

ST SILAS NEWSLETTER

Issue 1 – April 2004

Welcome, welcome, to the first issue of the new (somewhat imaginatively titled) St Silas Newsletter. The main aims of the newsletter are to keep us informed with events, and help people in the church get to know each other a bit better. So each edition will hopefully have a wee profile section, with info on a particular St. Silas regular, and also info about forthcoming and recent events. The newsletter will be produced (roughly) quarterly.

As a special introductory bonus, we would like to launch a competition, to find a new name for the newsletter! Any ideas can be passed on to Gill Wilson (gill_wilson@hotmail.com). The prize is, eh, well, not much, except of course to be reminded of your inspired genius approximately every three months. Also, if you feel you would like to contribute any articles or ideas for the newsletter, please get in touch with Cathy Brodie (cathy@stsilas.org.uk). Happy reading . . .

“So there might even be heating?”

Sarah Davies describes a weekend away with her housegroup

To begin with, I must declare my prejudices. When someone at my housegroup mentioned A Weekend Away, I had a whole load of assumptions ready: and few of them involved fun. My most memorable Christian Weekends Away have involved being herded with 35 very assorted strangers into a benighted Scouts hut built to toughen raw recruits, miles from mains plumbing or a phone signal. After an excruciating round of icebreakers, we'd embark on a packed and very heavy programme of spiritual teaching. The lamentations of minor prophets were considered just the ticket for a light Saturday afternoon seminar. At night we'd shiver in overcrowded dormitories, conveniently placed just above the main hall, where people who needed no sleep would congregate for some jamming. Six of them would have brought guitars.



I should have known better. Feeling that St Silage people might somehow break the mould, I agreed: and found myself having the most gorgeous holiday. The cottage was remote, warm and beautiful, complete with a log fire that knew how to roar, views to make TV ridiculous, and people who were quite happy to relax. The most packed programme in our weekend was a challenging round of gourmet meals. We'd chat, have a drink; read the paper, laugh; enjoy the sumptuous accommodation and revel in the cinematic weather.

There were walks that were just long and bracing enough, and a miraculous supply of caramel shortcake to come home to. We got to know one another better. It was good. Better than that - it was being together, with friends.

Sarah Davies, member of Roly and Jo's Housegroup

Burger, anyone?

On the Move BBQ Outreach, 2nd and 3rd April

Once again a number of churches/ fellowships in the West End - 2 churches of Scotland (Partick Trinity and Whiteinch) us (Episcopal!), Vineyard and Navigators - have got together to hold an On the Move-style outreach. The wonderful thing about the On the Move model of sharing the Good News of God's free love to us, is the fact that it is not forced and strident; it is relaxed and enjoyable and very attractive to passers-by. What they see is a crowd of people, to all intents and purposes, having a street party: tables, chairs, gazebos, live music, burgers cooking. They hear music and smell very tempting cooking smells. Curiosity, a personal invitation to enjoy free food, and God's Holy Spirit draw folk, and the team have the most extraordinary opportunity to chat about spiritual things, sharing what they know and experience to be true about Jesus Christ.

On Friday we were at Mansfield Park in Partick and on Saturday we were on Byres Road, at the Junction with University Avenue. Some of the team were old hands, but for others, this was their first experience of outreach. It was really encouraging to see their courage in spite of feeling 'scared' at the prospect of talking to strangers about something/ Someone which could challenge them to the core of their beings – and which a number may find quite offensive. We prayed for boldness, wisdom, discernment, grace, right words – but mostly for God's love and compassion for the people we would encounter.

Despite the rain . . .

We also prayed very fervently about the weather following a very wet and cold OTM experience in December – but were dismayed at the initial persistent drizzle on Friday, and the even heavier rain on Saturday when we started to give out soggy invitations to scurrying passers-by. I must confess that I railed at God, unable to see how His purposes could be furthered in this weather. However, one of the most significant conversations I had took place in the pouring rain, under a canopy over a shop front. She was an Australian visitor to the country, who had studied some Theology, but had still not found the Living God. It was good to be able to share what He has done, in Jesus, to seek us and enable us to come to Him.

Opportunities to share

On both days, however, just before 12pm, there was a break in the clouds and we had the kind of weather which was reasonably conducive for outdoor queueing and eating and listening to the excellent worship music played by the band Dougie Lindsay had

brought together – and there were some very worthwhile conversations and opportunities to pray with folk:

- a young man, who had experienced success, affluence, status but 'still hadn't found what he was looking for', left his details for the forthcoming Alpha course at Partick Trinity;
- the intelligent Chinese woman, visiting this country for a number of months, and very keen to find out what the Christian faith is all about. She needed no persuasion to sign up for Alpha;
- a man who had come to the BBQ on Friday during his lunch-break, returned on Saturday with a hungry, seeking heart. How exactly do you become a Christian? was what he wanted to know. Isn't it really complicated? He seemed surprised at how straightforward the process was. He too is intending to follow through with Alpha.
- an elderly lady, with no real church connection, who has been through some major bereavements arrived feeling disorientated, lonely and insecure and left knowing that she would be welcomed and loved in her local church, and having met those who would help her to become involved there.
- a young couple distressed at repeated attempted break-ins into their flat, and a two stress-related miscarriages shared their concerns and received prayer – and left encouraged and comforted.

These are just representative of the large number of encounters there were with hundreds of people who stopped to receive burgers and a warm welcome in the name of Jesus. God was at work – and we pray that He will follow with His blessing all that was said and done in His name. We trust and pray that passers-by received food for their spirits as well as very good (many commented on the quality of the burgers!!) food for the body. We pray that many will come to know Jesus Christ as the Bread of Life.

Like to get involved?

If you are interested in serving on an On the Move team, there are opportunities quite close at hand in the Glasgow area, in Hamilton and Paisley, Wednesday 9th – Sat 12th June, and many other opportunities in Britain and abroad. Further info from onthemove@btinternet.com or 0121 427 3300. You can also go direct to the OTM website: www.onthemove.org.uk We will also be having a couple more days of OTM more locally – Saturday 18th September at Whiteinch Cross and Thursday 30th Sept, outside St Silas. For further information, please ask Cathy – cathy@stsilas.org.uk or Tel 0141 357 1849.

Ladies Night!

Women4Women, 29th March 2004

I will not forget you! See I have engraved you on the palm of my hands. Is 49:1

This was the theme of our third W4W, a special evening of being together with other women; being reminded of how God sees us; of His nature and the gracious way in which He deals with us – and turning these truths into believing prayer for ourselves and for one another. W4W came about as the response to a vision Rachael Bell had for bringing women together to intercede, support and encourage one another - and to share food and fellowship too.

From the moment we walk into the church the fact that we are loved, precious, special and cherished is reinforced. There are flowers everywhere – daffodils, lilies, gerbera – an extravagant abundance. We worship together and focus on our great, loving and sovereign God. Rachael points out the lies and expectations, which are fed us by our culture, making us, feel ugly, inadequate failures. She reminds us how precious we are to God who has created us – quite deliberately and intentionally to be the women we are – and delights in us.

We hear a powerful poem of self-acceptance and confidence by Maya Angelou, a woman who had been abused and silenced by others, but had been helped to emerge and find her voice; we listen to meditative readings about women in the Bible who, in very different ways, encounter God and are changed, encouraged and healed as he fulfils His purposes in and through them: Moses' mother; Mary and Martha, the woman with bleeding – and others. They were like us – with hopes, anxieties, strengths, weaknesses. God valued them all.

We are encouraged to be aware that the competent, flawless veneer, that so many of us seem to have, is very superficial. Rachael - to many of us seems the epitome of confidence and competence!! - shares her own story of how God met her in her in a time of extreme self-rejection and how, though a couple of Christian friends, she experienced His love (hugs were an important part of this!), ultimately becoming a Christian herself – and now, by the grace of God and His healing work in her life, not only accepting, but also liking herself!

We listen to a series of God's promises to us, and His view of us. As we do so, the Holy Spirit works to transform our minds and realign them to His, releasing us from the pressures causing us to conform to worldly standards which only serve to discourage and destroy us. We take part in a symbolic act in which our painted palm print is included, with those of the rest of the women, inside the shape of a cross. We have our hands washed, dried and then anointed with oil.

The meal we share afterwards is exquisite, exotic and delicious (a variety of soups and desserts prepared by the legendary Gabrielle Briggs assisted by Tansy Harrison). The fellowship is sweet; the sense of community is real. We are being changed:

The Lord is giving us a new name; He will hold us in his hands for all to see – a splendid crown in the hands of God. Never again will we be called the Godforsaken or Desolate. Our new name will be 'God's Delight' and the 'Bride of God', for the Lord delights in us and will claim us as His own. Is 62: 2 – 4.NLT



Banner of the cross, made with hand prints.



PROFILE: GILL WILSON

Some folks that have been about St Silas for a while might remember that there was a newsletter a few years back. Why (oh why) did it ever re-emerge? Like all good newsletters, there had to be a sequel, and it was Gill's vision that got the ball rolling again. So here it is... and here is more about Gill.

Where do you live, and who do you live with? In Bearsden, with my daughter Isla :o)

Where were you born? I was born in Hardgate hospital, which is now a housing estate.

Where else have you lived? I lived in Glasgow most of my life, then moved away when I was 18. My ex-husband was in the Air Force, so we moved a lot. I lived in Forres, Elgin, Nairn, Plymouth, Lincolnshire and Norfolk. In the first 2 years of Isla's life, she lived in 11 different houses!

What brought you to Glasgow? I moved back to Glasgow in 1993 after my divorce to be back near family.

What jobs have you had? Before going back to Uni I worked mostly as a Legal Secretary. My most boring job was as a Ticker - which involved looking at two different pieces of paper and if they matched, ticking them! I have also worked in clinical audit and web development.

Favourite childhood memory? When I was young, we had a caravan at Loch Lomond where we would go every weekend and I could basically run wild there. I loved water and it was great to be able to swim or row to the nearby islands.

Most embarrassing moment? There have been so many! Probably one of the most amusing is the one when I went a walk up Ben Ann with Anne James, (who is a nutter). Anne decided that going back down the path wasn't challenging enough for us so we would go down through the trees. The trees were hiding a very, very steep decent and we basically slid on our backsides from tree to tree down this hill. It was really rough physically and when we finally could see the edge of the trees I was so relieved, I slid right over an ant hill. I immediately started screaming and pulled down my shorts to try and get rid of the evil black crawly ants. Once I calmed down I became aware of a small group of people on the road below staring up at me standing there with my shorts round my knees....

Any hobbies? Snowboarding - am an addict! I also do martial arts and play with Lara Croft.

Any annoying habits? I don't know, coz none of my habits annoy me!! Someone that knows me will probably give you a very long list though.

"Soapbox" issue? At the moment its balloon releases, but that is probably too controversial! My long-term issue is really the community aspect of church. I think we have a really great example of community in the first century believers, but we don't look after each other anywhere as well as they did. How we improve is a difficult one, since modern times bring different pressures to those they had, but I don't think in general terms we put in the same effort they did at building community.

Highlights of your life so far? Meeting Jesus, a bunch of "mum" things, snowboarding in the French Alps, and being introduced to Christian Hedonism (cheers Mitchum)!

Most difficult times? I guess when I was ill with depression a couple of years ago, and then when I got better, I had a huge faith and church struggle - I think the isolation of the illness is a hard place to move on from.

How did you come to know God? I met some Christians when I came back to Glasgow and went to university there. I argued a lot with them about their faith - it seemed too naive to stand up in the real world, but in their arguments they kept referring to the Bible, so I thought I should start to read the Bible to be able to be fully informed as I argued against them. When one of them suggested that I ask God to help me understand what I was reading, I thought I would give it a go, and I proceeded to devour the New Testament until I believed it. On New Year's Eve, I was alone in a B&B reading the Bible and I perceived a change in the lighting in the room and I was aware of someone else in the room with me. I guess that was when I knew that Jesus really can be with you, coz I knew it was him in the room, and that was when I decided that my life was His.

What is it like being a Christian in your world? Being a Christian in my family (with the exception of Isla) is really, really tough and has caused all sorts of family trouble, so all prayers appreciated. Work is easier, since in my new job at the Uni, there are other Christians in the Department, but I am still finding my feet with it all. My non-Christian friends are ok with my faith and sometimes we get good discussions going, which is all good!

In what ways have you felt God working in your life? God works in so many ways, but most recently I guess the blessing of my new job has been amazing. Loads of folks prayed about me getting the job. There were over 150 applicants and I wasn't the one who got the job, but they liked me so much they actually created a post for me! Now that was definitely a God thing. Also, watching Isla grow and develop in the Faith has been both humbling and challenging. She is amazing, and I can't even begin to describe how it felt when she came home one day and told me about how she led her friend to the sinner's prayer on the way home from school that day.

MUSINGS FROM LENDRICK MUIR

If you've never been to the church weekend away before, or you weren't there this year, then you might wonder what its all about, what it was like, and what happened there. Two first-timers share their experiences.

"How two baby Christians grew up (a little)."

We loved the fellowship at the weekend. That's a big part of why we love St Silas! Eating together, meeting new people, playing together and clearing up together was great fun. Being with new friends over the past few months is special, but all the people at St. Silas have been wonderfully welcoming to us new Alpha-ites, and meeting more of the church was a blessing. The group discussions were particularly good for this.

We did come to realise, however that Christianity is not just about 'church therapy' and God being light, white and fluffy! (Mostly via Russell's rose-coloured baby Christian glasses).

Gordon Ogilvie spoke from Acts on how the early church was formed, and how about 120 believers were charged with going out into the whole world and spreading the good news. They did this by reacting with joy, and received the gift of the HOLY SPIRIT, and they 'witnessed from here to the ends of the earth.' How did they keep up their spirits? They gathered together frequently to pray, and they committed themselves to this.

Gordon also spoke (eloquently again) on honesty among ourselves and with others. We should not be just a big happy club but do as the early followers did – they accepted the truth and lived by faith and trust. Our spiritual starting points are not the same, nor are our financial ones. However if we persevere, sustained by prayer, our spirituality can grow and overflow to people outwith St Silas – it's not just about our fellowship becoming deeper/better! Gordon emphasised that the giving part should reflect that of God, who 'loves to give and gives in love'

David spoke of his VISION for St. Silas, of how it is blessed, and suggested four points on how we can become even more blessed by looking at :-

- 1) Being prepared for God to come and work among us, and by being prepared to change.
- 2) By stepping out in joy as Jacob did.
- 3) Through perseverance – sticking together as a community through good times and bad.
- 4) By being observant and disciplined – looking 'with the eyes of the Lord.'

Our church should become a well from which people can draw spiritual sustenance.

Ian Futer and Rosie Lever both told us of their separate visions of spiritual floodgates which had been jammed, and Rosie suggested we ask the Holy Spirit for the strength to unblock them through prayer – both for St Silas and the community as a whole. David and Rosie both emphasised the need to develop prayer meetings/groups. David left us thinking of some of the ways that we, as a church, might share our love of the Lord with more people.

The worship team were magnificent as usual, their technology enabling us to sing out our worship with the usual St Silas gusto. 'Saturday Night Silliness' was great fun and not nearly as naff as the title suggests – much respect to the team that put together the details of our rector David 'the General's' background. It was truly awesome, dude, to be at the reunion of 'The Bench Boys!'

Many thanks go to the Bretts and all the backroom staff for co-ordinating a very smoothly run, joyful weekend.

The weekend left us feeling very much at peace with God, and with a new sense of purpose in sharing His love for us.

Russ Mac & Sim Jo
March 2004



Russell (Simon
unavailable for photo!)

RedR Canal Cycle Challenge 2004: 26th June

by Brian Pope

The 'RedR Canal Cycle Challenge' will return to Scotland in June and promises to build on last year's success. The organisers like to express their sincere gratitude to all those who took part in or contributed to the 2003 event. It was a tremendous effort and RedR were absolutely delighted with the results. Well done!

This year cyclists will depart from Loch 27 in Anniesland on Saturday 26th June and cycle for 25 miles along the Forth & Clyde towpath to the Falkirk Wheel. Lunch will be served at the Wheel and cyclists can listen to a few short speeches from some high profile representatives. The Falkirk Wheel itself is a great feat of engineering and is capable of lifting 600 tonnes of water over 35 metres in less than four minutes.

In the afternoon cyclists can either return to Glasgow or cycle on to Ratho, near Edinburgh, via the Union Canal. The views from the Avon and Almond Aqueducts are particularly noteworthy. Afternoon tea will be served in the marvellous little Ratho Inn on the banks of the Union canal. Transport by coach back to Glasgow has been arranged so don't worry too much about the distance - it's flat nearly all the way!

Teams or individuals from St Silas are encouraged to take part - so get that bike dusted off and prepare to be part of a spectacular event at one of Scotland's most exciting tourist attractions.

So what is RedR? RedR 'Engineers for Disaster Relief' is an international charity that relieves suffering in developing countries by selecting, training and providing competent and committed personnel to humanitarian programmes. RedR was founded in 1979 by civil engineer Peter Guthrie following his work in the Vietnamese refugee camps in Malaysia. At the end of Peter's assignment, he saw all too clearly that while engineers had an important role to play in reducing the suffering in emergencies, front-line agencies faced great difficulties in identifying and recruiting such staff.



Brian Pope (left) and friend, taking part last year.

Back in England, Peter searched for a solution and after discussions with friends and colleagues, founded "Registered Engineers for Disaster Relief" abbreviated first to REDR - Engineers for Disaster Relief and subsequently known simply as RedR (pronounced Red "R"). It now operates in over 40 countries worldwide including Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Iraq, Zimbabwe and Malawi. Over the last few years it has expanded its operations and now provides training for local staff in front line situations. RedR engineers make a vital contribution in humanitarian situations by providing clean water supply, sanitation, roads, shelter and electricity supply.

This year we hope to raise vitally needed funds for RedR and would be delighted if you would join us for the cycle. If last year is anything to go by it will be fun day out for all the family and friends.

For further information and entry forms please speak to Brian Pope (Mobile: 07951 197529 Home: 0141 6211870 Email: b.c.pope@waterman-group.co.uk.). Thank you

A few comments from last year's event:

"Enjoyed a fun day, especially the pub at the end. Got to meet some interesting people and raise some money for a good cause." Karen Bell

"Many thanks for organising the event. It was a very positive experience and definitely a challenge!" Fingal Noguera

"Well done and I look forward to next year! I think the Linlithgow tea stop should be made compulsory!" Katrina Dodd



The Falkirk Wheel



Christmas Service Story

by Kate Pearce



There was a lull: the church was dark and quiet, except for spotlights onto the dais. Final rehearsals had finished, and there was nothing else to be done until the start of the service later that evening. People sat, scattered among the pews, talking in muted voices or resting in this rare pre-Christmas peace.

A knot of choir members, though, was standing near the kitchen: the catering crew was still busy. Margaret, Lorraine and Peter had been working since ten that morning, and were now dispensing soup for those who didn't want to rush home for their tea. They were also making a ginger 'wine' and a mulled cranberry and apple drink for the anticipated four hundred who would attend the carol service. Cathy was in a vestry room rapidly moving donated cakes and mince pies from boxes and tins to large platters. Many of the luscious home-made ones seemed to come from boxes marked Reader-Harris.

The boys at the back were having a quick game of solitaire on one of the computers, but that was quickly erased as someone approached. Their computer, Mark and Peter explained, was set up to send the words for the carols to a projector behind the screen, so that the congregation could see them at the proper time. What if they made a mistake? No problem: their computer was linked to the visual mixer, along with the pictures to come from power point and the two video players, all under Graham's command.

Graham also presided over the lighting, but he only had (and still has) two hands, so after several appeals on the St. Silas online discussion board Greg stepped into the breach and was now ready to follow the speakers with a spot. And the sound board was in readiness for Graham Bell to man.

At eight, the church was still filling up. The choir stood at the back, ready for the processional. Jenny had prepared them well, going over each part until they were secure in their notes, and then bringing them together to sing the carols that most of the congregation would have sung since childhood.

But they were not to start the service. The church darkened, and from each of four corners a soprano voice lifted over the congregation, bidding them remember that *Hodie Christus Natus Est*. Alastair's God spoke, and Graham's visual's then led them from the creation, though man's fall and continual turning away from God, to the beginning of the Christmas story. A speaker came on to continue to tell the good news. (Graham quickly turned her mike up, just in time.) The choir processed, singing, and continued to sing with lights in their eyes.

The story was told, in words and song. A familiar story, but explained as 'one last try'; the Incarnation as God's final attempt to reach us with his love. Graham and Jenny had begun in the summer to think about the message; then the script was written and edited. Graham compiled one visual from webpages and a documentary and created another from members of the congregation filmed reading from Colossians. Now, David's talk, the speakers' scriptural message echoed in carols, and the vibrant visuals combined to remind the congregation of the love of Christ, manifest in his birth and death for us.

All had not gone exactly as planned: one video failed completely, and the choir and organ were on quite different notes at the beginning of *Once in Royal David's City*. But who noticed? St. Silas that night was full of people: friends, strangers, international students, who heard the story of how, and why, God came down at Christmas and that He was opening his arms wide for them still.