

EASTER SERVICES AND EVENTS

Friday 6th April – Good Friday Service 7.30pm in the Church Hall

Saturday 7th April – the Easter Play, 2.30pm Princes Street Gardens

Sunday 8th April – Easter Morning Service 11am in the Church

Please note that there will be no evening service on Easter Sunday. There will however be opportunities for worship at Resurrection 07 at Ingliston 7.30pm (tickets still available from Wesley Owen and the Faith Mission bookshop) and with our neighbours at Holyrood Abbey who have their evening service at 6.30pm in their refurbished sanctuary.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Children's Choir of Dr. Graham's Homes Kalimpong India is in concert at 7.30pm 17th April 2007 at Greyfriars Tollbooth and Highland kirk. Tickets are 5£ for adults and 3£ for children. Phone Bertha 6690568 for tickets.

The Easter Play will take place in West Princes Street Gardens on Saturday 7th April 2007. The performance will start promptly at 2.30pm just west of the Ross Theatre and finish approximately at 5pm. There will be no seating, apart from available provision for elderly or disabled. Please take note that all of the play is performed outdoors and is not under cover. We suggest that you wrap up warm and bring waterproofs just in case it rains.

Submissions for Newsletters can be sent to editor@newrestalrig.com or phone 0131-467-3319. Submissions must be in by the last friday of the month.

newrestalrig

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PARISH NEWSLETTER

APRIL 2007

FROM THE MINISTER

Dear friends,

The beginning of April signals the end of our joint evening services with our neighbours at Holyrood Abbey. We have enjoyed and been blessed by a partnership that started in January 2006 and has run for a year and three months. I would want to express my personal thanks to the congregation at Holyrood for being such good guests and also to Phil Hair for his willingness to share the preaching and, in effect, to do the lion's share. Their loss will be keenly felt. We certainly wish our neighbours well as they return to their refurbished sanctuary and new hall and trust that God will richly bless their ministry as a congregation.

The question therefore arises for us

in relation to our evening worship – where to now? This is a matter that the Kirk Session has given careful thought and prayerful consideration to. A number of options were available to us:

- 1. Close down the evening service altogether.** There is no biblical mandate to have two services on a Sunday. Numbers were relatively small (around 40-50). Commitment to the service from elders and congregation was limited. Fewer and fewer congregations have a commitment to an evening worship service. We were however not however persuaded that this was the right course of action. Numbers may be small but the service is still larger than some morning congregations in Edinburgh. The fact that other churches are abandoning evening worship is not necessarily a good reason for us to do the same. The Session did however recognise

that issues of commitment did need to be addressed, not least from the Session itself.

2. Continue as before. Simply restart the service and press on regardless. After all it is clearly meeting a need for some within and without the congregation. Once again we were not persuaded by this option. We believe that this present time gives us a God-given opportunity to change things in a way that is often more difficult in the normal routine of church life.

3. Redesign the service. In many cases churches offered evening worship because there were those who could not attend in the morning. Traditionally within many evangelical churches the evening service was viewed as *'the gospel service'* and had a specific evangelistic function. The Session believes we need to start from first principles and think through exactly what we believe our evening worship service should be for.

Our church's mission statement reads: *Our aim is to encourage people to respond more fully in faith to the love of God shown to us in the gospel of Jesus Christ.* This reminds us that the gospel is

to be at the centre of all that we do as a church and that includes our times of corporate worship. Our worship services should be designed to help people respond to the gospel.

Worship of course for the Christian embraces all of life; it is our life response to the gospel. Corporate worship is when the people of God meet together to worship as a body of believers, particularly, but not exclusively, on the Lord's Day. Corporate worship has a number of important God-given goals. Each of these is intimately related to our response to the gospel. These include:

Edification – the building up of the people of God through the teaching of the Word of God. Interestingly the NT more commonly uses edification language to describe the church assembling together rather than worship language (Hebrews 10;18-25, Acts 2;42-47).

Encouragement – the mutual support of the fellowship, believers speaking to one another in psalms, hymns and spiritual songs (Colossians 3;16, Ephesians 5;19).

Evangelism – the gospel is preached and explained not just to believers but also to those out with the Christian community (1 Corinthians 14;25).

Experience tells us that while the edification and encouragement of Christian believers is something that most of us are comfortable with in a service of corporate worship, evangelism is a different matter. Evangelism of the *'churched'* is common enough but this a rapidly declining group.

In the main our services are geared almost exclusively for Christian believers or for those with a nominal attachment to the church. We have not always expected non-believers to be present, except perhaps at a *'guest service'*. If our evening service is to be evangelistic (as well as edifying and encouraging) then we will need to work hard at making it more accessible and comprehensible to non-Christians.

We believe that this evangelistic aim should be more prominent in our evening service. At present a kind of vicious cycle exists in which because only Christians come the service is geared exclusively for them. There is

therefore little incentive to make the service more comprehensible to outsiders. People therefore do not feel comfortable inviting their sceptical and unbelieving friends to church. We believe our evening service should have a more explicit evangelistic purpose. However it should both edify and encourage Christian believers as well. Whatever we do we will seek to do it in a way that best *encourages people to respond more fully in faith to the love of God shown to us in the gospel of Jesus Christ.*

The Session has decided to re-launch our evening services in the church hall beginning on Sunday 15th April. We do hope you will come along and support this new venture. A programme of services up until the end of June has been drawn up and a card advertising these services should accompany this newsletter. Please feel free to invite family and friends. As we aim to review the service some time in June, if you have any suggestions or comments to make then please do not hesitate to contact me or speak to one of the elders.

In His Service,
David Court