

Life at St. Paul's Milngavie

December 2020



Dear Friends,

The word 'minimalist' has crept more and more into our vocabulary in recent years. It is used in reference to art, interior decoration and personal possessions. The message is that less is more, that often in life the simpler the better, that sparse does not necessarily mean deprivation.

With this in mind I suppose of necessity we are all having to plan a minimalist Christmas. Many of the things we took for granted at this time of the year are having to be stripped back if we are to help check the spread of Covid-19. Some ingenious suggestions are being made to help us make the most of things. But there is no doubt that this will be a Christmas like no other.

Part of me is saying that we just have to suck it up. Surely we can put up with one minimalist Christmas if it means contributing to the greater good. But we can't leave it at that. Christmas has never just been about decorations, dinners, parties, presents or even family gatherings. There is a message on which we are called to reflect and also to proclaim. And this is where our minimalist Christmas may just work to our good and the good of others. There may just be more opportunity for us to draw near to the reason for the season. The apostle John helps us with that:

'The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us.' (John 1: 14)

There is a tradition in the Eastern Orthodox Church that whenever that verse is read in a service there is a silent pause to allow people to meditate on that great truth and to take it deeper into themselves. I can see the wisdom of that. To think of it. God came to us as one of us. He began His human journey as we did, as a single cell in the womb, growing through the normal gestation period, developing from childhood to manhood, becoming the Saviour of humankind through His death on a cross and His rising from the dead, becoming the sign of what God's ultimate plan is for humanity and Creation.

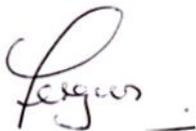
It may be that a minimalist Christmas will give us more space to reflect on that and to experience the hope that the birth of Jesus has brought to humankind. You'll be familiar with the hymn, 'It came upon the midnight clear'. There's a verse from the original that is usually left out:

'And ye, beneath life's crushing load,
Whose forms are bending low,
Who toil along the climbing way
With painful steps and slow,
Look now! for glad and golden hours
come swiftly on the wing.
O rest beside the weary road,
And hear the angels sing.'

Luke tells us that angels announced the birth of Jesus, how God wished the closest of relationships with humankind, and how He is eternally on our side:
'Glory to God in highest
And on earth peace to men
On whom his favour rests.' (Luke 2: 14)

In the midst of our burdens we have that message to reflect upon and also to experience the power of God's love within us.

Wishing you all God's Peace,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read 'Fergus', followed by a horizontal line.

Christmas Worship

At the time of writing worship within the Church building is restricted to 20. This is subject to change according to the guidelines of the Scottish government. Any changes will be announced on the Church website or in the course of the recorded services.

The recorded services will continue as long as they are necessary with a Morning Service and an Evening Reflection.

The Evening Reflection on 20 December will take the form of readings and Christmas hymns and choir items. There will also be a Christmas Eve service on 24 December. Both will be available on the Church website and YouTube from 7 pm.

Fergus hopes to provide a reflection on Christmas morning.

Gardening Thanks

May I take this opportunity to thank all the gardeners for their hard work during this very difficult year. Some of the gardeners could not, for various reasons, do any gardening and I am grateful to all the others who kept the garden looking neat and tidy. I would also like to thank Hugh for keeping the grass and the hedge cut. This year one of our gardeners had to retire but we have had three new members and I would like to take this opportunity to thank them for coming forward and joining us. I hope come next Spring that things will be able to go back to some form of normality.

Stay safe

Sheila Dickson
Garden Convener

Men's Association

This has been a very strange time for the Men's Association. As most of the congregation know, we meet on a Tuesday evening in the Centenary Room, where we have tea/coffee and treats before our meeting and then a guest speaker would share his or her thoughts with us and there would be a loving and Christian fellowship shared by all who attended. Our number have grown over the last year or so and we are very pleased that the Association is in such good heart.

There have been no meetings this year as a result of the pandemic but we have kept in touch with our members in a variety of ways. We do not anticipate any meetings before March 2021 when our year ends but we hope to return to normal in September 2021.

We have provisionally arranged for a trip to Mount Stuart on the Isle of Bute for April which was postponed last year, but only time will tell if that can happen. We also thought that it might have been possible to have our Annual Christmas Lunch but not surprisingly, with the current restrictions, that will not be happening. It should have taken place on 15th December and we've asked all members to have that date in their diary and to think of and pray for all our members and the wider congregation on that day, particularly around lunchtime. Maybe all the congregation could join in with their own prayers on that day.

The Men's Association sends Christmas blessings to all members of St Paul's at this time.

LHM 2020 CHRISTMAS APPEAL



**KEEP THOSE AFFECTED BY HOMELESSNESS
WARM THIS CHRISTMAS**
with a
WINTER WEATHER PACK

Winter Weather Packs contain; gloves, hat, scarf, face mask,
and a phone number providing access to support and
chaplains services. Each pack will be delivered to an
individual who finds themselves isolated and affected by
homelessness this festive season.

You could sponsor the cost of a Winter weather pack at £12
or simply make a donation to our Christmas Appeal and
help us to continue to care for and support those who are
isolated and without a home over the festive period.

HELP US SHARE SOME WARMTH THIS WINTER.

THANKYOU.



<https://lhm-glasgow.org.uk/give>

Church of Scotland Used Stamp Appeal

As Christmas draws near please remember to collect all stamps from cards and parcels for the World Mission Appeal. This appeal continues throughout the year so in these difficult times the stamps can be brought to the church in the future months. There is a collection box in the Strathblane Road porch with details of the charity that is being supported by World Mission.



Irene Strang



Dear Friends,

With news of the Christmas bubbles, I wonder what plans you are making to celebrate this year. I had hoped that Calum would be home by now from the US. However, when he went to get the coronavirus test required before a flight, he turned out to be positive. He has no symptoms but is now in isolation in his University room until he tests negative. We are not sure when he will be able to fly back and then he needs to quarantine an additional 2 weeks at home. Matthew also hopes to come back for the holidays once his semester ends, so we are hoping his test will be negative. Daniel no longer has a residents' visa so is not able to come this year.

Here we are now going into our third wave of coronavirus cases, with the number of cases, those seriously ill and those dying, all higher than they have been before (albeit lower than the UK). The Government has identified restaurants and bars as probably places of infection, so we now have a guideline of 5 "small's": eat out with **small numbers** (up to 4), for a **small** (short) **time**, using your own **small plate** (rather than sharing), speaking with a **small voice**, and paying attention to **small details** such as masks, hand washing etc.

Christmas is the biggest outreach opportunity of the year in Japan. Churches had already decided not to hold special events, but are thinking of other ways to reach out to their communities. Instead of the usual children's party, my church is making up Christmas gifts to deliver to the children from the community who usually come to these sorts of events. Others are delivering tracts to people in their neighbourhoods, and hosting online Christmas gatherings. I am making a small gift and Christmas card to give to my neighbours.

There are so many people in Japan who need the message of hope that Christmas brings. As the pandemic continues, we are seeing significant rises in the number of suicides, especially of women in their 20s and 40s. We are also seeing increasing numbers of young families purchasing Shinto altars and setting them up in a prominent place in the house, close to the ceiling. In so doing, they create a "high place" of worship in the comfort and safety of their own homes. The sense of uncertainty is leading many people to seek some visible representation of divinity to watch over their lives. Please pray that in spite of the restrictions, many Japanese people will hear and respond to the wonderful message of Christmas, that God did not stay in a high place, but came down to live among us, and die for us.

Thank you for all your prayers and support this year. Whatever your circumstances, may you know the Lord's blessing this Christmas.

With love and prayers,

Lorna, Daniel, Matthew, Calum and Alistair

Guild News

It could easily be assumed that the Guild is in hibernation this year because our meetings have not been taking place. Far from it! The committee members phone Guild members regularly and have long chats; I have had some fascinating conversations and have discovered a myriad of facts about members' lives and the history of Milngavie. Apart from these phone calls, several lunches have taken place at Andiamo's, always adhering to public health guidelines, of course. Members have really appreciated the opportunity to see one another, and we hope that these lunches will be able to continue in the New Year.

The committee has held three meetings on Zoom which have been very useful. We have allocated funds in the normal way for this time of year. Some money will go to the project we have chosen this year from the six which are supported by the national Guild over a period of three years. Our chosen project, Free to Live, helps an organisation which has rescued young women from prostitution and has provided a residential school for their children in Pune in western India.

Every year all the Guilds in Dunbartonshire hold a Carol Service which this year will be a virtual one. It will include readings, carols and a message from the Moderator of the General Assembly, and will be available on Facebook and Youtube on Wednesday 16th December at 7.00 p.m.. Our own Chris Scott has been called on to compile this service – how would we manage without him?! Normally, members are asked to bring specific items to the service but, of course, this year that cannot happen. Instead, each Guild will collect hats, scarves and gloves for Nursery and Primary School children who are spending more time than usual out of doors. We will give them to schools where the children are less privileged and perhaps don't have the resources at home to provide these cosy clothes.

Some of our ladies are keen knitters; we have sent a large number of hats to the maternity unit of the Queen Elizabeth University Hospital, and other suggestions for knitting are available from Elizabeth Bragg (316 1175) and Kate Seller (563 9904). Kate also organises the distribution of jigsaws to members, though would appreciate some more puzzles to add to her library if any church member has any to spare.

Christmas will be different for us all this year, despite the recent relaxation of government regulations. Naturally we all wish we could have our usual celebrations. We should, however, try to remember what Fergus said in a recent sermon: we are still part of a community, we are not alone because of the presence of the Holy Spirit with us and in us, and we can still pray and worship together, albeit not in the usual way.

The Guild committee sends best wishes to all our members and also to other members of the congregation, and trusts that you will have a happy Christmas when you will know the real meaning of 'Emmanuel, Christ with us.'

Eleanor Easton

What's Happening with the Young People of St. Paul's?

We may not be able to meet up in person yet but there has been lots going on with the young people of St Paul's. The Sunday Clubs have been meeting up online on a Sunday morning at 10:30. The youngsters have packs of craft materials and work sheets delivered to them. They use these on a Sunday morning on the Zoom calls. It has been a lot of fun.

We've also been continuing with Sunkids online too. It has been fun keeping up with the youngsters and finding out how their lives have been during these unusual times.

The Bible Class has tried a few different times for our Zoom calls, some more successful than others. We have settled on a Sunday morning at 10:30 the same as the SC. At the moment, we are working on a 'play' which we hope will be included in one of the online services in the run up to Christmas. The young people have a lot of challenges at school and with keeping themselves in touch with their friends. We would ask you to pray for them as they navigate their way through these unusual times.

Gift Giving



As there will be no gift service this year, we thought that you and the young people may like to still donate gifts. We are arranging that the church hall will be open from **10 – 12 on Saturday 12th December** to drop off your gifts. The gifts will be donated to Preshal Trust, who will distribute to disadvantaged families.

St. Paul's Society Cards

As usual the St. Paul's cards are readily available and a few of the collection can be seen here or on the church website or facebook page. The pack of five pastel notelets (£2.50 for five) are especially popular with some of the elders to send out to their district and the inspirational cards (£1 each) are going down well too. The gold foil cards at £1 each are great as a special note card, or we have loads of designs including new babies, new houses, praying and birthdays. Also available are the "razzle dazzle" cards with the person's name on them. Great for birthdays with a bit of bling and well worth £2.

At the moment the money being collected is for The Boys' Brigade Overseas Fund and shortly we will hit the target for that and send off a cheque. Over the last year we have sent cheques to:

£400 Beatson Wellness Centre

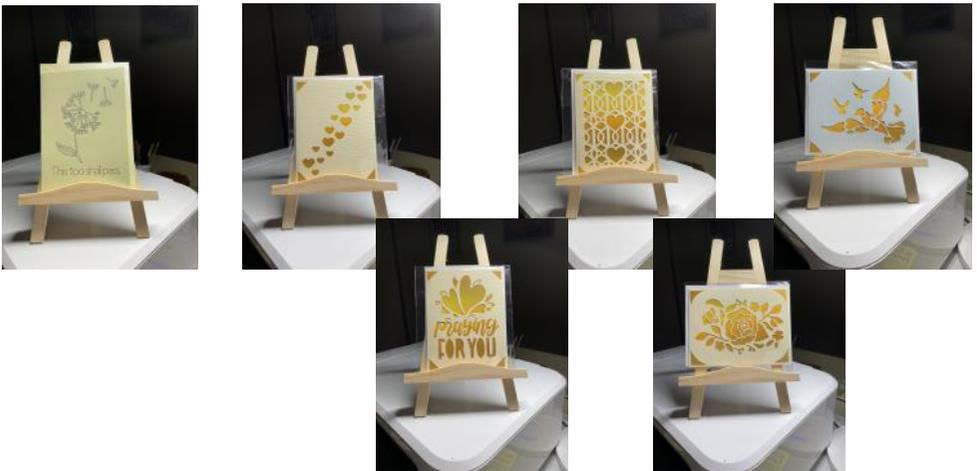
£400 Myeloma UK

£200 Playlist for life

£200 Bobath (now called Cerebral Palsy Scotland)

With the help of the Church we are also sending out approximately three cards each week to anyone we know who has been ill, suffered a bereavement or has gone into an eventide home. We are also sending out a card to anyone in the transport list who cannot get to church and anyone in the pastoral list. We will alert the elders of those involved when we send a card out and it is hoped that each person will receive two cards from the church during the current lockdown. The card has a picture of the Sanctuary of St. Paul's taken at last year's Harvest Festival. Each card is personalised inside and has a prayer on the card as well as an encouraging verse from the Bible. Picture is shown on page 9.

Finally, we received a letter from Mrs Stephanie Fraser who is the CEO of Bobath now called Cerebral Palsy Scotland. Stephanie is known to us through Baldernock Parish where she is a member.



Cerebral Palsy Scotland

Dear Alex,

What a lovely card to receive in the centre this morning and thank you to you and the St. Paul's Church Society for your very generous cheque for £200 to Bobath Scotland Cerebral Palsy Therapy Centre. What a wonderful way to support local organisations and we are so delighted that you have chosen to support us. Thank you.

This year is difficult for all of us as we find our way through the COVID-19 pandemic. Whilst personally I have been missing the communal fellowship of real church services hugely, I am well aware that I am one of the lucky ones. Life during lockdown for people with cerebral palsy and their families has been particularly hard. All were named on the government's vulnerable list and people

have felt isolated and have struggled to cope as their usual support services have been limited.

Your donation will help us to provide support in persona and online to help people rebuild mobility and confidence. We have been developing new ways to support people both online and in person in order to suit individual needs. We are so grateful for your help.

"The contact and reaching out to say you are there has been valued"

"I really liked the virtual appointments. Just a couple of sessions gave us a lot of new ideas and sensible advice about tackling some day-to-day problems."

Again, many thanks for your wonderful donation. I trust that you and Mrs McEwen are keeping well and that it won't be too long before we can meet and enjoy services in Baldernock and St. Paul's once more.

With best wishes



Mrs Stephanie Fraser
CEO



FRIDAY 11th DECEMBER AT 19:30

Join us on zoom for the Tearfund Quiz. Make yourself a cuppa or grab your favourite beverage and join us at 19:30 on 11th for a fun quiz. Contact me at Janice.maclean2@outlook.com or on 07711361936 for joining details.

Even if you can't join us for the quiz, please consider a donation. All donations will go to further the work of Tearfund. Donations can be made on the following link: <https://www.justgiving.com/fundraising/Janice-Maclean1>

Following Jesus where the need is greatest

Sunday Morning Zoom Chat at 11:30

Are you a bit more familiar than you were 6 months ago with Zoom and online chat? If so, you may want to consider joining the St Paul's Zoom chat on a Sunday morning. There are usually around 30 or so people joining in. We have around 10 mins chatting in a big group and then we split into random smaller groups of 5 or 6 for a couple of 15 mins sessions, but you are welcome to come and go as you please. There is always someone in the waiting room.

If you would like to give it a try, contact nimmiwhitelaw@ntlworld.com to be added to the list for joining instructions.

World Mission News

Kirk welcomes Nuclear Ban Treaty

The Church of Scotland has welcomed the news that 50 countries have now ratified the Nuclear Ban Treaty. This means that nuclear weapons will be banned in the same way as chemical and biological weapons, land mines and cluster bombs.

The Church has consistently opposed the possession, use or threat to use nuclear weapons for over 30 years and has explicitly backed the Nuclear Ban Treaty. It has also called on the UK Government to disarm its nuclear weapons and to support the Treaty process.

The Very Rev Dr Susan Brown, Convener of the Faith Impact Forum of the Church of Scotland, said: "This is an important moment in the history of nuclear disarmament. I would like to thank everybody in the Church of Scotland who has worked and prayed for this moment to come, and to say we now need to work to get every other country – including our own – to scrap nuclear weapons."

"The only way to ensure they are never used again is to put them beyond use; we create peace through growing love, building relationships and showing compassion. Relying on the prospect of utter destruction does not lead to peace, but rather it intensifies the threat of war in our world."



Scottish Church leaders call for action on Internal Markets Bill

Six Scottish Church leaders have sent a letter to MPs and the House of Lords voicing grave, shared concerns over the Internal Market Bill, which they say sets a 'disastrous precedent' that risks breaking international law.



The letter warns that the passing of the legislation by the UK Parliament strains the devolution settlement by failing to seek the consent of the Scottish Parliament. It also threatens the delicate balance of peace in Northern Ireland, and passing a Bill for Royal Assent would place Her Majesty the Queen in the difficult position of having to sign legislation that breaks international law.

Signed by Rt Rev Dr Martin Fair for the Church of Scotland, Archbishop Leo Cushley for the Roman Catholic Church, Rt Rev John Armes for the Scottish Episcopal Church and three other senior church leaders, the letter calls on MPs and Peers to debate these issues and make representations to the UK Government.

For more information on World Mission, visit: <https://churchofscotland.org.uk/serve/world-mission/world-mission-news>

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Copy Date

The copy date for the January issue is Wednesday 30th December via email.

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

Note from the Editor

Many thanks to all who have contributed over the past year. If you have any comments on the magazine or you would like to contribute, please don't hesitate to send me an email (st.paulslifemagazine@gmail.com).

Carla MacAllister