

# Leaflet

**Greenbank Parish Church**  
Braidburn Terrace, EH10 6ES  
No 570 March 2007



## Pulpit Diary

**Mar 4**

10.30am Rev Alison Swindells and  
Rev Dr Andrew Wilson  
*Note that there will be no 9.30am  
First Sunday Service this morning*

**Mar 11**

10.30am Rev Alison Swindells  
*The Annual Business Meeting of the  
Congregation follows this Service*

**Mar 16**

7.30pm Pre-Communion Service  
Rev Alison Swindells

**Mar 18** **Sacrament of the Lord's Supper**

9.00am, 10.30am & 3.00pm  
Rev Alison Swindells  
3.00pm Service in Braid Room

**Mar 25**

10.30am Rev Alison Swindells  
*Spectrum 3 Lunch will be served in  
the Main Hall following this Service*

**Apr 1** **Palm Sunday**

9.30am First Sunday Service  
Led by the Guild  
10.30am Rev Alison Swindells

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For information about church organisations, please contact the Church Office (Mon–Fri, 9.30am–12.30pm):

**Mrs May Brown**

e-mail: [greenbankchurch@btconnect.com](mailto:greenbankchurch@btconnect.com)

The pastoral team can be contacted through the Church Office:

**Rev Alison Swindells**

**Mrs Anne Oxbrow, Pastoral Assistant**

To make contact with any of the organisations described in this *Leaflet*, please contact the Church Office.

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## Minister's Log

It is exciting to think that by the time you read this, I shall, all being well, have been inducted as your parish minister. As I write this, however, that event is still a couple of weeks away and a myriad of things remain to be done. I'm sitting in a study surrounded by boxes and crates – the worrying thing is that most of them are still empty!! But then surely it is more important



to spend time with family and friends who have offered so much support and encouragement throughout my ministry.

Last week my husband, Sean and I went with friends to Rome for a few days. If you have ever been to Rome you will know what a wonderful city it is. We were very fortunate in that, while we were there, we met up with a Roman Catholic priest from Aberdeen who is currently studying in the city. He gave us our own personal guided tour of St Peter's Basilica. Then in the afternoon he took us on a walk through the city and showed us some of the sights. Following Stuart through the back streets was a revelation. Most of the time we hadn't a clue where we were going. It seemed as if around every corner there was another surprise.

Narrow back streets opened out into wide airy piazzas – and it seemed as if each had their own statue or fountain by Bernini. Push open the door of a dark gloomy looking church and you would find yourself looking at a painting by Rubens or Caravaggio. Turning one corner, we suddenly came face to face with the Pantheon. You might wonder how you can arrive at such a big building so unexpectedly – well let me assure you that you can! It seems as if in Rome all things are possible. I'm quite sure that left to our own devices we would have become quite lost. Admittedly, we might well eventually have found our way to

some of the better known sights, but we would have missed out on much of the wonder and surprise that we enjoyed that afternoon. Following someone who knew the way meant that we saw so much more and it made such a difference to our understanding of the city.

Reflecting back on that day I am reminded of what it means to follow Jesus. To

the fisherman, financial experts and political idealists of his day, Jesus said, "Follow me". And he led them on a journey of discovery along the shores of Galilee, through the streets of Capernaum, of Jericho, of Bethany, before he took them into Jerusalem itself. How many surprises those first disciples of Jesus must have had as they saw Jesus healing the sick, contradicting the worldly-wise, touching the untouchables, raising the dead. We know from the Bible that there were times when the disciples felt confused and perhaps even totally lost. But despite this, as they followed Jesus, their eyes were opened to a new understanding of what it means to live and love as God lives and loves. And they were moved to wonder and praise. Ultimately these same disciples were entrusted with the task of being witnesses to Christ in the world.

Today still, Christ invites people to follow him. Today still, he offers new ways of seeing and understanding the world and ourselves. I'm sure that, as together in Greenbank we seek to follow Christ into the future, there will be many surprises, many amazing experiences of God's love at work. It is my hope and prayer that these surprises may lead us to the kind of wonder and praise that allows us to be effective witnesses to God's love for the world.

**Alison Swindells**

Please deliver material for the April *Leaflet* to the Editors' pigeon hole by 10.30am on Sunday 11th March, or to 17 Jordan Lane or by email to [alison@eca.ac.uk](mailto:alison@eca.ac.uk) or [j.murison@ed.ac.uk](mailto:j.murison@ed.ac.uk) by 6pm on Tuesday 13th March.

## Dr John Stevenson

A vacancy can be a very difficult time for a congregation, particularly when the departing Minister has been in post for a lengthy period. One of the problems can be that Sunday mornings, the principal occasions when the congregation gathers together, feature a succession of unfamiliar preachers. That is not to denigrate the efforts of any such visiting Ministers but merely to recognise that inevitably there can set in a sense of dislocation and lack of continuity which can be very unsettling.

With this in mind I was delighted when last year the Rev Dr John Stevenson accepted an invitation to act as Locum during the vacancy arising from the retirement of Ian Scott. I am sure that I speak for all of you when I say some nine months later that I have not been disappointed!

Since the end of May 2006 John Stevenson has done an enormous amount of work to ensure that the life of the congregation has carried on as close to normal as it has been possible to get. He has visited those members most needing a visit. He has chaired most meetings of the Kirk Session and attended the Congregational Board meetings, offering wise counsel as appropriate. He has offered advice and assistance to Committee Conveners, particularly helping with the Adult Education sponsored series of meetings last autumn. He has run



an Enquirers Class which culminated last month with a number of new members making public profession of their faith. And of course he has preached on most Sunday mornings during the vacancy. It is probably this last and most important role with which he is most associated in the minds of the majority of members and judging from the comments

that have been made directly to me he has been an outstanding success. Many of you have commented how greatly they have appreciated the attention to detail that he has put into his services and the thought provoking sermons that he has preached.

The terms of John's employment as Locum were that he would spend three days a week working for the congregation. Clearly he has done far more than that and we are in his debt for the care and attention that he has lavished on us. By the time you read this he will be handing over the reins to our new Minister. If she does not find us in good heart the fault will certainly not lie with John Stevenson.

We will take the opportunity at the social following the Induction of the Rev Alison Swindells to make a more tangible recognition of John's efforts but it is right that we record here our warm and heartfelt thanks to him (and to Mairi who has supported him so faithfully) for all that he has done during the past nine months or so.

**David T Reid, Session Clerk**

## A Break for Carers

*Are you a carer? Do you need help? or Could you give help to a carer?*

The aim of the A.B.C. Group is to give carers a break for a few hours, so that they can relax, meet a friend, go to the theatre – just have some time to themselves, knowing that their loved one is safe and happy.

We soon get to know the housebound person and how he or she likes to spend their time. They may be happy reading or watching a favourite TV programme. Often they like to talk about their memories of childhood or about their family. We sometime play dominoes or listen to music... and of course we have a cuppa! The time passes very quickly and it's good to know that just by being there, we have made life a little easier for the carer, and of course we've made a new friend!

I'm sure that lots of members of Greenbank are already doing this for neighbours, friends or relatives, but if you have a little time to spare and you would be willing to become a member of the A.B.C. Group, please telephone me or speak to me any Sunday, and I'll put you on my list of helpers. I never know when a request for help will be made and the more names that I have the more likely it is that I'll be able to plan a good "partnership."



**Eileen Walker**

## Leaflet and Life and Work

Enclosed this month is an envelope in which you are invited to return your annual donation towards the cost of providing the *Leaflet* and *Life and Work*. The suggested donation towards the *Leaflet* is £7 and £15 for *Life and Work*, a total of £22 if you take both publications.

Last year we received a record total of contributions but congregational funds still subsidised these publications by some £5,700. With that in mind, I feel that it is right to remind members of the substantial costs involved and to ask you for a realistic contribution. By ordering *Life and Work* in bulk we are given a substantial discount but we are billed early in the year for all 12 editions which is why I am asking you for donations at this time.

All donations received are eligible for tax recovery under the Gift Aid scheme. Please return donations in the FREEPOST envelope through the Sunday offering bags, by post (no stamp needed), or to the Church office.

**Fiona Watt, Treasurer**

## District Visitors

In the article on District Visitors in February's *Leaflet*, we omitted to mention that Mrs Aileen Barnes had given dedicated service as the Visitor to District 48 for over fourteen years until she had to retire owing to ill health. We thank her most sincerely for her many years of stalwart service.

**John Mowat**

## Treasurer's Report for 2006

With this issue of the *Leaflet*, readers will find enclosed the *Treasurer's Report for 2006*. This report consolidates the year's financial information into a readable format. Copies of the full accounts are available in the racks in the vestibule or from the Church Office.

The Congregation's **Annual Business Meeting**, at which approval of these accounts will be moved, will follow the 10.30am service on **Sunday 11th March**.

**Editors**

Visit Greenbank on the Web:  
[www.greenbankchurch.org](http://www.greenbankchurch.org)

## The Guild

We begin the month of March in a very outward looking way with the **World Day of Prayer**. The Service, written by the Christian Women of Paraguay, will be held this year in Morningside Parish Church on **Friday 2nd March at 10.30am**. Everyone will be most welcome. Following that, we then welcome other denominations to our own *Ecumenical Meeting* on **Tuesday 6th March at 7.30pm**. We are particularly delighted to have Rev Dr John Stevenson as our speaker at this meeting, which is being led by Sheila Uren. Come and enjoy *A Kirriemuir Experience*.

We conclude our session on **Tuesday 20th March at 7.30pm** with our *Annual Business Meeting*, at which we can later enjoy some amusing and moving stories and poems in the company of Cathie Brown, who is also the Treasurer of the Presbyterial Council.

We are pleased to record that, from our Fundraising Event, **£1,100** is being sent to Scottish Love in Action (SLA), our project for the Session. Also we received **£122** in donations for our Guild Funds at our Gift Envelope Coffee Morning in January. Our thanks go to everyone who so kindly contributed to these events.

We are very fortunate to have had Valerie Smart as our overall Co-ordinator, and very special thanks must go to all the different leaders who helped enormously to the success and smooth running of our meetings. As ever, everyone is assured of a very warm welcome at any of our meetings.



**Enid Mowat**

*The Guild article was omitted in error from last month's Leaflet – sincere apologies.*

*Editors*

## Help the Homeless



### Fresh Start collection

Starting on a negative note, please, please think before you donate items for the Fresh Start starter packs. These packs are made up for people who are setting up their homes after being homeless. Half-used bottles of shampoo are not appropriate, and

## Lent and Easter Appeal

### The Sick Kids Friends Foundation

As is customary we will be having a collection during the Lent and Easter period, with the proceeds going to a local charity.

This year we have decided to support *The Sick Kids Friends Foundation*, and specifically their *Drop-In Centre*. This is a recently opened facility in Millerfield Place, close to the hospital, which aims to support families and children in a homely, informal atmosphere. The centre provides information and advice, complementary therapies, activities, a meeting place for various groups, for example teenage patients, and somewhere for parents and children to go to have a break from the hospital wards.

Obviously a facility like this requires ongoing funding and we hope to be able to make a generous donation.

Donation envelopes will be available in the pews from **Sunday 11th March** until Easter Day, **Sunday 8th April**. Donations are eligible for Gift Aid. Any cheques should be made payable to Greenbank Church.

**Fiona Watt, Treasurer**

## Book of the Month

### Sanctuary, Monastic Steps for Everyday Life

*by Abbot Christopher Jamison*

Published by Weidenfeld and Nicholson, £10, pp192, ISBN 0297851322

This delightful little book was written by Christopher Jamison, the Abbot of Worth Benedictine Monastery. He will be a familiar figure to those, like me, who watched the BBC programme *The Monastery*. The programme demonstrated the value of monastic practices to five ordinary men facing the problems we all face in our everyday lives. It demonstrated that the monks were not out of touch as is so often suspected, but were very much aware of the pressures of the modern world. They not only accepted the men, but challenged them to listen deeply to themselves, to other people and to God. All of those who took part found their hearts and minds reshaped, and were very much in touch with real life when they left the monastery. The most memorable moment was when one of the men who worked making videos for a telephone sex chat line, sat with his spiritual guide, and experienced God. This led him to make major changes to his life. The experience lasted and a year later his spiritual life was developing richly. This book can do the same for you.

The book takes the sane and balanced approach of St Benedict to people with families, people who are busy, people who are under pressure – people like you and me. It helps those searching for spiritual space and peace in the busy, and often confusing, modern world. The book identifies the roots of our endless 'busy-ness', explains why we all need a sanctuary and shows how it can be built into our lives with the blocks of silence, contemplation, obedience, humility, community, spirituality, and hope. Each of these terms is explained and interpreted in ordinary situations. In each chapter the author demonstrates how we can build one of these blocks into our lives. This book opens up a spiritual route that Presbyterian churches largely let go after the Reformation. It could reinvigorate your spiritual life if you are prepared to open yourself to its message. It also offers other books and websites to allow you to take your journey further. Try it!

**David Allan**

neither are pressure cookers minus the instructions (for Health and Safety reasons). If you would not use the item yourself, do not give it to Fresh Start.

On the other hand, we are very grateful for all the usable household items which have been donated so generously each month. All the packs are now being made up by volunteers in the Fresh Start premises in Ferry Road Drive. A full list of the items which can be donated is available from me at the collection stall in the Main Hall after the 10.30am service on collection days.

The next two collection days are **Sundays 4th March and 15th April**. Donations of good quality *erving spoons, fish slices, tin openers* and *other kitchen utensils (including those suitable for non-stick pans)* are particularly needed. **NO KITCHEN KNIVES PLEASE, AS WE ARE NOT ALLOWED TO SUPPLY THEM.**

If you have any questions about donations to Fresh Start, please do see me in the Main Hall on these dates, or contact me, and I will be happy to help.

**Alison Ambler**

## Christian Aid Spring Fair

Following the great success of our Spring Fair last year, when £2,567 was raised, it has been decided to hold another Spring Fair this year. It will take place on **Saturday 12th May 2007** at the Braid Centre, Nile Grove, **10am–2.30pm**.

This year's Spring Fair will be similar to last year's and consequently it is now time to be thinking what you could give to the **New, Nearly New and Craft Stalls**. Spring is just around the corner and your cuttings, shrubs and bedding plants will be very welcome at the **Plant Stall**. The **Book Stall** is also popular and is always requiring a selection of new books as well as DVDs, CDs and jigsaws. On the day, home baking, preserves, marmalade and chutneys etc. will be appreciated for the **Baking Stall**. There will also be a selection of professional Stallholders with a variety

## World Mission

### Fair Trade Fair

The World Mission Committee are holding a **Fair Trade Fair** in the Main Hall of Greenbank Church on **Saturday 10th March** from **10am to 12 Noon**. We will have a wider than usual range of foodstuffs, plus flowers, crafts and gifts.

Please come and bring your friends and neighbours. Refreshments will be served. The theme for this year is **Change Today, Choose Fairtrade**. The focus is on positive actions to get more people to choose products with the FAIRTRADE Mark.

After recent predictions of the effects of climate change on our world by the *Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change*, we should support Christian Aid's Climate Change Campaign which is to be launched later this month. As part of their campaign

## Friendship Club

At our first meeting of 2007 the speaker was Miss Rachel Davies, whose subject was *Understanding Dementia*. (Her job title is 'Principal Co-ordinator of Alzheimer's in Edinburgh'.) This was a sympathetic, instructive talk stressing the care and understanding required and given, in dealing with this distressing and disabling illness.

On 24th January, our speaker was Patrick Cadell, whose subject was *The High Constables of Holyrood*. This was a most interesting and fascinating afternoon. We learned of their formation,

of **Craft and Design Items** for sale, as well as our own **Traidcraft** and **Fair Trade Stall** with its various foods and interesting gifts. The Churches' own Youth Organisations will also be providing a variety of **Activities and Games of Skill**.

The Boroughmuir High School Big Band with the talented "Vanessa Trio" will entertain you as you arrive to browse among the stalls, and enjoy the refreshments of soup, filled rolls, biscuits with coffee, tea or juice.

Set this day aside to **Come to the Fair**.

**John Mowat**

## Worship at Home

Are you unable to get to Church? Do you know that our Greenbank Church services are recorded monthly? Would you like to listen to recordings on a regular or even short-term basis? If so, please tell your elder or Anne Oxbrow or call me, saying whether you prefer a CD or a cassette tape. (Cassettes are re-used and CDs are recycled!)

**David Ferguson**

they are organising a *Cut the Carbon March* with volunteers walking some or all the way from Belfast to London passing through Scotland from **15th–19th July**. Anyone looking for a challenge?

## Recycling old mobile phones and ink cartridges

As an experiment, the World Mission Committee will collect mobile phones and ink cartridges. They will be collected by a company which sends them to a recycling unit and then makes a payment to a charity of our choice. Unfortunately they cannot take Epson cartridges but all other makes are acceptable. These items can be brought on **10th March** to the Fair Trade Fair or to the monthly One World Stall on **8th April, 29th April** and **20th May**.

historical significance and their duties throughout the year. They play a meaningful and important role in the city as royal retainers. This was a particularly enjoyable meeting.

On 7th February Alasdair and Valerie Smart spoke of their recent holiday and journey in *New Zealand*. Their talk was well illustrated with many spectacular pieces of scenery, evoking memories for many members, and well described by Valerie in an interesting, detailed narrative.

**Eileen Crawford**

## Social Committee

### Walking Group

The Social Committee is proposing to lead a walk from Blackness to South Queensferry (5 miles) on **26th April 2007**. Anyone interested in participating should meet in the Hermitage Room at 11.45am on **Sunday 8th April** to discuss arrangements, or contact Stuart Macmillan or Clifford Hastings.

### Scrabble Club

There has been a limited amount of interest shown regarding the setting-up of a Scrabble Club in the Church. Anyone interested in joining please contact Caroline Kehoe.

## The Open Door Celebrates 25 years



**An invitation to Volunteers Past and Present: Join us for Afternoon Tea on Tuesday 10th April, 2pm–4pm.**

To help with catering arrangements, please let us know if you plan to come. If you need help with transport, please ask. Patchwork Quilt Raffle will be drawn – don't forget to buy your tickets!

Looking forward to seeing you all.

**Fiona Davies (Tel 447 9757)**

**women@greenbank**

**Fundraiser**

**An Evening of Entertainment**

**by Symington Kirk Choir**

**on Thursday 19th April**

**at 7.30pm**

**in Greenbank Church**

**Tickets: £5**

**including refreshment**

**All welcome**

**Tickets available from**

**Church Office, or Rona, Janet or Julie**

## Congregational Register

Omitted from the on-line version of the *Leaflet*

### Coffee Rota

#### Mar

- 4th D37 – Chris Horne  
 11th Annual Business Meeting – *No Coffee*  
 18th Communion – *No Coffee*  
 25th Spectrum Lunch – *No Coffee*

#### Apr

- 1st D31B – Moira Davidson

### Crèche Rota

*Supervisor*

#### Mar

- |                       |                   |
|-----------------------|-------------------|
| 4th Jean Roynon-Jones | Rachel Watt       |
| 11th Janet Ferguson   | Christine Wallace |
| 18th Janet Tait       | Flora Pollock     |
| 25th Janet Inglis     | Catriona Corbett  |

#### Apr

- |                      |             |
|----------------------|-------------|
| 1st Cathie Maclennan | Rachel Watt |
|----------------------|-------------|

### Work Party

The Work Party Coffee Morning will be held on **Thursday, 8th March at 10.30am** in the Main Hall. There will be a Bring and Buy Stall. This is our annual fund-raising event which we hope will be well supported.

**Doris Laing**



## Duty Teams

- 4 Mar (no First Sunday service)** Tom Walker, Stewart Hunter, Frank Hutson, Alison Murison, Valerie Macniven, Paul Maxwell, Bill Frazer, Fiona Grant and Leslie Stokoe.
- 11 Mar** Ian Thom, Alison Berrill, Keith Clark, Ray Dely, Catherine Hardie, Anne Oxbrow, Isobel Thom, Kay Ellis, Michael Turnbull and Greig Scott.
- 18 Mar (Communion)** Walter Crosby, Brian Barron, Donald King, Donald McLeod, Roderick Morrison, Mairi Stevenson, Jim Young and Kathryn Sangster.
- 25 Mar** Stuart Sanders, Moira Davidson, Stuart Macmillan, John Murison, Fiona Greig, Alasdair Swan, Sandy Cameron and Sally Stephen.
- 1 Apr (First Sunday)** Roger Bland, Richard Dunbar, Clifford Hastings, Chris Horne, Doris Laing, Enid Mowat, Keith Winton, Joyce Horberry and Robert Nimmo.

## Church Flowers

*Provided by*

*Delivered by*

#### Mar

- |                       |                  |
|-----------------------|------------------|
| 4th Janet McAinsh     | Janet Edwards    |
| 11th Moira Davidson   | Irene Rutherford |
| 18th Elizabeth Gordon | Alison Murison   |
| 25th Alice Schaupp    | Caroline Kehoe   |

#### Apr

- |                  |                 |
|------------------|-----------------|
| 1st Katy Maguire | Elizabeth Smith |
|------------------|-----------------|

## Lent Study Course:

### “Where is God...?”

This course will take the form of a discussion group meeting on **Mondays evenings from 7.30pm to 9pm** in the Hermitage Room, Greenbank Church. The evenings will be led by members of Greenbank and are open to all.

Topics and dates are as follows:

- 26th Feb *Where is God...  
when we seek happiness?*
- 5th Mar *Where is God...  
when we face suffering?*
- 12th Mar *Where is God...  
when we make decisions?*
- 19th Mar *Where is God...  
when we contemplate death?*
- 26th Mar *Where is God...  
when we try to make sense of life?*

*Where is God...?* is a five part course prepared by York Courses for groups and individuals. You are welcome to attend any or all of the sessions. Reading the study notes in the course booklet prior to each meeting is helpful, but not essential. Course booklets, priced £2.75, are available from the Church Office or from me.

**Joan Ritchie**  
**Convener, Adult Education Committee**

## Paul's Purple Passages: The Cross as God's Wisdom

**“Cross row stokes Christian anger”.** This was one of many newspaper headlines last November when British Airways tried to prevent one of their check-in staff, Nadia Eweida, from wearing a small cross on a necklace and compelled her to take unpaid leave. Two months later they at last agreed to reinstate Nadia and to change their rules to give approval for those who wish to display a Christian cross to do so. This was by no means an isolated incident: the BBC admits to having had discussion about the potential tension between impartiality and its presenters displaying religious symbols and in particular the cross. And in France crucifixes can no longer be displayed in schools. Those critical of BA, the BBC and others seeking to impose a ban on religious symbols see this as part of a campaign against Christianity. However, it is significant that at the height of the British Airways controversy a representative of the Muslim Council of Britain said the crucifix was not in any way objectionable, intimidating or offensive.

**Has the cross become too familiar?** Crosses may be a fixture around the necks of many Christians and have even become a fashion accessory for A-list celebrities. But do we appreciate what it is which hangs from necks on chains, adorns the lapels of jackets, dangles from wrists on bracelets and is the focal point of our church building? Would we do the same with a hangman's noose? An electric chair? A lethal injection? An executioner's axe? Surely not.

**The cross has been domesticated.** Its power to offend has been lost. We have become too accustomed to the Christian story. It has become very difficult for us to grasp the absurdity of the gospel of a crucified saviour. The cross is, or should be, as offensive and upsetting a sight as the electric chair or the hangman's noose. In the ancient world the Jews believed that anyone sentenced to die by being nailed to a cross was not only excluded from the circle of the living but even from the company of God. The Romans used crucifixion as a punishment for escaped slaves or rebels against their government. It was regarded as the most cruel and repulsive, the most horrible form of death penalty. Long after it was eventually abolished by the Emperor Constantine early in the fourth century, Christianity hesitated to depict the suffering Jesus on the cross. Eventually, however, it became an emblem used by Christians everywhere.

**The cross is the central symbol of Christianity.** The cross is at the heart of Christian faith. And the message of the cross is central to the thinking and writings of St Paul. He could summarise his preaching in two words: “Christ crucified”. He claimed no other ambition than to know and preach “Christ Jesus and him crucified”. The only thing he ever sought to boast about was “the cross of our lord Jesus Christ”. All this from a cultured man who knew that the cross of Jesus was bound to strike an educated Greek as barbaric folly, a Roman citizen as an embarrassment and a devout Jew as a disgrace.

**Paul struggled to make sense of the Cross.** He knew all about the painful, repulsive and ignominious death endured by Jesus. At one level the cross of Christ encapsulates the enigma of a seemingly callous universe at the mercy of malevolent fate and mindless injustice. How could this be part of God's plan and purpose for humanity? Writing to the infant church in the Greek city of Corinth he grapples with such issues and seeks to counter the objections raised. Paul was one of the first to grasp that it was the cross which separated the new way of Christianity from the other religions of Greece, Rome and Judaea.

**Neither Jews nor Greeks found what they were looking for in the Cross.** Paul's fellow Jews would look at the cross and see it as a sign of weakness and not of power, of defeat and not of victory, of humiliation and not of conquest. “We want a sign of divine power at work in the world and you offer us this despicable sign of death and defeat. Take it away!” His sophisticated Greek contemporaries regarded the cross as absurd. “We want wisdom, an explanation of the meaning of life, and you offer this ridiculous anomaly. Take it away!” Thus the religious teachers of Israel and the wise people of Greece rejected the possibility that God could have done anything of significance in the cross of Christ. In face of all this Paul persisted in claiming that in the Cross of Jesus could be discerned God's foolish wisdom or wise folly and God's vulnerable strength or power in weakness.

**Paul realised that people were judging God by the wrong criteria.** God operated in a manner and by standards incomprehensible to the sophisticated Greeks and the blinkered Jews. To put it in picture language: it was as if there was more power in God's little finger than in all the might of the Jews, more wisdom in one cell of God's brain than in all the collective intelligence of Greece. The Cross may appear as weakness and God's intention to achieve something by it as folly, but it was a deliberate strategy. The Cross was not only the result of an unholy alliance of human forces — the religious establishment, the politicians and the general population all had a say in deciding that Jesus had to die; nor was it only the inevitable outcome of our Lord's own chosen way; it was supremely God's way of bringing a mad and ruined world back to wholeness and sanity and peace. As John Calvin put it, “Had it not been by God's will that Christ was crucified, where were our salvation?” Behind Calvary is the throne of heaven.

**This is why Paul could write:** “The Message that points to Christ on the Cross seems like sheer silliness to those hell bent on destruction, but for those on the way of salvation it makes perfect sense.

This is the way God works, and most powerfully as it turns out.

For God's foolishness is wiser than human wisdom, and God's weakness than human strength.”

*1 Corinthians, Chapter 1*

