

ST PAUL'S MILNGAVIE

# LIFE



*“O TASTE AND SEE THAT THE LORD IS GOOD;  
HAPPY ARE THOSE WHO TAKE REFUGE IN HIM.”*  
- PSALM 34:8



# Contents

Editor's Note	04
Lynsey's Letter	05
Hello From Sakata	09
Christmas Cards	12
Recipe of the Month	13
John's Reflections	15
Thank You	17
Guild News	18
Men's Association	19
Book Club	20
Dalmuir Barclay Church	22
A View From My Balcony	24
Scots Kirk	29
Roll Changes	31
The Noticeboard	32

# Editor's Note

STEPHEN BRENNAN

Welcome to another issue of *Life* after our break for the New Year, and may I wish you every blessing for 2026 on behalf of the editorial team. We might still be in the grip of winter, but as John reminds us in his reflection (p. 15), the snowdrops are starting to break through as a welcome sign of new life.

We have a wide variety of content this month, so thank you to all our contributors. I hope you find it interesting and helpful.

Stephen

## CONTACTS

### EDITOR

Stephen Brennan

EMAIL [st.paulslife  
magazine  
@gmail.com](mailto:st.paulslifemagazine@gmail.com)

### MINISTER

Rev Lynsey Brennan

EMAIL [lbrennan  
@churchofscotland  
.org.uk](mailto:lbrennan@churchofscotland.org.uk)

TEL 0141 588 6023

### PASTORAL ASSISTANT

Rev John MacGregor

EMAIL [jmacgregor  
@churchofscotland  
.org.uk](mailto:jmacgregor@churchofscotland.org.uk)

TEL 07387 851020

### CHURCH OFFICE

EMAIL [st.pauls  
@btconnect.com](mailto:st.pauls@btconnect.com)

TEL 0141 956 4405

# Lynsey's Letter

REV LYNSEY BRENNAN

Dear friends,

**A**t the beginning of a New Year, many of us find ourselves pausing to reflect as we take stock of where we are, what the year ahead might hold, and what we hope or long for as we step forward into another new year.



It feels fitting, then, that as a church we are beginning 2026 with a sermon series centred on Questions Jesus Asked. Jesus was a master teacher, but He was also a master question-asker. Rather than offering quick answers, He so often invited people to stop, to listen, and to look more deeply at their own hearts.

One of the first questions Jesus asks in the Gospel of John is simple, but searching:

***“What do you want?” - John 1:38***

It is a question that still confronts us today. Not just at the start of a year, but at every turning point in life. What are we really seeking? What shapes our desires? Where do we look for meaning, security, and identity?

The disciples who first heard that question responded with a desire to be close to Jesus — “Where are you staying?” — and Jesus replied with an invitation: “Come and see.” Discipleship began with seeking the presence of Jesus.

As we begin this New Year together, I want to encourage us to make space for Christ to minister His grace to our hearts in 2026. There is much happening in church life at the start of a new year, and likely there is also much happening in your own personal diaries. These things matter. But none of them should replace the central calling to worship, to come into the presence of God, and to stop long enough to follow Jesus again and again.

Scripture reminds us:

***“Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.” - Matthew 11:28***

That invitation still stands.

You will see in this edition of *Life* information about what is coming up in the life of the church. Among these is our monthly evening service, The Way, which will run throughout 2026. This year’s theme is: **“Denying Self – Following Christ in a Self-Obsessed World.”**

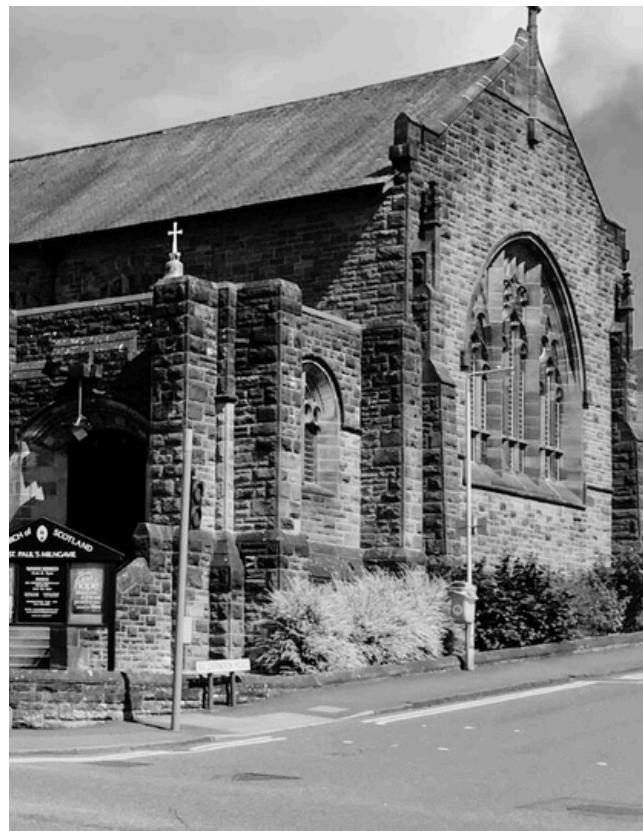
These services will create space to explore how our identities should be formed, not by culture, pressure, or performance — but by Christ.

On a more personal note, this year I am taking a break from all social media – and I thank our communications team for allowing this to happen. I am doing this to focus my attention more on the people in front of me and to enjoy more fully God's creation and the gift of the present moment. It is a small reminder to myself of something we all need: room to listen, room to notice, room to pray. And sometimes we need to turn down or off unnecessary noise and/or distraction.

We are made in the image of God. And in Christ Jesus, we are called children of God. That is our deepest identity.

In a world that constantly seeks to shape us, label us, and mould us, we need time and space to ensure we are being formed by Christ above all else.

John and I hold each of you in our prayers as we step together into this New Year. Please know that we are here for you, should you need spiritual or pastoral support at any



time. We also ask for your prayers for us and for all who serve in leadership within the church, that we may be continually guided by Christ, and that all our ministry and mission may flow from His grace rather than our own effort or desires. May this year be one in which we listen more deeply to Jesus' questions, respond honestly, and accept His gentle invitation once again:

***“Come and see.”***

With every blessing for the year ahead,

Blessings and Peace

Lynsey



*Our Praise Band playing at “Mince Pie Sunday”*

# Hello from Sakata

LORNA FERGUSON

Greetings from a cold and snowy Sakata.

I wonder how you feel about learning new skills. As a missionary, being involved in the local community is an important way to get to know people outside of church. At a church event, one lady introduced me to the wellness sport of *fukiya*, or blow darts, and invited me along for a trial.

In *fukiya*, you use a long pipe to blow round-tipped darts at a target. As in most Japanese sports, your posture, breathing and accuracy are all important. After the trial session, I decided to join the club. Each week we meet in a local community centre to practise. The best player in the club is a 92-year-old man who regularly scores maximum points.

When I first joined, one of the older members explained the basic rules and how to blow the darts. I was amazed that I actually managed to hit the target! At first, no one commented on my



technique. Recently, however, the chairman has started to tell me various things that I am not doing quite right. Last week he said, “If you want to improve, the best thing you can do is to watch the better players”.

In Japanese culture, it is unusual to be told what to do or not to do. You are expected to observe others and learn by imitation. At the end of the blow darts practice, everyone helps clear up. No one ever asked me to help or told me what to do. I was expected to notice what the others were doing and join in.

As I reflected on this, it struck me that the Christian life can be similar. While learning from God’s word is essential, there is also great value in watching how others live out their faith. We learn not only through instruction, but also through example.

Paul highlighted this in his first letter to the church of the Thessalonians:

***“You know how we lived among you for your sake. You became imitators of us and of the Lord, for you welcomed the message in the midst of severe suffering with the joy given by the Holy Spirit. And so you became a model to all the believers in Macedonia and Achaia. The Lord’s message rang out from you not only in Macedonia and Achaia—your faith in God has become known everywhere.”***

***1 Thessalonians 1:5b-8a***

Of course, our primary role model is the Lord Jesus. But God also wants us to learn from and be a model to each other. Please pray as I attend the fukiya class that I will not only learn about the sport from the more experienced players, but that I will also be a model of what it means to follow Jesus here in Japan.

With love and prayers,

Lorna

---



“Join together in following my example, brothers and sisters, and just as you have us as a model, keep your eyes on those who live as we do.”

– Philippians 3:17

# Christmas

## Cards

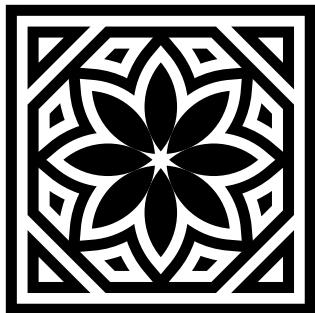
GORDON FAIRBROTHER

**I**would like to express my sincere thanks to all the volunteers in the congregation who gave so willingly of their time and talents in the run-up to Christmas.

As a result, around 1800 households in our parish received a Christmas card with a message from our minister and information regarding 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.





# Recipe of the Month

## PANCAKES

ANN MACLEOD

I was visiting Margaret Ingles last week and talking about food. She often made delicious pancakes for the Lunch Club and remembered the recipe she used. I asked if I could send it to *Life*, and she agreed.

### INGREDIENTS

- 200g self-raising flour
- 1 level tsp baking powder
- 1 level tsp salt
- 25g sugar
- 1 dessert spoon syrup
- 1 egg
- 200 to 250 ml milk



## METHOD

1. Sift dry ingredients.
2. Mix in egg, syrup and enough milk to make a thick batter.
3. Heat a lightly greased griddle or large frying pan to medium hot.
4. Drop a dessert spoonful of batter onto the pan and cook for 1 to 2 minutes until lightly browned.
5. Turn and cook the other side.
6. Place between a clean tea towel over a wire rack, until cool.



# John's Reflections

REV JOHN MACGREGOR

Dear friends,

**I**t was mid-January and I was on my way to Baldernock Parish Church for the 9.30am service, I said to Susan, my wife, “it won’t be long until we see some lambs in the fields and snowdrops”; then I parked the car, unknowingly beside a field with a crop of snow drops and Susan said, “Look John, they’ve arrived!”



I love to see those first flowers appear each year, often pushing through frozen ground while winter is still with us; because of that, snowdrops have long been seen as a symbol of hope and new beginnings.

Their small white heads, bowed as if they’re in prayer and politely nodding hello; although they look delicate, they’re

surprisingly tough and can survive frost and snow — a quiet reminder that strength doesn't always have to be loud!

February also brings us the season of Lent, or at least the approach of it. Lent invites us to slow down, to reflect, and to make space for God in the midst of our everyday routines. It's not about grand gestures or dramatic changes, but about turning our hearts again toward the One who walks with us through every season.

In pastoral visits and conversations over these past eight months, I've been reminded by how many people carry unseen burdens — worries about health and family, or simply the weight of loneliness. If that's you just now, please know that you are held in prayer and that the church is here for you. No one is meant to walk the journey alone.

My hope for us this February is simple: that we notice the small signs of grace around us; perhaps a kind word, a shared cup of tea, a moment of stillness, a snowdrop pushing through the frost, a kind smile. These are not small things in God's economy; they are reminders that light is returning, and that love is always at work.

May we continue to be people who look for hope, who offer encouragement, and who trust that God is gently preparing new life in us, and in our community.

I look forward to meeting with you at church or at one of our different events during the week.

If you would like a pastoral visit or if you know of someone who would benefit from one, please don't hesitate to get in touch.

With every blessing,

John

---

# Thank You

MARJORY-ANNE KENNEDY

**W**e would like to thank everyone at St Paul's for the cards, flowers, home baking and messages of condolence and support following the recent death of our Mum, Marjory, on Christmas Eve.

A special thank you to Rev John MacGregor for all the hospital and home visits and for conducting the services at both the Crematorium and at St Paul's, to Derek and the Choir, to Hugh and to Carla.

The retiral collection for Chest, Heart & Stroke Scotland raised the sum of £800.

With grateful thanks from Marjory-Anne and Fiona

# Guild News

ELIZABETH MCEWAN

**F**ollowing our 125th Anniversary, it was decided to donate to a new Guild initiative, “Living Stones” in Livingstonia, Malawi, to help equip a maternity unit. This initiative fits in with the National Guild Theme of “Living Stones” (see 1 Peter 2: 4-9).

Donations have also been sent to two National Guild projects as a result of last year’s coffee morning. “Operation Hope”, which assists persecuted Christians in Egypt, and Crossreach “Playful Beginnings”, which supports families in crisis in both Edinburgh and Glasgow.

Donations are also given to speakers from various charities throughout the Guild session.

Our syllabus for February is as follows:

**2nd Rev John MacGregor - Bible Study**

**9th Craig Wills, Crossreach - Playful Beginnings**

**16th Jane Hill and the Bearsden Ukulele Group**

**23rd Jill Morrison, Tearfund**

Visitors are most welcome to join the members on a Monday at 2pm in the large hall. There is always time for a cuppa and fellowship at the end of each meeting

A date for your diary: Saturday 7<sup>th</sup> March is the Annual Guild Coffee Morning in aid of two National Guild Projects. Further details to follow in the weekly intimations and the next copy of *Life*.

---

# Men's Association

BRIAN ADAIR

**T**he association met on 13th January when the speaker was Dr Iain Whyte and his topic was “Flags: origins and uses”. A most interesting evening was had, and we welcomed David More from Cadder Parish Church, Secretary of their Men’s Club, as a guest.

Our next meeting in January was our opportunity to invite the Guild to share with us. Our speaker was our own elder, Malcolm Boyd, and his title was “Elvis has left the building”.

In February, our first meeting is on Tuesday the 10<sup>th</sup>, and we will welcome Paul Semple from Waverley Excursions as our speaker. Our second meeting is on 24th February, when there has been a change in the speaker. We will now be hearing from Alex McKinnon, and his title is “Lochaber to the Cosmos”, which is about C.T.R. Wilson, the first Scottish Nobel Prize Winner for Physics, who invented a device called a cloud chamber.

The Association takes this opportunity to wish all members of St Paul’s blessings for the year ahead.

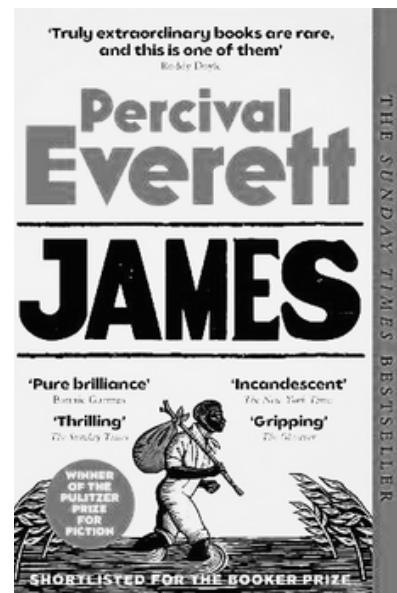
---

# Book Club

JOYCE CLARK

Our book this time, which was shortlisted for the Booker Prize, was *James* by Percival Everett.

James is a slave, and although the first few chapters are written in pidgin English, we soon realise that James is highly intelligent and has taught himself to read and write and is also teaching the slave children.



When James escapes, we journey with him on his adventures, which are sometimes harrowing to say the least. At this point, the author introduces the character of Huckleberry Finn, who shares the adventures with him.

The group felt the book was well written, easy to read and full of interesting characters. The treatment of the slaves was horrendous, as was James' life even after he escaped. It was suggested that we should read the book as a "romp" and solely as an adventure story, and it might make for an easier read.

Next time we have a choice of two books – *A Small Weeping* by Alex Gray or *The Killing Stones* by Ann Cleeves.

We are meeting on 3rd February at the usual time of 1.45pm for 2pm. Please contact the Church office for the venue if you would like to join us.



# Dalmuir Barclay Church

LIZ STEWART

*Lynsey received this letter from the Session Clerk of Dalmuir Barclay Church following our Gift Service in December.*

Dear Lynsey,

**W**e are so very grateful this year again for the wonderful support that the congregation have given DBC Community Food Pantry over the year. The two cars yesterday full of gifts for all: babies, boys, girls, ladies and men – wow! We are so blessed to have your support, and your kindness is overwhelming.

We do our best to reach out to all in the community who need our support. For a few months, our numbers had been going down a bit, but they have increased again, and we have more younger couples needing more support now. I mentioned to the congregation about the man who had nothing. No means to cook anything, no electricity or gas and only one tap with running water. We have been supporting him most weeks since then, and I am happy to inform you all that he is in a better place now, mentally

and with his house situation: repairs being done and utilities being attended to. To see him smile and be in a better place makes all the many hours and hard work so worthwhile. He is not alone in these circumstances, and we try to help everyone who comes to us for help. Sometimes we don't do enough, but we can point them in the right direction the help can then be twofold.

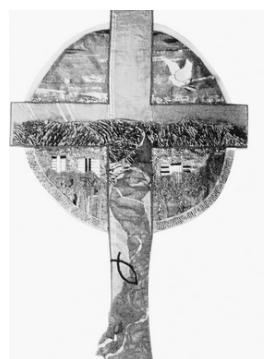
This year again, the donations from the congregation have left us speechless. The gifts are amazing and will enable us to help a great many families have a better Christmas. When the cars arrived, we were stunned at the amount of gifts given from the congregation

We know that there are many charities who need your support as much as we do, and we can't thank you and the congregation enough for your continuing support - it is very much appreciated by us.

The invitation to visit us any Thursday evening or Friday is open to you all, and you will be made very welcome.

May you all have a lovely Christmas and be richly blessed in 2026.

Liz Stewart



# A view from my balcony

GEORGE MITCHELL

*(This is an extract from a journal entry made on holiday in Tenerife a few years ago)*

I look over from our tenth-floor balcony; it is high, and I feel fear as I contemplate how near and how easy death is; one small but irrevocable step... I rest my hands on the ledge and take care not to lean too far lest my feet lose the grip of the floor, and I overbalance into the void. The fear is real, almost a terror, and I savour the opposite of that fear; the life which I have right now. Somehow, I stand on the threshold between life and death, and having the choice to live or die is a frightening prospect... And I notice that it is the fear that keeps me alive.



And I find that interesting; is it only the fear...? Fear of what: the long, screaming plunge to the ground? What about losing the life I have and all

that is manifest in that life: my friends and the love that grows within friendship: my clients who benefit from my gifts (no room in these reflections for false modesty), these gifts that have been forged in the alchemy of therapeutic relationship, (and now continue to grow in the nurturing love of personal relationship) gifts that have metamorphosed from the agonies of abuse and rejection, the God-given gift of sobriety. These gifts, and the friendships and relationships that have grown in my life, transformed a life that was once so barren and devoid of love that nothing could thrive or grow, an environment so empty of anything nurturing or good that I reached the point where death was indeed preferable.

And I stood on that threshold once, neither living nor dying, and God came into my life and set before me a new path, a different path. This new path has not been easy, but there was never the promise that it would be - there was never any promise other than life itself. I believe I was set on this path for a reason; I can only hope and pray that I am fulfilling what is asked of me by doing what I am doing, by being how I am being. By training myself to use my life and experience to help others; to engage with others in relationship, making myself available to be loved and to love. To love my neighbour as myself. And sometimes I succeed in all of these, and sometimes I fail in all of these. Sometimes my work with clients crosses that wondrous threshold and enters the mystical realm of deep healing and loving connection. Sometimes it doesn't. Sometimes I can feel impatient and inadequate, sometimes

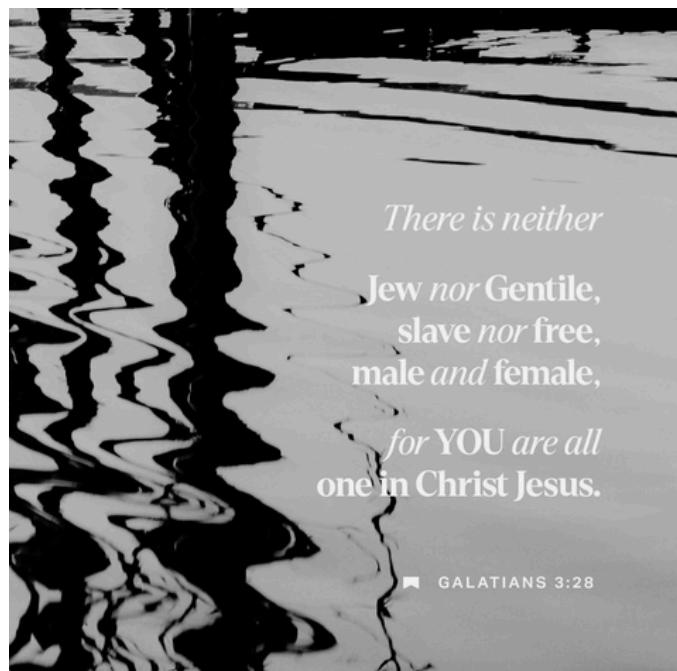
self-satisfied and conceited. In relationship, I can encounter thoughts and desires far removed from the 'pure' love I often like to profess; desires and feelings and thoughts that have no place in friendship. And yet they exist. The pure love co-exists with the base desires; the loving therapeutic alliance co-exists with the conceit and self-congratulatory reflections, the selfishness with the selfless giving.

The light cannot exist without the darkness (at least not in this world). Where there is light, there is also shadow. I am light, and I am shadow. I am human and hope to embrace, acknowledge, and allow my shadow. I am not perfect; I am human.

I stand on my balcony looking down in fear and acknowledge how deeply and profoundly I am blessed; I have much to give, and so much is given in return. I have my shadows also, and I embrace these darker aspects as a contrast to the light; to let the light shine out, for if there were no darkness, how then could I know the light? I do not deny or turn away from the darkness; I have been given the choice in which realm I live, and sometimes I choose unwisely. I like to think I choose the path of light more frequently, but maybe that is a shadow thought... I stand on my balcony and feel blessed that I have a choice to take; because for some, as it once was for me, there was no choice... There was no light; there was only darkness. Now I have light, and with the blessing of light comes shadow. Is this what it means to be human...?

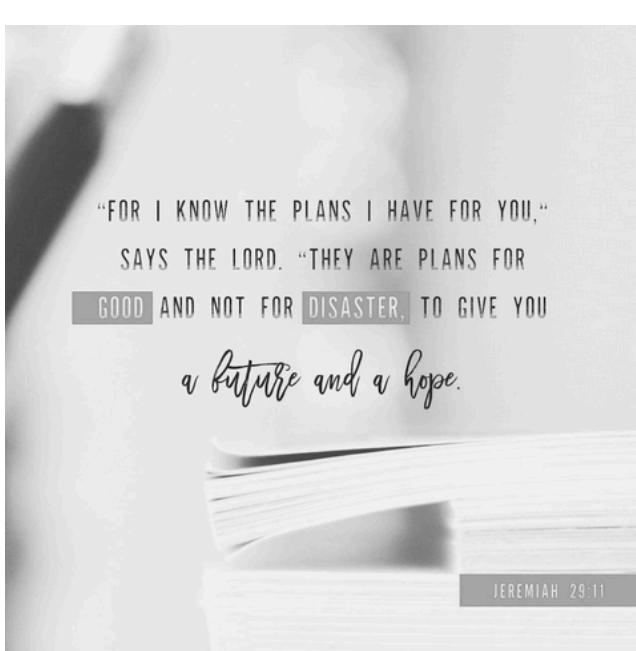
I stand on my balcony and look down. I see other people there, alone or in pairs. Sometimes a little group. I look at one of these people and follow his (her?) walking for a short time; "What is your story? How did you come to be here in this moment with this particular companion..."? And there is the realisation that this person has their own wondrous story, no less or more wondrous than my own. He has his own life, friendships, relationships, no more or less profound than mine; for who am I to judge what is profound and what is meaningful?

Were I able to walk in his shoes for only a few steps, what joys and sorrows would I encounter there? What pain and heartache do you embody? What hopes and fears haunt your nights? We are alike in so many ways; we may be different in so many ways; this person's skin might be a different colour from mine, the figure may be male or female, French, gay, younger, older, atheist, Muslim... Who knows...? But at our core, we share many of the same fears and hopes, loves, aspirations and ideals; we have so much more in common than that which separates us. We are both human and thus share a fundamental existence that surpasses all human constructs of what 'difference' means and the level of significance and importance we ascribe and attach to it. My



mysterious friend far below me shares the same wondrous infinitude of life, and it's living. Were we to meet and talk, I know we would share much in common; we would share the experience of life.

I stand on my balcony and look down. My own story manifest in every aspect of my being; in the relationships which grace my life, my hopes and fears, my work and my leisure, my thoughts and how I express them, and to whom. And I am grateful beyond all measure for this life I now have. In a curious way I am also grateful for the path that has led to this moment; all of it... All of it... God's hand is in it all, from my conception and before even that, through my childhood and all that brought, my early adulthood, my struggles that led to an end of one 'life' and the beginnings of another. That guiding hand and plan are beyond understanding, but I stand on this balcony for a reason. I have experienced what I have in my life for a reason. I am moved to share these reflections with you for a reason. You are in my life for a reason, as I am in yours for a reason.



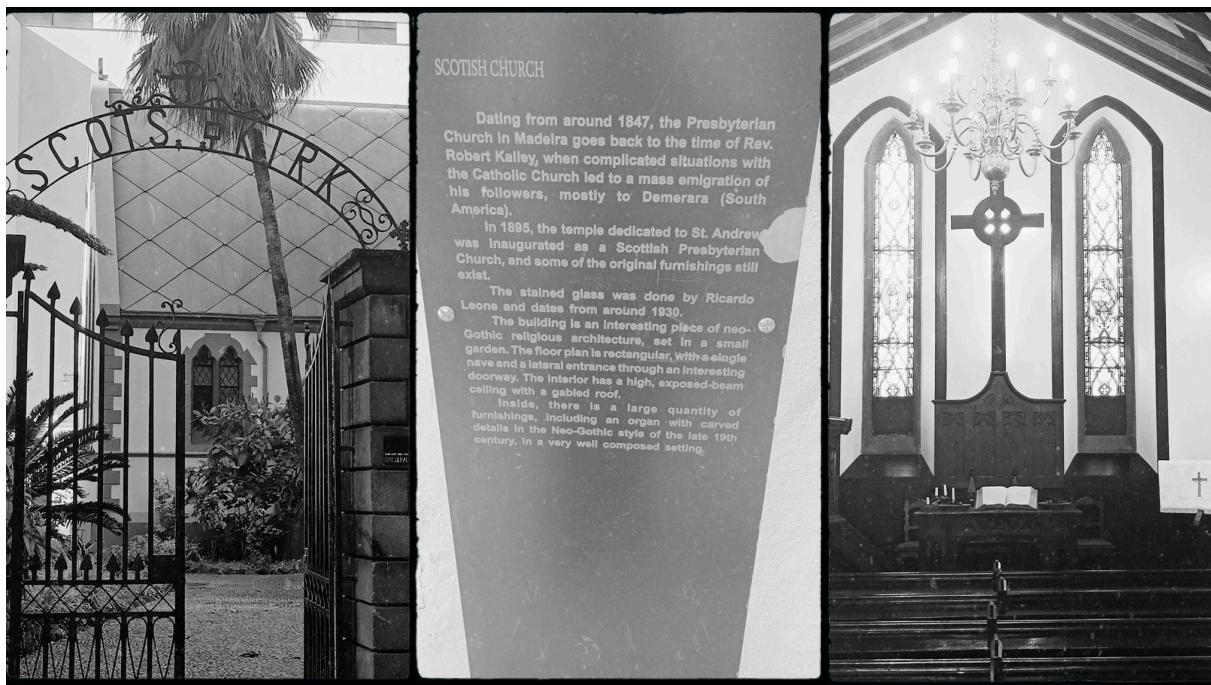
"FOR I KNOW THE PLANS I HAVE FOR YOU,"  
SAYS THE LORD. "THEY ARE PLANS FOR  
GOOD AND NOT FOR DISASTER, TO GIVE YOU  
*a future and a hope.*

JEREMIAH 29:11

I cannot know God's plan. All I know for certain is that it is the love that is present in my life today, in all its forms, that keeps my feet firmly on the balcony. Love is all that is needed. Love is all there is. I stand on my balcony and look down and share and express my love and my life with you in this moment.

# Scots Kirk

**O**n a recent holiday in Madeira, Vivienne McGuinness and her husband came across the Scots Kirk in Funchal. This was the first Presbyterian church in Portugal, and was founded by the Scottish physician Robert Reid Kalley in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century. The building is still in use as a church, but no longer has links to Scotland. Vivienne has kindly shared some photographs which she took of the church building.



The text of the inscription in the middle photograph is as follows:

## **SCOTTISH CHURCH**

**Dating from around 1847, the Presbyterian Church in Madeira goes back to the time of Rev. Robert Kalley, when complicated situations with the Catholic Church led to a mass emigration of his followers, mostly to Demerara (South America).**

**In 1895, the temple dedicated to St. Andrew was inaugurated as a Scottish Presbyterian Church, and some of the original furnishings still exist.**

**The stained glass was done by Ricardo Leone and dates from around 1930.**

**The building is an interesting piece of neo-Gothic religious architecture, set in a small garden. The floor plan is rectangular, with a single nave and a lateral entrance through an interesting doorway. The interior has a high, exposed-beam ceiling with a gabled roof.**

**Inside, there is a large quantity of furnishings, including an organ with carved details in the Neo-Gothic style of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, in a very well composed setting.**

Do any other readers have memories of visiting Scottish churches abroad? I have had the pleasure of worshipping at the Scots Kirk in Paris and the English Reform Church in Amsterdam, both part of the Church of Scotland's International Presbytery. I found great comfort in being able to worship God with other Scottish people in an otherwise unfamiliar city. Please share your stories and photos.

# Roll changes

Sorry, this section isn't available online.

# St Paul's On Tour

ST PAUL'S LIFE

1

## ST PAUL'S ON TOUR



Due to a cancellation, a double/twin room has unexpectedly become available on the church holiday to Northumbria (17<sup>th</sup> to 21<sup>st</sup> April 2026). If interested, please call or message Anne Ritchie on 07811 973375.

For those already booked on the trip, a reminder of the final payment of £545 each, due by 20th February. Refer to the sheet already circulated for details.

Looking ahead to next year, St Paul's On Tour 2027 will be a trip to North Wales,

staying at the Celtic Royal Hotel in Caernarfon, from 21<sup>st</sup> to 25<sup>th</sup> June 2027.

Refurbished rooms have been requested.

## 2 NOAH'S ARK

Noah's Ark is hosting a coffee morning on Saturday, 7th February, from 10am to noon. All funds raised will be donated to Glasgow Children's Hospital Charity. Tickets are £2.50 for adults and free for children. These are on sale at the back of the church, or pay at the door.

Any donations of home baking would be greatly received and can be handed in on Friday, 6th February, between 3pm and 4pm or brought on the day.

All are welcome to come along and help raise funds for a worthwhile charity.

3

## BIBLE SUNDAY



Sunday 22nd February will be Bible Sunday in St Paul's, when there will be an opportunity to hear about and to support the work of the Scottish Bible Society both in Scotland and overseas. Norman Liddle from the Scottish Bible Society will give us an update on the work of the Society.

## 4

## FLOWER DONATIONS

Thank you to all who gave Flower Donations in 2025 and to those who arranged and distributed the flowers. The flowers are much appreciated by those in church each Sunday and by those receiving them after the service.

Donations can be left in the Flower Guild pigeon hole at the back of the church, or in the offering plate marked “For the Flower Fund”.



## 5

## THE BEACON

We have too many helpers at The Beacon to acknowledge everyone, but the folk who come and donate money for lunches have enabled us to give donations to the following charities:

**Dalmuir Barclay Church** for children's work, after a break-in and theft denied the children their trip.

**Lodging House Mission** and **Glasgow City Mission**, which both do great work among the homeless.

**The Salvation Army**, whose work is well known.

Finally, **Book Aid** to provide books for midwives in Africa.

We also donated to St Paul's to help with heating expenses.

Thank you all for your generosity in giving help to so many needy folk, as well as enjoying lunch and company at The Beacon each Wednesday at noon.

6

## ST PAUL'S SERVICES

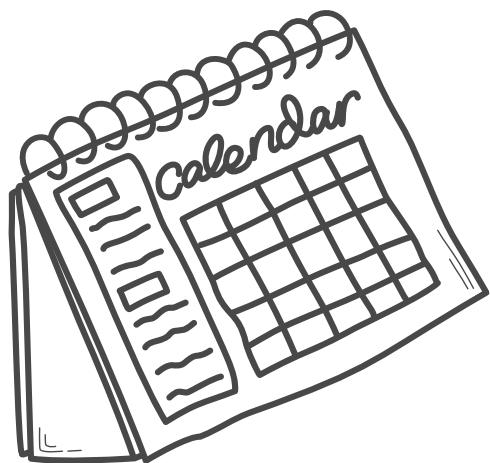
All Sunday morning services this month will take place at the new, regular time of 11am. Services on 1<sup>st</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> will be led by Rev Lynsey Brennan; on Sunday 15<sup>th</sup>, we will be led by Stephen Thoms; the Bible Sunday service on 22<sup>nd</sup> (see above) will be led by Robin Easton. As always, we invite you to stay for tea and a chat after the service.

On 28th February, we join together for *The Way*. This is a contemporary service encountering the Spirit of God. We meet at 6.30pm for hot drinks and doughnuts, before the service at 7pm.

7

## LIFE DEADLINES

The next issue of St Paul's Life will be published on Sunday 1st March. The deadline for submissions is Sunday 28th February. All submissions and suggestions are welcome. Thank you for all your continued support.





1 BALDERNOCK ROAD  
MILNGAVIE, G62 8DP

