

Life at St. Paul's Milngavie

February 2021



Dear Friends,

As we continue through these Covid-19 days I hope the prayers below will be a help to you.

Holding the promises of Jesus for His Church,

Fergus.

'When I consider your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars, which you have set in place, what is man that you are mindful of him, the son of man that you care for him?' (Psalm 8: 3-4)

God our Father,

With our limited minds, our limited understanding and our limited love,
We stand before the wonder of our God:
Eternal, all-knowing, all-powerful, every impulse enveloped in love, taking delight
in the response of His people.
We struggle to conceive how the Creator of the Universe holds each one of us in
His loving focus,
But your Word tells us that You know every thought, every word, every action,
And You know our deepest needs.
So we come to You confident that the Lord of all being is indeed near to every
loving heart.

Thank You for this assurance in our need of forgiveness for past failure, in our
need of the will to change, in our need of grace to persevere through set-back,
discouragement and anxiety,
This not just for our own peace but for the good of others with whom we have to
do that they may find us understanding, encouraging, forgiving, wishing the best
for them.

As You are mindful of us, as You care for us, let this be shown in our attitude to
all those You love.

Amen.

God our Father,

We thank You for Your Creation and for all it teaches us of Your love and Your power.

We thank You for those who explore the wonder and mystery of Your Creation to increase our understanding.

We thank You for those who recognise those things that threaten the balance and the beauty of Creation and seek to bring them under control.

We thank You especially for those engaged in the study of Covid-19 and how it might cease to damage our quality of life.

May every experience of the goodness in Creation make us stronger within ourselves and more willing to hold the Creator as the centre of our lives.

We join with Your Church throughout the world in worshiping You today and praying for hearts more attuned to Your ways.

We join with the World in a common aspiration for peace between nations, for justice within nations, for relief from poverty, disease and oppression.

We join with the four nations of the UK to pray for wisdom for our leaders, protection for those in the frontline of care, fewer things that divide and sour the spirit.

We join with those who face lockdown alone, who are struggling financially, who are worried about their jobs and their education.

We join with those stricken with the virus and those who love them, not able to visit, feeling helpless and anxious. We pray your strength and peace for them.

Amen.

There will be short Reflections online on every Saturday through Lent beginning on 21st February. The theme is 'Songs For The Dark Times' and will focus on Psalms which reflect the response of people of faith in challenging days.

Fergus and members of St. Paul's Kirk Session will lead the reflections. It is hoped that this will be a source of strength and inspiration for us all in this time.

Minister's Blog

The Minister's Blog has been rather sparse recently possibly as a result of other online work demanding attention. Rumour has it that in future there will be more for you to focus upon.

St. Paul's Society Cards

There are three new cards available for a total price of £4 (see image below). If you would like a favourite Bible verse, that can be arranged, as well as the delivery. Payment can wait or we can give you the bank details to transfer the money through digital banking.

During the past month we have sent £100 to Old Kilpatrick Food Parcels and we are well on our way to sending £100 to St. Joseph's Food bank which is run by The Tressle Trust. After that, it is our aim to send another £100 to The Preshal Trust to be used for their take away lunches.

A great big thanks to everyone, as it will be our target to have given away £1000 during the current pandemic.

So far:

Playlist for life £200

Beatson £200

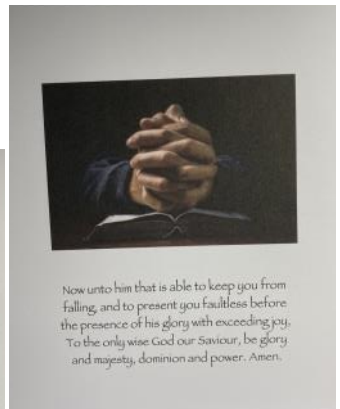
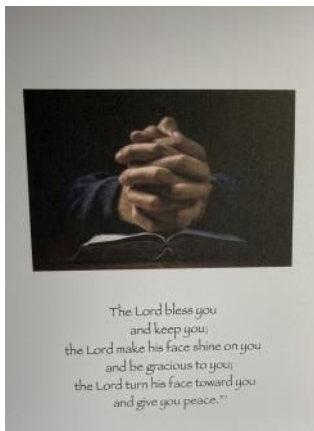
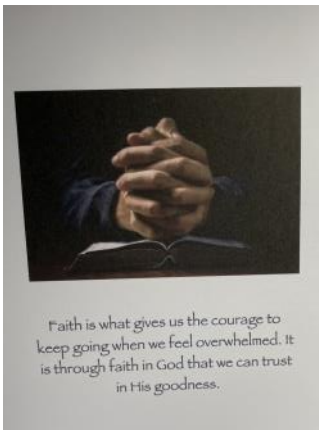
Bobath £200

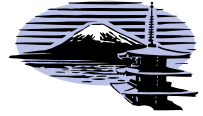
Boys' Brigade Overseas £100

Old Kilpatrick food parcels £100

That's a total so far of £800 since March last year, so thanks to one and all for all the orders and please keep them coming in.

Alex McEwan





Dear Friends,

Since I last wrote, about half of Japan's population has been placed under what is called a State of Emergency. We are asked not to go out unless necessary, and especially not after 8pm. Churches can remain open but need to be extra vigilant. My church has asked those who are over 75 to consider watching the online service rather than coming in person, since they are more at risk.

One of those is a lady in her late 70s. She was widowed 25 years ago and lives alone. She decided to try to support all the other older ladies who are on their own and often have no one to talk to most days. So she asked a family member to get her a smart phone with a plan for unlimited calls, so that she can phone the other ladies regularly to check how they are doing, and to encourage them. Sometimes they sing hymns together over the phone.

The Bible talks about not despising the day of small things (Zechariah 4:10). This lady feels that she is only doing a small thing, though I am sure that it is a big thing for those that she calls. I think that for many of us, this pandemic is the day of small things. We can't gather together, big events are cancelled, many people are furloughed from their work and perhaps wondering what they can do. It is easy to be discouraged. However, there probably are small things we can do – a phone call or text to someone on their own, meeting someone outside for a walk together, sending a letter or card.

And most of all we can pray for people. Often we say, "All I can do is pray," as if it is a small thing, perhaps especially just now when we cannot give practical help so easily. But actually praying is one of the biggest things we can do for each other. Thank you for all your prayers for Japan. In my church here last Sunday we had a time of prayer for my supporting churches in Scotland. I hope we can continue to pray for each other, and look out for the "small things" we can do to encourage and support those who are struggling.

With love and prayers,

Lorna, Daniel, Matthew, Calum and Alistair

Guild News

In normal times the Guild branches in Dunbartonshire hold a joint Carol Service in December; we are asked to bring items for a particular project which are then distributed to a variety of charitable organisations. This session, of course, we were unable to hold such a Carol Service, though a recorded version took place which was masterminded by Chris Scott and was a great success.

The minister of Faifley Parish Church alerted us to the problems of nursery and primary schools, where this year the children are expected to spend more time than usual outdoors. The staff had discovered that many children come to school without the necessary hats, scarves and gloves for these chilly days. Thus it was suggested that each Guild branch should ask its members to provide these items, either by knitting or buying them.

We contacted teachers to ask if this would be helpful and were assured that it was a wonderful idea! Some 20 sets, comprising hats, scarves and gloves were given to a children's organisation - PEEK- which works in Glasgow. The remainder were divided between a school in Drumchapel and another in Springburn.

We knew that our members are generous, but the quantity provided, far exceeded our expectations. Other members and friends of the congregation also contributed, even from as far away as Tiree! We thought that everyone would like to know how many items were handed in:

| | | |
|-----------------------|------------------------|------------|
| 36 hat and scarf sets | 16 hat and gloves sets | 17 scarves |
| 64 pairs of gloves | 104 hats | |

The children and teachers are very grateful for all these cosy items, especially when temperatures are so low. An enormous 'thank you' to everyone who has been so generous!

Finance

Last year was extremely difficult for us all, with lockdowns, self-isolation and shielding meaning that we were unable to do the normal things in life. In the Church we were, and still are at the present time, unable to meet for worship and fellowship on Sundays and during the week for Organisations.

That being said, the Church still exists and has to be maintained to ensure that it will still be available for us when normality returns.

Last year, we lost out on a considerable amount of income from the offerings we would usually receive on a Sunday and ended the year with our offerings being £16,300 less than the year before. While this is an extremely large amount (about 10%) it would have been considerably more had some of the members, who usually give by envelope, not sent their offering by cheque or by changing to Standing Order.

We managed to reduce our General Expenditure by taking advantage of the Government's Job Retention Scheme Grants for staff wages when the employees were furloughed. Our energy bills and insurance remained very similar to last year, but most repairs to fabric are now charged to the Restoration in Faith Fund which leaves the General Fund mostly for day to day running costs of the Church.

Last year we received 2 Legacies totalling £44,200 from faithful members who remembered us in their wills.

We also received over £7,800 in income to the General Fund from our investments in the Church of Scotland's Investors Trust Income Fund.

Some of this money was used to clear our year end deficit in the General Fund and the remainder lodged in the General Reserve which now has a healthy balance.

At the time of the first lockdown and Church closure, our own minister Fergus was still absent due to his illness, we were supported by Rev. John Wilson. After discussion with our Session Clerk, we arranged to record the services in the Sanctuary and stream it to the internet to maintain contact with the members of the congregation, and to provide DVDs of the recording to allow those without access to the internet not to miss out on the service. When Fergus returned, he continued with the recorded services and in addition he recorded a short evening Reflection which is also available on the Church website and on DVD.

On another note, the Coffee Fellowship donations and the Christmas Eve offering appeal raised a total of £1,230 for Glasgow City Mission and I have received an acknowledgement which goes on to thank St. Paul's for the generous donation and tells us that their three projects – Overnight Welcome Centre, City Centre Project and Child and Family Centre are still open. The Overnight Centre still continues to provide a warm bed, cooked dinner and safe place for those who would otherwise have to sleep rough in the city centre. The city centre Project offers hot carry out food as a door service, and also there is the ability to discuss issues at the door or in the building if more advocacy is needed. The Child and Family Centre in Govan caters for a small group of children who are vulnerable or children of key workers.

They added that they were thankful for our support as it makes their work possible in Glasgow and gives hope to those in most need.

My thanks go to everyone who supported this appeal.

Chris Scott

Congregational Treasurer

Covid – 19 Update

The First Minister has announced changes to Level 4 restrictions which cover most of Scotland including the East Dunbartonshire Council area with the legal requirement to stay at home (with exceptions) coming into force at midnight on Tuesday 4th January. The restrictions will last for four weeks in the first instance.

For the “enhanced” Level 4, the main impact on St. Paul's is that from Friday 8th January church buildings must be closed for worship or private prayer therefore there will be no Sunday services in St Paul's until further notice.

Fergus is still on the Scottish Government's shielding list. In the present restrictions he is directed to work at home. This means he cannot be involved in recorded services from any Church building. Efforts will be made for the recorded Sunday services to continue with Fergus making his contribution from home. This is a new and challenging development. Prayer would be appreciated. Please remember that although the Prayer Group is unable to meet, some thoughts from scripture and a list of prayer suggestions are available each Thursday on the St. Paul's website so that it is accessible to anybody who wishes to 'join' in prayer.

With very best wishes to you and yours for 2021.

Graham Mill

Session Clerk

World Mission News

Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons

The Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons comes into legal force on Friday 22nd January. The treaty prohibits signatories from taking part in any activities involving nuclear weapons, including possessing, transferring, using, or encouraging use of nuclear weapons.

We're celebrating the treaty and the work of all the peace campaigners and activists who have helped to secure this historic development, as well as urging the UK government, which has not yet signed the treaty, to reconsider.

The General Assembly has consistently backed nuclear disarmament for nearly 40 years, and in 2018 it explicitly welcomed the Treaty and called for the UK Government to disarm and engage with the treaty process.

Faith Impact Forum Convener, the Very Rev Dr Susan Brown, has contributed to a short video featuring leaders of different faith communities standing together for a more peaceful world. You can watch the video from Friday as the legislation comes into force.

https://www.churchofscotland.org.uk/news-and-events/news/2021/church-joins-disarmament-campaigners-in-celebrating-nuclear-weapons-treaty?utm_source=Master&utm_campaign=b89b8c5e81-EMAIL_CAMPAIGN_2020_02_07_04_54_COPY_10&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_7120bc6aa0-b89b8c5e81-34198909

Middle East Council of Churches writes to President Biden

In a letter to President Joe Biden, the Middle East Council of Churches has renewed its call to lift economic sanctions imposed on Syrians. After congratulating him on his inauguration, they call on President Biden to work towards lifting the economic sanctions the Syrian people have been struggling with for years. This is alongside difficult living conditions, daily worsening economic, social and health crises - and the devastating impact of the coronavirus pandemic.



Prayer requests for South Sudan



Our partner, the Presbyterian Relief and Development Agency of the Presbyterian Church of South Sudan, has reached out to us with a prayer request. They ask us to pray for their nation displaced by political war and also floods in the Greater Upper Nile area which are causing a severe lack of clean, safe water for sanitation, as well as difficulties with access to medical help, food and shelter. They ask that we pray for God to draw alongside them during this situation and provide for their needs.

Rt. Rev. Dr. Martin Fair, Moderator of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland, along with His Holiness Pope Francis, and the Most Reverend Justin Welby, Archbishop of Canterbury, wrote to the South Sudanese Presidency urging them to continue seeking peace.

Preshal Thanks

Dear Fergus,

16th November

Please pass on our heartfelt thanks and appreciation to all your congregation for their most kind and generous donations of Christmas toys and cheque and cash gifts all for the work and people of the Preshal Trust.

Your support has enabled us to continue our food outreach work as well as helping the many families in need at this time.

It has been an extremely busy time for us despite being unable to open up our centre. There is much need among the community and we have given out thousands of hot meals and food parcels to many individuals and families who have come to us for support.

We also set up an outdoor space to offer a takeaway Christmas lunch as well as giving out Christmas gifts which hopefully brought some Christmas cheer to all those who attended.

We have also been busy making up and giving out Christmas gift bags to families who are suffering financial hardship.

I would like to thank you once again for the generosity, kindness and support and we wish you all a Happy, Healthy and Peaceful Christmas.

Kindest Regards,

Alan Nicholson
CEO

Book Group

As you can imagine the members of the Book Group have taken the opportunity to catch up on their reading during this lockdown. We haven't been meeting of course so I have phoned round a couple of members to ask what they would recommend for your lockdown reading.

Here is a list of some of the books they have enjoyed (or otherwise!):

Troubled Blood by Robert Galbraith (J.K. Rowling really). A couple of people have recommended this but think it is over-long although the initial idea is good. Detective novels set in Norfolk by J.M. Dalgleish. Quite a few in the series – possibly 6 or 8 in total.

Graham Norton books. Both of his first two books have been read and enjoyed. A surprisingly good read.

The Saturday Murder Club by Richard Osman. This book is flying off the shelves we understand and is the first of four. I have read this one and was really disappointed considering the hype surrounding it when it was published. Try it for yourselves and make up your own mind.

The Chestnut Man by Soren Svestrup. Scandi noir. You either like it or loathe it. The author wrote the screenplay for The Killing which was serialised on BBC4 recently and was also involved in the film of The Snowman by Jo Nesbo. Highly recommended if this is your favourite genre.

I have just finished Snow by John Banville. Beautifully written detective novel set in Ireland. I have also just received Hilary Mantel's new book called Mantel Pieces. Short stories instead of a novel - some of which have previously been published in the London Review of Books which sometimes comes with the paper.

We all hope you are keeping safe and well and maybe you will try some of the above suggestions for yourselves.

Joyce Clark



1st/2nd Milngavie Company, the Boys' Brigade.

It was a big disappointment for the Boys and the Officers, when their weekly meetings had to stop, with no prospect of starting again.

A Zoom meeting of all the Staff was called and the decision was made to go online for all three groups, the Anchor Boys, the Junior Section and the Company Section.

Coming together in their groups and seeing their friends, will be good for the Boys, and the officers are looking forward to seeing them and having fun, too.

The difficulty for the Anchor Boys is, how to play "Dodgy Ball" virtually but a baking challenge will be enjoyed, for the results can be shown off and then eaten!

The Junior Section hope to have Craft sessions. Ideas, mostly possible and some improbable, came thick and fast.

Heartening news from the Company Section is that two Boys are continuing their President's Badge work and two more are completing the final stages for their Queen's Badges. This is organised by B.B. H.Q. and is online.

It is good to be able to report that 1st/ 2nd Milngavie are in the good hands of the Captain and Officers who get on so well and are looking forward to making up for restrictions.

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Copy Date

The copy date for the March issue is Wednesday 24th February via email.

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