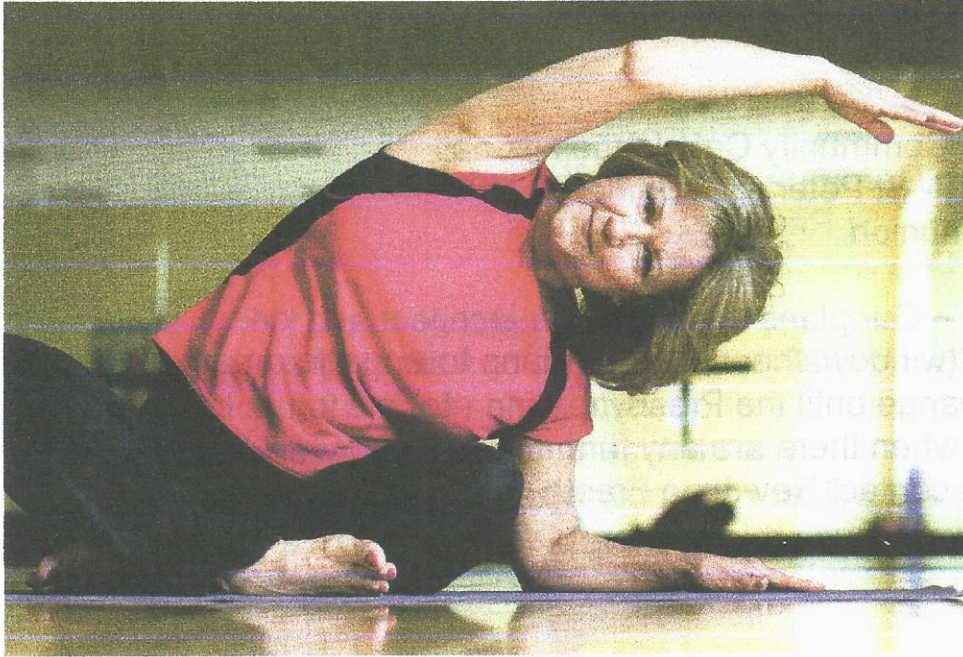


A flexible approach



Caroline Hodgson *reflects on*
Colossians 2:6-15 [16-19]

In its heyday Colossae was a large, populous and prosperous city, although by Paul's time it had dwindled in size and significance and become known as a hub of "syncretism". This is defined in the dictionary as "the amalgamation of different religions, cultures, or schools of thought". In first-century Colossae this meant a mashup of Jewish, Gnostic and pagan ideas, including an angel cult in which the archangel Michael was venerated. It was, you might say, an alternative kind of place.

We live in an age in which diversity, inclusiveness and individual choice are celebrated, in which people pick and choose the religious, ethical and moral frameworks for their lives according to personal choice (although in reality their choices depend largely on background, upbringing, experience and the influence of those around them). Our lifestyle and ethical choices may change as we grow through life, and that's also celebrated.

Christians reading today's passage might feel uneasy, wondering whether we, in this age of fluid and flexible thinking, have become "captive through philosophy and empty deceit". Is this the "human way of thinking" that Paul warns against?

I love Paul's poetry, faithfulness, commitment and passion, and I wouldn't recommend subscribing to an angel cult. However, I don't agree with his way of setting "human tradition" in opposition to a life lived "according to Christ". So, trying to keep the example and teaching of Christ above all in my sights, I say the opening verses of this passage as a personal prayer. 🙏

Lord God, as I have received Christ Jesus the Lord, may I continue to live my life in him, rooted and built up in him and established in the faith, just as I was taught, abounding in thanksgiving. Amen.

International Friendship Day

by Christine Clark

International Friendship Day was conceived in 1930 by the founder of Hallmark Cards. It is easy to be cynical and suspect that there was an element of commercialism in the idea. Today the celebration has all but vanished in Europe and the USA, although it has been taken up enthusiastically in some Asian countries.

If we drop our cynical misgivings and see the wider picture, the concept of celebrating friendship should be welcomed. After all, if Christians subscribe to the idea that God is love, which we in turn reflect, this love can be shown in our daily lives as kindness, compassion, mercy and friendship.

We keep old friends and make new friends; some we see regularly and often, others we keep in touch with just at Christmas; we have best friends and people to nod good morning to in the street; neighbours and friends at work. All sorts of friendships, all opportunities for Christians to show their best side. 🙏

“The friendship of the Lord is for those who fear him, and he makes his covenant known to them.

Psalm 25:14

Stained glass

by Heather Smith

Stained glass saw a revival in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, alongside a number of artistic, philosophical and religious developments. The Oxford Movement placed an emphasis on pre-Reformation doctrine and liturgy, with obvious connections to the fabric of the church. At the same time, the Cambridge Camden Society (the Ecclesiologists) was concerned with preservation of churches and their architecture.

The textile designer, writer and socialist activist William Morris

joined forces with the artist Ford Madox Brown to set up a studio producing stained glass, although not much was installed in ancient churches because of philosophical differences between the two men and the Ecclesiologists. Other artistic styles that influenced stained glass included Art Nouveau, Naturalism and Opulence.

Cathedrals and churches still commission stained glass and many prominent artists have contributed windows. Their subjects are varied. No longer obviously biblical, and even sometimes abstract, they surely all contribute to the spiritual and faith life of those who see them. 🙏

Church of Scotland: Orphir and Stenness Parish

Interim Moderator: Rev June Freeth 721449

Locum Minister Rev Martin Prentice **Session Clerk:** Nicol 811242

Kirk Information

There is a loop system. Adjust hearing aids to benefit.

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.

Intimations

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

Sunday 4th August – 2.30pm - St Peter's, Stromness

Sunday 11th August – Communion

Kirk Refurbishment update – Our plans to engage an architect and kirk refurbishment/improvements (windows/heating etc) are on hold for the present time. This situation is unlikely to change until the Presbytery plan for the future has been agreed. We will let you know when there are any further developments. If you wish to discuss this further, please contact Rev June Freeth.

Readings:

Genesis 18: 20-32

Luke 11: 1-13

Hymns

Hymn 129 The Lord is King

Hymn 214 New every morning

Hymn 493 It's me, it's me, it's me O Lord

Hymn 545 Lord teach me how to pray aright (T. Belmont 632)

Hymn 547 What a friend we have in Jesus

Prayers of Intercession

L: God of all:

All: we ask on behalf of those in need.

Doxology

May God's blessing surround you each day,

As you trust Him and walk in His way,

May His presence within, guard and keep you from sin,

Go in peace, go in joy, Go in love