

Life at St. Paul's Milngavie

June 2021



Dear Friends,

I am writing this in the week of the General Assembly and while some important decisions have been taken which will shape the future of the Church much business remains to be conducted. I've kept in touch with colleagues who are commissioners and some frustration and unease has been expressed. I know the feeling. There have been times in the past when decisions of the General Assembly have not only disappointed me but dismayed me. At a time when resources are depleted and membership diminished the challenges facing us have not been helped by division over issues which have been felt at a deep personal level.

For all this, there is still something impressive about people gathering from all over Scotland and the world seeking the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Assembly Sunday very often coincides with the Day of Pentecost when Jesus' promise of the Holy Spirit was fulfilled as His followers were gathered in one place. Some people have boldly questioned whether given her condition and witness the Spirit is still with the Church. I do not think there is anyone who can authoritatively claim this. The Church has gone through times of struggle and at times lack of faithfulness but the Spirit has worked upon minds and hearts to bring about renewal. That vision should be the inspiration of our prayers at this moment in the history of the Church.

Just this week I was in conversation with a young woman who is a candidate for the ministry. I will be meeting with her regularly over the next month or so as part of her training. The fact that people like her are still hearing God's call to engage in ministry is surely a sign that the Spirit continues to work.

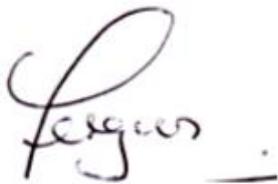
Some high-quality Christian thinking has been shown in books and videos which have sought to engage with issues thrown up by the pandemic. Not to mention the preaching that has continued in the darkest days. Surely a sign that the Spirit continues to work.

The Church has been in the forefront of care for the vulnerable during the pandemic, sometimes unseen and unreported. Justin Welby was criticised for his lack of leadership by some pundits but was doing a stint as a hospital chaplain at the height of the pandemic. A sign that the Spirit continues to work.

Continued overleaf...

The future is unclear and uncertain but has it ever been otherwise? At a deeper level, however, followers of Jesus can be certain of His presence, the forgiveness that flows from His sacrifice, the promise given in His resurrection, the assurance that His Kingdom will come. All of this made a reality in the ministry of His Spirit eternally present in His Church.

Praying a blessed season of Pentecost for you all,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Alex McEwan' with a horizontal line extending to the right.

St Paul's Church Society

We continue to sell cards and take donations for Dumbrock House Boys' Home in Strathblane. The hope is that we will enable them to buy outdoor equipment for their garden. At the moment we have raised £315 and we hope to send them some money soon so that they can benefit from our donation over the summer. We will probably continue to raise money for this good cause up until Christmas .

Alex McEwan

Thank You

I should like to express my appreciation to the wonderful St Paul's family for the greetings sent to me via every possible means of communication on the occasion of my~~dare I mention it—90th birthday. It was utterly overwhelming (and quite humbling) (Mind you, when I get in my car I'm still 40!!!)

Thank you so much. I continue 'to run the race (well possibly walk it) set before us, looking to Jesus, the Author & finisher of our faith'

With Christian love,

Rosemary F.



Dear Friends,

Last September I joined a gym. I have to say that although all 4 of my boys enjoy exercising, I don't. I know that exercise is good for me, so reckoned that if I paid to join a gym, I was at least likely to go, in order to get my money's worth!

I have been pondering recently about how our "faith muscle" grows, and I think there are some lessons I am learning from my time in the gym. When I first started going there, it was hard even to use lighter weights, and my muscles ached afterwards. Then I got used to that weight, and increased it, starting the cycle over again. And I think there are similarities with faith. As we look back on our lives, most of us can probably say that we have learned more through difficult times, than through easy ones. I know I can certainly say that. It is as I go through a difficult time that my faith is challenged, and stretched. Then there might be a time of relative quiet, before something else comes along, which stretches my faith further again. And it can be painful! But hopefully each time, my faith in God, my ability to trust Him, is growing stronger.

As we are 16 months into the pandemic, many people around are feeling stretched. In Japan, we are on our 4th wave of coronavirus infections. Many women in particular are feeling the strain, especially those working part-time jobs or in the service industry which has been badly hit. It is a cultural value not to cause trouble to other people, meaning that many people don't feel that they can share their problems. I am meeting with a couple of people at the moment. They feel it is easier to share with me as a foreigner, because I am an 'outside person'.

God tells us in 1 Peter 5:7 that we should cast all our anxieties on Him. Why? Because He cares for us. That is indeed good news that we want to share with others. God wants us to trust Him with everything and as we learn to do that through the challenges of life, our 'faith muscle' can grow too.

Thank you for all your love, prayers and support.

Lorna, Calum and Alistair

Zoom Quiz Nights

As some of you are aware, we have been having a monthly themed Quiz Night over Zoom for the last little while. We have used this as a way of giving to various charities that we thought were in need of our help at the time. It began with our Christmas Quiz, in aid of Tearfund. We have since supported Faifley Parish Church, Teen Ranch and Christian Aid (for their emergency Indian aid) too.

For the April Quiz we decided that as we can't have our yearly Cherry Blossom Fair in aid of OMF and Lorna Ferguson's work in Japan, any donations for this Quiz would be collected especially for this purpose.

The theme for the Quiz held on 09 April 2021 was "Not Quite a Bible Quiz" - and in our brilliant quizmaster, Janice's words, "Brushing up on your books of the Bible and the order, or who was Nebuchadnezzar's father or 1st cousin once removed, isn't going to help you in this quiz". Janice does the most wonderful job of putting these Quizzes together.

The Men's Association Team have usually been the winning team on most of our Quizzes but not this time. Congratulations went to the Congregational Board for stealing the Men's Association's crown.

We have collected and sent £651.00 to Lorna as of now. If any of you would still like to donate to this cause, there are a couple of ways to do so. If you would like to drop off a cheque (addressed to St Paul's Parish Church) or cash in an envelope, clearly marked for 'Lorna Ferguson', through the letter box of St Paul's, that will be kept aside for her. If you are doing a bank transfer to St. Paul's, please use 'Lorna Ferguson' or 'L Ferguson' as your reference.

If any of you would like to join in our next Quiz or would like more information about it, do get in touch with either Janice at janice.maclean2@outlook.com or Nimmi at nimmiwhitelaw@yahoo.co.uk and we will be more than happy to have you on board.

Do also remember that we meet every Sunday after the service on Zoom at 11:30a.m. for a Sunday Cuppa and Chat informal meeting. Again, if you would like to join us, we are more than happy to provide you details and put you on our mailing list.

Christian Aid

A huge "thank you" to everyone who has so generously donated to this year's Christian Aid week. The total so far is £2136 and with gift aid we should see that rise to nearly £2400. Given the circumstances, this is a great effort from St. Paul's and I would like to thank everyone.



Alex McEwan
Christian Aid Convenor

World Mission News

Syrian families mark five years in Scotland

Just over five years ago, the UK Government started their Syrian Vulnerable Person's Resettlement Scheme which resettled families from Syria to the UK. Many online groups, including churches, have been celebrating with Syrian families across Scotland.

Friends of Amal in Aberdeenshire, a local community group, brought Syrian women together online to mark this day. "Al-Amal" means "hope" and so they crafted lanterns to shine a light, and shared stories of hope from their own lives.

One woman shared: "I was a bit apprehensive as I was one of the first to arrive. But I found a warm welcome in the people that I met. Now I have a home here." Another woman shared that life as refugees in Lebanon had been very hard and that it was a real sign of hope when they got the chance to resettle to Scotland.

Jackie, the chairperson for Friends of Amal, explains: "We have been holding a weekly ladies' social on Zoom since June last year. The idea was to come together to share cultures, build relationships and practice English in a relaxed and informal way."

"It has been a lot of fun and many of the regulars say it is a highlight of their week. We have covered many topics such as stories and poetry from Syria and Scotland, information about famous places and people in both countries and of course cooking tips."

"For me, the best part has been watching as the New Scots women have become more confident and able to say what they would like to cover in the meetings. It is certainly a highlight of my week."

World Mission Cont...

Nepal prayer request

Our mission partner Joel has written from Nepal to ask for our prayers. Nepal is now back in lockdown which is being strictly enforced in Kathmandu, the main centre of infection. New cases have risen to over 8,000 per day, and Joel asks that we pray for the hospitals as they deal with the steep rise in Covid-19 infections. There are only about 1,600 intensive care beds and fewer than 600 ventilators in the country. There are 0.7 doctors per 100,000 people - a lower rate than India.

We are also asked to pray for increased supply and a more rapid rollout of the vaccine, and for a rapid and full recovery for staff and their families who have been ill with Covid-19. It is hoped that it might be possible for all staff to receive vaccinations enabling them to work with a greater level of safety.

Pray for the United Mission to Nepal staff as they work with local governments in their districts to respond to the pandemic.

General Assembly 2021

The General Assembly took place online from Saturday 22nd May until Thursday 27th May. The Rt. Hon. Baron Wallace of Tankerness QC was elected as Moderator. Better known as Jim Wallace, the former Deputy First Minister of the Scottish Parliament, former Leader of the Scottish Liberal Democrats for 13 years and a Liberal Democrat MP and MSP for Orkney and Shetland for many years before taking his seat in the House of Lords in 2007. Jim, an elder for almost 40 years, is a member of St. Magnus Cathedral, in Orkney and only the second elder in modern times to be Moderator. During his year as Moderator he hopes to encourage those holding the office of elder to serve more widely within the Church.

Representing the Queen at the Assembly was Prince William, known as the Earl of Strathearn in Scotland. This is the first time one of the Queen's grandchildren has been appointed to the role of Lord High Commissioner.

The Assembly Trustees presented a report on "*A Year Like No Other*" which highlighted the unprecedented challenges we all have faced but praised the resilience, support and love in the ministry of the church.

A free downloadable summary of the General Assembly is available from www.lifeandwork.org.

Covid – 19 Update

On Monday 17th May the East Dunbartonshire Council area moved into level 2 of the Scottish Government's Covid-19 protection system. For St Paul's this removed the blanket limit of 50 people attending Sunday worship and replacing it with a building capacity limit based on 2 metre distancing. In addition a small group is able to sing during an act of worship.

A limit of 102 people has been set for Sunday services in the sanctuary which is a mix of individuals and those in a household "bubble". As Trace & Protect remains in operation those wishing to attend worship on a Sunday morning MUST continue to apply each week by email or telephone to the Church Office and must not attend without having received a confirmation reservation number. The halls and office remain closed. The next review is due on the 1st June and any changes will be updated on the St Paul's web-site.

Covid remains active in the community and although the above changes are welcome, we must continue to observe all the rules and guidance.

Graham Mill
Session Clerk

National Parliamentary Prayer Breakfast 2021 Online

You are warmly invited to join the 2021 National Parliamentary Prayer Breakfast Online, which will be livestreamed on Friday 25th June from 8:00-8:45am.

The theme this year is 'Life Beyond Covid: A Renewed Hope' and we are delighted that our main speaker will be The Rt. Rev. Professor NT Wright. The event will include prayers led by parliamentarians, hymns led by special guest singers and the keynote address.

As we start to think about life beyond the coronavirus pandemic, we want to bring together parliamentarians, church leaders and Christians from across the UK to pray for our country, parliament, government and politics, and reflect on the message of renewed hope that the Christian Faith brings to our society.

Following the event, our principal partner Bible Society will be hosting a webinar for church leaders from 10:00-11:00am, titled 'Re-imagining Mission', and this will be followed by a programme of webinars hosted by our partners from 11:00am-3:00pm.

The event is open to all. Sign up for free at [Christians in Parliament's website](#).

More information is available at the [prayer breakfast page of the Christians in Parliament website](#).

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Copy Date

The copy date for the July issue is Wednesday 23rd June via email.

Please send any articles to st.paulslifemagazine@gmail.com