

**KIRK OF KEITH:
ST RUFUS, BOTRIPHNE &
GRANGE
QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER
Issue No 87
December 2020**

Dear Friends

I am touched by the true story Ed Young recorded in his book, 'How the Grace of God can take you from Bad Beginnings to Happy Endings'. It's about a convicted murderer on death row named Rusty who had killed four people. Rusty would just stare in front of him absent-mindedly in his lonely cell. Until one day a Christian worker came to visit him who started to read to him from the Bible and pray, but no reaction from Rusty. Day after day he would tell Rusty about Jesus's love for people especially like him, but still no reaction. Then, one day while the Christian worker was praying, the tears suddenly started running down Rusty's cheeks, and shortly after that he sobbingly kneeled at his bed and accepted Jesus as his Redeemer.

In the months to follow, a special bond had developed between the death row inmate and the Christian worker, in so much so that Rusty became a son to the Christian worker he never had before, and the Christian worker became a father to Rusty he never had before.

The morning before his execution on 10 October 1989 at 1am, Rusty became restless and requested that his "dad" read to him from the Bible. After a couple of hours, Rusty seemingly became peaceful and closed his eyes. When the time came for his "dad" to leave, the Christian worker stood up, tucked Rusty in, and kissed him on the forehead. According to one of the wardens, Rusty's last



words were: "What a shame that a man has to wait until his last night to be kissed and tucked in for the very last time".

What do we do when we celebrate Christmas? Movingly, the meaning of Christmas is summarized in three stanzas: "Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace to those on whom his favour rests" (Luke 2:14). Humans? Favour? "There is no-one righteous, not even one; there is no-one who understands; there is no-one who seeks God. All have turned away, they have together become worthless; there is no-one who does good, not even one.", according to Romans 3:10-12. And "For the wages of sin is death..." (Romans 6:23).

The favour the angels sang about is not a wish, but a reality! Open and wide it sounds, "For God so loved the world ..." (John 3:16). For the grace of God has appeared that offers salvation to all people. (Titus 2:11).

God is no idealist. He does not overlook our sins as if they never had existed. He knows who we are and what we do, and despite all this, He still retains his favour in us! Breath-taking, inexplicable, and incomprehensible. The Good News! God favours you! It does not matter what kind of history you may have behind you or what future you might anticipate for yourself. God favours you! If you understand this, you understand the crux of Christmas.

It had cost God everything. Before He could tuck us in, He had to see his Son getting tucked in in a manger and later a grave. When He covers us in his care and calms us with his kisses, He goes Himself in his Son away to be executed in our place.

When you experienced something of this favour of God, you become yourself someone filled with favour, also toward those, like ourselves, who are not worthy of God's favour. Someone like that starts to penetrate the prison cell life of others with the good news: peace on earth to those on whom his favour rests! For you!

God kisses you on your forehead.

Rev Wiekus van Straaten

Fundraising and the Virtual Christmas Fayre

Fundraising Committee events obviously ground to a halt but we are absolutely delighted with the £6,000+ raised via the Virtual Christmas Fayre. We are hugely grateful to Nicola Smith, Joan MacBeath and Sandra Gerrie for their hard work over the month, and obviously grateful to the many folks who supported us by donating and/or spending money.

Once restrictions are lifted, we can think again about fundraising ideas. If you have any spare time, spare energy or bright ideas you are welcome to join the Fundraising Committee or just pass on your suggestions.

Steve MacBeath, treasurer

Wiekus's Weekly Words

Wiekus records a short midweek reflection which can be sent directly to your phone via WhatsApp. To receive the audio link, send your mobile number to Wiekus's dedicated mobile on 07341 370133. Be sure to save Wiekus's number on the contact list of your own mobile device to receive the messages. Be assured, your number won't be visible or shared with anyone else.

Christmas and New Year Services

Sunday, 20th December – 10am and 11am: Christmas services in St Rufus Church

Thursday, 24th December - Christingle in St Rufus Church, 6pm

Sunday, 27th December – United worship in St Rufus Church, 10.15am. Also streaming online

Sunday, 3rd January – United worship at St Rufus Church, 10.15am

Sunday, 10th January – Morning worship at St Rufus 10.15am; Botriphnie 11.45am

To safeguard the safety of all and in adherence with Government Covid 19 track and trace rules, places are limited. Book ahead by contacting Session Clerk Nicola Smith on 01542 488673; 07507 234423 or email strufuschurch@gmail.com

You may also make a booking request via our Facebook page or by scanning the QR code taking you to the online booking:



Church register to 25 November 2020

FUNERALS

October

Alan Watt

Maisie Lemon

Jean Catto

Mary Morrison

Carolyn Clark (USA)

November

John Willox

Nancy Auld