

Weekly Newsletter: 24th October 2023

Reflection: Halloween - Pray, Rejoice, Give, Say

By Jon Gemmell

Halloween! Growing up Halloween was a 'no-go-area' in our house. We were the house at the end of the cul-de-sac where the curtains were drawn, the lights were dimmed and there was absolutely no confectionary by the back door even if someone had chanced-their-arm by ringing the doorbell. Not that our street was full of children, nor thirty years ago was Halloween the mass commercial event that it has since become. With the cultural-wind blowing across the Atlantic, Halloween is now the second biggest grossing holiday in the UK, while in the USA Halloween accounts for a quarter of all 'candy' sales per annum.

We cannot escape the truth that Halloween grows out of an unsavoury confluence of pagan and spiritualist religion that was absorbed and 'reimagined' by the church 1,200 years ago. As Ralph Linton writes, 'Among all the festivals which we celebrate today, few have histories stranger than that of Halloween. It is the eve of All Hallows—or Hallowmas or All Saints' Day—and as such it is one of the most solemn festivals of the church. At the same time, it commemorates beings and rites with which the church has always been at war. It is the night when ghosts walk and fairies and goblins are abroad.' (Ralph Linton- *Halloween through Twenty Centuries*) Or, Nicholas Rogers cautions in his book, *The Pagan Origins of Halloween*, 'Halloween has been rejected as demonic and pagan, subsumed into (medieval) Christian ritual, and accepted unthinkingly as harmless fun.'

So, perhaps my parent's approach was sensible? Or, can we utilise Halloween without engaging in its unsavouriness? Can we leave the lights on and offer a warm welcome or should we retreat behind the sofa?

Let us be honest, this is a matter of individual conscience and there is great liberty to engage or not engage as each person feels led. However, please read the following suggestions to help guide you in how you might spend the evening of Tuesday 31st October.

Pray - Even if not opening the door and dimming the lights is your preferred option, then why not carve out some time in the evening to pray for your neighbourhood, and your neighbours. The ones you know and the ones you don't know. Why not draw a map of your block of flats or street, fill in information that you know about each household and spend some time praying for them? As S.D. Gordon famously said, "You can do more than pray after you have prayed but you cannot do more than pray until you have prayed."

Rejoice - John 1:5- 'The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.' The great news for Christians is that Christians are eternally immune from the influence of demons and death. The great

dragon is crushed even though his great tale whips around in the present. Martin Luther, who let's face it, wrote more about the devil than is maybe healthy, said, "The best way to drive out the Devil, if he will not yield to texts of Scripture, is to jeer and flout him, for he cannot bear scorn." Perhaps, Tuesday evening might be a reason to laugh and to celebrate. The Lord Jesus has triumphed over all spiritual powers and authorities and put them to open shame (Col. 2:15). Perhaps we could celebrate that truth especially on an evening devoted to darkness.

Give - Maybe Halloween is a chance to be neighbourly, make some connections with neighbours and learn things about them. Perhaps your household could be renowned in the street as full of generous, warm-hearted people who took an interest in their children. Perhaps there is the chance to go all out and buy great sweets, package them nicely in a bag and even include a non-cheesy leaflet about the gospel. Tracts have an amazing ability to stick, you just never know who might give it a read while they eat their cereal.

Say - Halloween is also a springboard for gospel conversations. As people ascent to the idea of 'the spiritual', 'life after death' and 'evil', perhaps there is the opportunity to cross 'the pain line' and say something to your friends, family, neighbours or colleagues? Perhaps start with a question, What do you think about the spirit realm? Do you think ghosts, goblins and ghouls are just a bit fun? Do you think it is strange that we spend an evening celebrating things that are really scary? The sure and certain way to never have a conversation with anyone is to keep your mouth closed.

Friends, Halloween is complicated and please know that I dread it more than I relish it, however, even if it just spurs me to pray for my neighbours then that is a positive. Go well, stay safe and shine bright.

Plans for this Sunday

Joe is leading a men's weekend away in Alltnacriche this weekend and a number of guys from the church family are going. We're delighted that Tim Rawlinson (20schemes/ Musselburgh Baptist) will be preaching for us on Sunday morning. Tim and a small team are planting a church in Tranent and he'll hopefully share a bit about that new work.

Sunday evening is a 5th Sunday and we're looking forward to having David Kunzi (Ministry Director of Word of Life UK) with us. He'll give a reflection and we'll enjoy a time of praise together.

Please also remember that the clocks go back an hour this Sunday!

Church Family Lunch – Save the date!

As the weather gets colder and we can't meet in the park, we are hoping to have a church family lunch on **Sunday 19th November** after the morning service. Lunch will be provided - please put the date in your diary.

Prayer Meetings

Just to flag that our prayer meeting is on Zoom at 7pm this week but next week is the first Wednesday of the month so we will be in person in the church at 7pm. Please contact Liz (Liz@holyroodevangelical.org) if you would like the Zoom codes and don't already receive them.

Christmas Appeal 2023

By Andy Scott

This year, we are again asking the congregation for suggestions for projects that can be supported by the Christmas Appeal.

This will hopefully have been discussed in your home groups over the weekend as this year the elders are making a couple of small adjustments. While the congregation are free to suggest any project, the Session are keen to encourage projects that reflect the developing aims of the church. The elders will be looking particularly for projects that enhance or support the following areas:-

- Within the fellowship:- preaching, prayer, congregational discipleship, or youth work
- Our local missional/outreach work
- Supporting other training and church planting organisations:- e.g. 20 Schemes, Free Church, Bonar Trust, Cornhill Scotland
- Missionary partners that we pray for and support throughout the year

Please send your suggestions to me by Tuesday 14 November at 5pm either by email (andyandlizscott@gmail.com) or happy to receive suggestions in long hand if that is easier.

The elders will meet on Thursday 16 November to decide which projects are to benefit from the Christmas Appeal. They will be announced to the congregation shortly thereafter and more information on each project will be provided to the congregation in the month of December in the normal manner.

Please let me know if you have any questions.

HEC Roof Repairs 2024

By Ken Colville, Maintenance Team

You may be aware that we have been plagued with water ingress through the roof for some time and have tried unsuccessfully to effect a repair. Last year we commissioned F3 Surveyors Ltd. to inspect and report on the condition of the roof space, between the ceiling you see from the sanctuary and the slated part you see from outside. Their report stated that there were a number of missing or damaged slates, but more importantly there was no roofing felt evident, which is standard on pitched roofs. While the roof vent structure was showing signs of wood rot externally, the structural timbers within the roof space were sound, the rot was only to the decorative external timber.

These findings were discussed and we recommended that F3 be appointed to prepare a tender document, including a specification, and invite contractors to prepare bids for the complete re-slating of the whole roof and associated works. A green slate very similar to the existing, but more economical, was specified and they come from a quarry in Vermont, USA.

Three tenders were received and the tender of James Breck Ltd has been accepted for the value of £141,067.10 excluding VAT. The work is due to start in March 2024 and be completed within twenty weeks, with F3 Surveyors appointed to supervise the works and agree monthly payments to the contractor as work proceeds.

At each stage the project was discussed and approved by the elders, with the finance team confirming we have funds in place for the work. The work will not impact on our regular week day activities, with no work being carried out on a Sunday. If you have any questions, please speak to an elder or myself.

Please pray that this project will progress smoothly, with no unforeseen works required and be completed to God's Glory.

Latin Night with Latin Link – this Thursday



It was great to have Mike Fernandez from Latin Link along at the prayer meeting earlier this month. He plugged a Latin Night that Latin Link are organising this Thursday (26th) at Bruntsfield Evangelical Church from 7.30 – 9pm.

Come along to sing praise in Spanish and English and hear more about the work God is doing in Latin America.

Edinburgh Theological Seminary Conference 2023 – this Saturday

The ETS Annual Conference 'The Church Among the Ruins' takes place this Saturday from 9am to 5pm at St Columba's Free Church. Lots of great speakers and for more information go [here](#).

Church Calendar

For your prayers and info:

- Monday:
 - Baby & Toddler Group from 10am – 11.30am
 - Warm Space 12noon – 3pm
- Tuesday:
 - Men's Discipleship at 6.30am on Zoom
 - Pickleball and Table Tennis at 7pm
- Wednesday: Prayer Meeting at 7pm on Zoom
- Thursday: Men's Discipleship 10.30-11.30am in the church
- Sunday:
 - Worship Service at 10.30am (and live streamed). Tim Rawlinson preaching.
 - Evening Service at 6pm



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