Fellowship 7-8pm. Lent study.

Tuesday 8pm: Choir

Thursday 10am – 12noon: Community Café in the kirk hall

Readings:

Isaiah 55:1-9 Luke 13:1-9

Hymns:

God is Constant Pursuing Love *tune: 'Hyfrydol'*
374 From heaven you came helpless babe
565 My life flows on in endless song
97 O God, you search me and you know me
458 At the name of Jesus *tune: Camberwell*
From The Depths Of All Our Yearning *tune: 'Ode to Joy'*

As we worship with thanksgiving;
Sense God's presence in each one;
Feel the pulse of wholesome living,
Yes! the vict'ry can be won.
Cautiously we seek God's kingdom;
We approach God's open door;
Prized and precious we are welcome.
Peace in God we need, no more.

As we walk this life-long journey,
Be the one close by our side.
May we hear the Spirit's Wisdom
In our hearts as faithful guide.
When religion all around us
Preaches sin, corruption, shame,
Whisper still to us the beauty
Of the One whose name we claim.

God is love and love gives freedom;
Freedom from all fear and guilt.
God is love and love will blossom;
Broken lives can be rebuilt.
Punishment for past wrongdoing
In God's dealings has no place.
Love is constant, keeps pursuing;
We are bound in God's embrace.

Draw our focus to this moment
So we live abundantly,
Not in future halls of glory
But in ways that keep us free.
Free to live your love in action,
Free to answer when you call,
Free to change the world a fraction
From the horrors that appal.

God is love and love is gentle;
Love can keep no scores of wrong.
God is love and love is central
When discipleship is strong.
If the kind and good and tender
Are to happen here today;
It will issue from surrender
Of our lives to Jesus' way. **George Stuart**

Give us eyes to see the other,
Give us ears to hear their pain.
Give us hands to reach beyond
The things which merely bring us gain.
May we feel the whole Creation
Groaning, struggling to survive.
Show us how we help or hinder
In its fight to stay alive.

From the depths of all our yearning,
From the heights of all our joy,
From the breadth of all our sorrow,
God as wellspring Love outpours;
Guiding, teaching, filling, meeting,
Reaching us with hope and peace.
Greatest mystery, ground of being,
May your presence never cease.

So in conflict, laughter, suffering,
Terror, sorrow, joy and gain,
May we know the God who struggles
With and for us in our pain.
May we feel that Life beside us,
Strength within, and Ground beneath,
Knowing that, through all life's journey
This great love will never cease. © V Webb