

Life at St. Paul's Milngavie

January 2022



Dear Friends,

Our first weeks into a new year and another Covid winter. The difference this time is that I am hearing of more and more people, within the congregation and my family circle, who are being affected by the virus. Experience seems to be bearing out the scientific consensus that this Omicron variant is more infectious. Happily, we are in a better place than last winter. The vaccine has made a difference and has been a considerable encouragement to the most vulnerable. But our behaviour continues to be a factor in protecting ourselves and others. I was listening to Jason Leitch on the wireless recently. While agreeing that the Omicron variant is 'milder' he also emphasised: 'It is not mild!'

The message is that we still have to be careful. Living with restrictions on freedoms we have taken for granted is not easy. I have found myself being tempted to kick against the goads, on more than one occasion. There is so much in my work that involves being with people individually or in groups in a variety of settings. I have to think twice now and that does not sit easily.

The most important thing for me at present is that we continue to worship. I understand completely if people are uneasy about gathering on the Lord's Day but the blessing of our online worship means that no one needs to be side-lined. We can be together in prayer, praise and meditation on the Word. It is so vital for us in this moment to sustain our consciousness of God and to find a way forward in His Love and goodness.

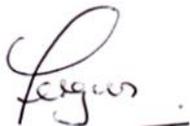
Writing in the Stornoway Gazette Professor Donald Macleod said this of the Christmas story:

'It's not just the story of the divine humility, the glory of God veiled in swaddling clothes, or of an inhospitable world that offers the migrant no room in the inn.

'It is both of these, but what we read of on the first page is the power of God: a power that works silently and invisibly, allowing itself to be ignored and kept out of the reckoning, but a power that works hand in hand with God's love for the world and which even in the depths of a Covid winter has that world firmly in its grasp.'

In the end, I will probably continue to moan from time to time about the annoyances of these Covid days but I will never forget I am being called to keep my heart turned towards the God revealed in Jesus, the God whose power works hand in hand with His love 'even in the depths of a Covid winter'.

Stay safe and in His love in 2022,

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

Thank You

2021 was another challenging year for St Paul's and although the prospects for 2022 are brighter there is still considerable uncertainty about the future.

A highlight of 2021 was the welcoming back of our Minister Fergus Buchanan and a very big thank you is due to Ramsay Shields for his support as Interim Moderator over what became an extended period.

The biggest thanks is to you the members, for ensuring the life of the congregation has continued in these challenging times. Thanks also to our dedicated employees, Derek, Hugh and Sandra who willingly contribute so much to the life and smooth running of St Paul's with the additional challenge of keeping up with the Covid regulations and advice.

Particular thanks to Barbara and Jackie, the finance team and to the many people who put in considerable hours voluntarily, to keep the Congregation running. From finance, insurance, fabric, furnishings, communications, health & safety, food hygiene, safeguarding, data protection, the roll, *Life* magazine and many others these contributions are often unseen but essential to keep St Paul's running smoothly and legally. Thank you to Chris for the recorded services and the distribution of DVD's each week and to those who organized the Zoom coffees, quizzes, bible studies and prayer groups.

Special mention to Derek Norval and the Choir for their contribution to the advent services and leading the congregation in worship throughout the year when permitted, to those who decorated the Church for Advent, to the visiting preachers who have brought us the Word each week, to those who man the sound desk and those who tend the needs of our buildings and garden.

It is impossible to mention everyone but I thank you all.

Graham Mill

The Lunch Club

The Lunch Club has been running for many years in St Paul's and is a great outreach catering for St. Paul's members and some with no church connection. It is a relaxing time to enjoy food and company. But we have a problem. Some of our helpers have had to retire. We need both ladies and gents to help. If you can help even just once a month that would be great. Get in touch with Ann MacLeod at 07803 934688. Thank you.

Men's Association

A Happy New Year from all members of the Association to all members of the Congregation and their families.

Our meeting in December was a most successful Christmas Lunch held in Milngavie Bowling Club where 18 members attended, having all taken lateral flow tests before coming and wearing masks which were removed for eating and drinking! A most convivial time was spent and there have been no reports of infection!

We were due to recommence on Tuesday 11th January however it has been decided that while Church Services can continue, organisations should not be meeting in the Halls during January. Accordingly, our meetings on 11th and 24th January will now not take place. We will keep Fergus and Brian as reserve speakers for later!

Members will be updated towards the end of the month about our meetings in February and March.

Brian Adair, Secretary.

Lodging House Mission

Thank you to everyone who bought the Christmas cards in December. Very few packs remained for return to the LHM and I was able to take £380 with them.

Ann Begg

Christmas Card Thank You

The stewardship committee would like to express our thanks to all the volunteers in the congregation who gave so willingly of their time and talents in the run up to Christmas. Your work was particularly appreciated this year given the many issues everyone is facing as a result of Covid-19.

As a result, around 1800 households in our Parish received a Christmas Card with a message from our minister and information with regard to our Church services over the Christmas Season.

Thanks again to the volunteers who hopefully also benefited from the considerable exercise of climbing stairs, walking the streets and getting to know all the nooks and crannies of our Parish.

Gordon Fairbrother

World Mission: Prayer request from Pakistan partners

In July 2012 Zafar Bhatti was accused of sending a blasphemous text message. Arrested and sent to Adiala Prison in Rawalpindi, he has been in custody for over nine years.

Our partner in Pakistan, the Centre for Legal Aid, Assistance and Settlement has given free legal aid to Zafar and financial support to his wife. In 2017 he was sentenced to life in prison and faced a significant fine. As the mandatory punishment for blasphemy in Pakistan is death, the judge may have given a life sentence rather than acquit Zafar due to pressure from religious extremists.

The life sentence has been challenged by Pakistan's High Court which said the only legal sentence is the death sentence. Our partners have appealed to the Supreme Court against this judgement and ask people to pray for Zafar and his wife, for their lawyer and legal team and that the judge will decide the case on its merits.

[Find out more about the blasphemy law and our partners](#)

Christmas Donations

As a result of the donations received the following has been distributed:-
The Glasgow City Mission Child & Family Centre in Linthouse £254
The Preshal Trust in Govan £453
The Salvation Army in Clydebank £244
Thanks to all who contributed gifts and financial donations.

Guild News

At the start of a new year we send warm greetings to all members of the congregation and wish you good health and happiness in 2022. We hope you will know God's blessing in the days ahead.

Our final meetings of 2021 were most enjoyable; Patricia Rundell, who lives on a canal boat in Bishopbriggs, held us enthralled as she recounted her early courageous struggles with health issues and then her decision finally to sell her house and move to a boat. Life on the boat is never dull!

The finance meeting in December was efficiently conducted by our treasurer, Kate, followed by Chris Scott who showed several hilarious clips from favourite shows. Our last meeting before Christmas was a celebration of Christmas in various ways: we sang favourite carols and some other seasonal songs- we were delighted to welcome back David Turner who accompanied us in his usual wonderful way on the piano; we had a Christmas quiz which challenged the most erudite but also provided some fascinating facts, and we had a wonderful afternoon tea during which we had the chance to catch up with friends' news. It was a lovely way to finish our first term back after lockdown.

Unfortunately the planned Presbyterial Carol Service was cancelled because of the rise in Covid cases. This was to be held in St. Paul's on December 13th and would have brought members from a wide area. We hope such events will be able to be held again before too long.

Our first evening meeting of 2022 was due to take place on January 10th when Norman Stone would have talked about his life in films. However due to the rise in Covid cases, we have had to postpone this and the subsequent January meetings. This is really disappointing but safety of our members is paramount. Please check the intimations sheet on Sundays to keep informed of changes to meetings. The committee will also contact members to keep them informed of any changes.

In conclusion, we want to assure all members of the congregation that they are welcome at any of our meetings!

Flower Donations - December

Thank you, for the Flower Donations given in Memory for the month of December.



F Dorrell
Mr & Mrs J More

Mr & Mrs G Getty
R Douglas

Thank you to all who arrange the flowers on a regular basis for the Church. They enhance the Church week by week and are appreciated by everyone.

Please mark any donations for the Flower Fund, to 'The Treasurer'.

Any Cheques should be made payable to St. Paul's Church. Donations can be left at the back of the Church Flower Guild pigeonhole or the offering plate

Book Group

Calling all members of St. Paul's Book Group! We are delighted to announce our first meeting for a long time will be held on **Tuesday 8th February 2022 at 1.45pm for 2.00pm.**

I know that you have all been spoken to individually but in case we have not managed to speak to you, please give me a phone and I will be happy to help.

Some of us have been reading avidly during the last two years and some of us have found it difficult to concentrate on reading at all.

So we have plenty to discuss at our first meeting, please bring along the book you enjoyed the most, or alternatively the one you just didn't get on with at all!

Looking forward to seeing everybody on 8th February.

Joyce Clark



Dear Friends

Happy New Year. In Japan we have entered Year 4 of the current Emperor's reign known as the Reiwa Era, which is also the Year of the Tiger. It is common here to be asked to put the year in the traditional Japanese format. I was asked recently for my date of birth in that way, and had to pause to remember that I was born in Year 41 of the Showa Era. All four boys were born in the Heisei Era, in Years 6, 8, 12 and 15. It's good exercise for the brain to remember all the dates in two different formats!

This year the 5 of us celebrated Christmas and New Year in 4 different countries: Daniel in Thailand, Matthew in Glasgow, Calum in Florida with a family which is originally German, and Alistair and I here in Japan. It is interesting to observe the different ways that cultures mark times like this.

Japan has a lot of ways to celebrate the New Year. Many people go to a Buddhist temple on the night of the 31st of December, to say goodbye to the old year. Buddhism in Japan is largely associated with endings and death. Then on the 1st of January, people will pay the first visit of the year to a Shinto shrine – Shinto being more associated with new beginnings and births.

This year I joined hundreds of people early in the morning of the 1st at a local beach to join in another tradition – watching the first sunrise of the New Year. I have also decided this year to start to read right through the Bible in both English and Japanese. I was struck afresh how in chapter 1 of Genesis the first thing we are told that God created was light, which He then separated from the darkness. In Chapter 1 of John we are told that the coming of Jesus meant that the light shines in the darkness and that the darkness could not overcome it.

Paul tells us in Ephesians that we too used to be darkness, but that now we are light in the Lord. So he tells us to walk as children of light, with the fruit of light consisting in all goodness, righteousness and truth (Eph 5:8-10). Please pray that in Japan the light of the gospel would shine brightly this year and that many would be drawn to it. And may each of us walk as children of the light.

With love and prayers.

Lorna, Calum and Alistair

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Copy Date

The copy date for the February issue is Wednesday **26th** January.

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

Happy New Year to all! A big thanks to all of those who contributed throughout last year. Please keep the contributions coming!

Carla MacAllister, Editor