



**Chrystal Chronicle
Newsletter
April/May 2020**

EASTER BLESSINGS



St Mary's-Greyfriars' Parish Church

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From the Locum Minister

With little of interest on scheduled TV programmes the other evening, Hilary and I tuned into Netflix and watched “Darkest Hour”. The film went on general release in 2017 and secured Best Actor Oscar for Gary Oldham in the lead role of Prime Minister Winston Churchill. Set in 1940, the film focuses on the strong opposition and the underhand tactics faced by Churchill from within the ranks of his own War Cabinet on the part of former Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain, the then Lord President of the Council, and Third Viscount Halifax, the then Foreign Secretary. Both wanted an approach to be made to Italy’s Mussolini to broker a peace deal with Hitler. Rejecting the two cabinet ministers’ calls for appeasement, Churchill took Britain into war with Germany, addressing the House of Commons with memorable words that inspired and rallied a nation “We shall fight in France, we shall fight on the seas and oceans, we shall fight with growing confidence and growing strength in the air, we shall defend our island, whatever the cost may be. We shall fight on the beaches, we shall fight on the landing grounds, we shall fight in the fields and in the streets, we shall fight in the hills; we shall never surrender.”

In the daily spiritual warfare to which Christians are called in these times, there can be no appeasement with the enemy, no surrender! Jesus’ temptation in the wilderness and throughout his earthly ministry was summed up in his words “Get thee behind me Satan!”. We should likewise, as His own, authoritatively dismiss the enemy as he makes his approach. We need in troubled times like the present to be Christ-like and Churchillian, resisting all manner of evil and temptation, speaking out Christ’s Name in our warring through the unequalled power of the Holy Spirit within us.

In the face of evil’s attacks upon us, John Newton spoke of the cutting edge of our defence in Christ’s atonement through the shedding of His own blood sacrificially in place of ours and his dying plea on the Cross for our forgiving

“Bowed down beneath a load of sin,
By Satan sorely pressed,
By war without and fears within,
I come to thee for rest.
Be thou my shield and hiding place
That, sheltered near thy side,
I may my fierce accuser face
And tell him thou hast died”

In the face of warring and the human fear of it, we are reminded that the same God who called Joshua of old (Joshua 1.9) calls out to us, too, “Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged, for the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go.”

Like Joshua, the Christian does not venture forth against the enemy sent his way alone but accompanied by his God. God who has called us is present to our every need as to Joshua’s of old, offering divine protection, ample resourcing and ammunition. David, the shepherd boy set to become his nation’s king, engaged in conflict with his enemy accompanied by God, addressing his enemy of the day, Goliath, in these words “I come against you in the name of the Lord Almighty” (1 Kings 17. 45). We in our time, as God’s own, should have supreme confidence in our God, the same yesterday, today and always, to stand with us, who make our stand with Him. Our God will surely grant us deliverance from evil, as we exercise trust in Jesus, God’s Son and our Saviour, known and proven. We should remind ourselves that Jesus, through the Cross and his emptied tomb, saw the enemy defeated and the enemy of death crushed. In our Christian lives we need to daily claim Jesus’ victory and remind evil that in God’s grace through Christ we fight from a position of strength, victory over him secured.

In these dark days of the Coronavirus threat to our people and all peoples, let us approach that evil and its evil companions prayerfully. Our prayers to God should be daily offered, I suggest, beginning with the familiar words of The Lord’s Prayer (Matthew 6. 9-15), remembering that each petition of the prayer is God-given and includes the plea “deliver us from evil (“evil one” in the Greek *poneros*).

Prayer preceding prepares us for each day's victorious living in Christ. Like all God's warriors, as Paul in New Testament times, we should remember that true prayer is inspired in us by God, this through His Holy Spirit, who would always affirm our position of privilege and strength in Christ, "the one who is in (us) is greater than the one who is in the world." (1 John 4. 4)

May you and I be found in these times offering daily intercession to God in a society where many do not. May we thus become our society's intercessors. May our prayers in these times of foreboding be of Christian hope for the neighbour next door, for the neighbour in the near vicinity, as well as for the neighbour beyond and far beyond. On their behalf and ours may God intervene in the face of the present Coronavirus threat and all the ill and evil consequences of its being sent our way. May victory be won through Christ. May there be good come out of it all. A more God-dependent, God-honouring society. May many find faith in Jesus Christ and discover His Person and love in place of loneliness and fear. May they and we yet prove with Tennyson that "More things are wrought by prayer than this world dreams of".

May each of us also in our looking to God, be it in self-isolation or howsoever, allow the Holy Spirit to move over and within us. May we prove to be a people after God's heart carrying the Christ-light for the neighbour sent our way in the night-time of their fear. May we in doing so be the more affirmed individually and in togetherness as temples of God's Holy Spirit, His worshipping and working churches (1 Corinthians 6.19).

I commend to you unceasing praise and worship of God in these times of trial and tribulation. May I encourage you to make your own the experience of new "live worship" offered through television and radio and other media, as experienced on Sunday 22 March? We ourselves should also spend quality time with God, opening our bibles and asking the Holy Spirit, who caused the Scriptures to be written, to inspire our reading of them today. We may also avail ourselves of the opportunity to tune in to a variety of Christian Radio and TV Channels such as TBN UK. Seek and you shall find! Listen in as well to Christian music and song and be assured of the Lord's promised presence to your life

“And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.” Matthew 28.20. I am with you always”.

In terms of a vital Christian song of our time, I commend to you a particular personal favourite:

“MAKE US A HOUSE OF PRAYER”

Chris Bowater / Kent Henry

(available on <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BcFpYFencwE>)

Make us a house of prayer, that we might meet You there,
on behalf of the nation, to a dying generation, make us a house of
prayer.

And Lord, teach us to pray unceasingly night and day.
Make our intercession for You a mighty weapon. O Lord, teach us to
pray
Make our intercession for You a mighty weapon. O Lord, teach us to
pray.

Make us a house of prayer, that we might meet You there,
On behalf of the nation, to a dying generation, make us a house of
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And Lord, teach us to pray unceasingly night and day.
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O Lord, teach us to pray
Make our intercession for You a mighty weapon.
Make our intercession for You a mighty weapon
Make our intercession for You a mighty weapon
O Lord, teach us to pray

In the Spirit of this song, may we be truly inspired to intercede for God’s
intervention in our society in these troubled times. In so doing, may
we neither fail God nor our neighbour. And through it all, may you and
I be strengthened in Christ’s grace sufficient and more.

Your Locum Minister and Friend,

Douglas Irving

Church Register

Please let me know of any changes of address: **Marion Bennett**, 2 Wolfgill Drive Dumfries DG1 4XY. Tel: 263106

Primary Schools Easter Mini Easter Eggs and “Happy Easter” Story Leaflets

A gift of mini-Easter Eggs and illustrated Easter Story Leaflets has been made to each of the 73 pupils of both Brownhall (45 pupils) and Caerlaverock (28 pupils) Primary Schools. Our Locum Minister, Douglas Irving, who has been providing Chaplaincy services recently, made sure that the pre-Easter gifts were handed in before the closure of the schools on 20 March on account of the Coronavirus situation. The Kirk Sessions of both Congregations contributed equally to the cost of the eggs and the leaflets.



Alpha Course 2019-2020



Catriona Logan kindly hosted our Alpha Course under the banner “Why am I here?”. It was held on Wednesdays in the late afternoon, with a Saturday morning double session, at the Manse from October through to February with 9 participants. Douglas Irving led most of the sessions. For those of us who’d done the Course before, the impressive new format, updated content and new main presenters Gemma Hunt and Rev. Toby Flint made for an enriching experience for us all. Topics included “Who is Jesus?”, “Why did Jesus die?”, “How can I have faith?”, “Why and how do I pray?”, “Why and how should I read the Bible?”, “How does God guide us?”, “Who is the Holy Spirit?”, “What does the Holy Spirit do?”, “How can I be filled with the Holy Spirit?”, “How can I resist evil?”, “Does God heal today?” and “How can I make the most of the rest of my life?”. Each CD teaching session, excellently filmed, was around twenty minutes’ duration, with good participation on the part of all in the discussion time each night. We even had an “audience” with Pope Francis in a filmed interview with His Holiness! We bonded well as a group, each contributing to lively discussion times and each in turn prayed for at one session. We would be encouraging of you to make the Alpha experience your own should the opportunity come your way.

From the Flower Team

Thank you to everyone who has donated, arranged or delivered flowers over the past year. Members of our congregation who have been bereaved or are housebound, and sometimes on special occasions, really appreciate the gift of flowers. Regrettably, because of the current social distancing advice, we will not be able to deliver any flowers from the church. This is necessary to keep everyone safe

Flower team contacts: Norna Francis (250199), Moira Cannon (720394), Betty Jardine (257691), Margaret Thomson (253484) or Maureen Wilson (255008).

Thanks for flowers have been received from Margaret Dickson, Mae Lorimer, Lorna Bell, Mary Bell, Grace Kirby, Elizabeth Armstrong, Sylvia Bertram and Margaret Clark.

And thanks for Christmas gifts received from the church from Mr & Mrs M Fraser.

Eunice Sutherland wishes to thank everyone for their cards and comforting expressions of condolence on the sad loss of her sister on 20th January.

From the Editor

Because our church buildings are closed at the moment, and we have all been advised to stay at home as far as that is possible, we are unable to produce and, more importantly, distribute printed copies of our newsletter. We appreciate that not all our members will be able to access this online-only edition but we would urge you to let others know it is available and how they can see it.

A lot of information is available on the Church of Scotland website, including a list of churches which are providing streaming of their services. It is also hoped to provide a recorded service for the next 2 weeks, including Easter Sunday, via the Church of Scotland website and social media platforms. And anyone can access our Facebook page from the church website – even if you don't "do" Facebook.

Food Bank

At this time donations are needed more than ever. While our church buildings are closed we have no way of collecting and distributing items to the Food Bank. Donations can be taken into the Food Banks or left at Tesco or Morrisons.

Christian Aid

Unfortunately some Lent Lunches have had to be cancelled owing to the health restrictions. Thanks for the wonderful support from our members and those who attended on 28 February on the first Lent Lunch day (see photos below). The Christian Aid Week House to House collection is cancelled this year in its current form owing to the current crisis. Remembering that Christian Aid Week is the single most important fundraiser – can we think of other ways of supporting? A final decision regarding Christian Aid Week, Dumfries area, will be taken after Easter, when we might have a clearer picture of things.



Isobel and Thea taking the money at the door



Carol and Irma preparing the rolls for lunch



Anne, Bette, Cheryl, Janette, Jane and June serving the soup

From the Gardening Club

On January 15 we had a presentation on our summer visit to Two Acres – using photos taken by Bill and André and with commentary by Colin. It had been a lovely warm and sunny day. The garden had different levels and many different features. We started in the wild area around the quarry and then moved up to the managed area around the house. There was a lawn, with bushes and trees and good views. We moved to the rockery, “spring” and water area with running water, pools and water plants. At the back of the house there was a further grassy area with flowers and exotic trees and the greenhouse. It was a great pleasure to revisit our summer outing in the depths of January.

On 29 January we had an “in House” day. June spoke with skill and obvious love about orchids and carpentaria: how we should pick them, care for them, the surroundings to keep them in and how many years of joy we could expect from them. Dorothy delivered readings on flowers and the wintering of plants. Betty spoke on gardening with flowers – in particular hollyhocks and her adventures with seedlings. She also demonstrated a terrarium. Tommy concluded with poems.

On February 12 Mrs. Pumphrey explained that rather than "Wildlife in the Garden" her talk was "Gardening FOR Wildlife" – in other words things we can do to encourage wildlife to come to our gardens. Perhaps we can think about the design and planting of our gardens, about feeding, watering and providing "homes" for our wildlife. Mrs. Pumphrey suggested various trees, shrubs and ground cover plants that are good to grow. As well as feeding the birds (remembering to remove the cover from fat balls) we can help by having bird boxes, insect boxes, perhaps a small pile of logs and also provide a source of water. If you can, have a small pond that encourages insects, frogs, etc. If feeding the birds, try to ensure that the feeders are near to

somewhere where the birds can take cover if "danger" such as cats, kestrels, magpies, etc. are around. Conservation - if you can have a compost bin that is a good idea. Look for hoverflies and lacewings in

your garden because if they are there you must be doing something right. Trees:- silver birch, bird cherry (seemingly quite a small tree),

rowan, holly, hawthorn; Shrubs:- pyracantha, cotoneaster, brambles, buddleja (butterfly bush). Ground cover:- bluebells, pulmonaria, honeysuckle, dog rose, foxglove, teasle, alliums, echinops, sea holly, echinacea, lavender, inula, sedum, michaelmas daisy, sunflowers. Go for plants that have single rather than double flowers, as it is easier for insects to get into them.

On February 26 Julian Stanning made a presentation on the landscape and plants of Patagonia. He travelled south through Chile on the western slopes of the Southern Andes. Each part had previously only been accessible from the sea. Now there is a "road". The scenery, fish-farms, plants, ferns and trees were fabulous. There are very few people. It was amazing to see lovely flowers growing on screes which must move every winter. The return journey north included a high moorland and a volcanic area. The presentation was greatly appreciated.

Message from Rev Bill Holland

Dear friends

The intention was that I would be conducting the services at Caerlaverock and St Mary's-Greyfriars' on Palm Sunday and Easter Sunday. I had already started my planning and have continued with my preparations. The result is that the text of each of these services will be saved as a PDF file and made available on the church website. I hope you will be able to use it.

May God bless us all.

Regards,

Bill Holland

Fairtrade Breakfast

Many thanks to all who supported this event on Sunday 23 February, much enjoyed by members with a few visitors attending also. Thanks to those who prepared and those who supported Fairtrade. We have been able to send a cheque for £100 to the local Fairtrade Group from donations received that morning.

We hope you managed to visit some of the events held in and around Dumfries during Fairtrade Fortnight.



Margaret Dalrymple and Gillian Boyes with some of the breakfast items.



St Mary's-Greyfriars' members and friends enjoying their breakfast.

Postage Stamp 2020 Appeal

This year all our stamps will be going to help the Women's Development Centre (WDC) in Kandy, Sri Lanka which supports women and girls who have survived rape, sexual violence and family rejection, returning them to education or learning skills that will allow them to make a living. Hopefully we can send a big bag of stamps away once we are up and running again.

Liz Tanner

Guild News

We were delighted to welcome Jay Rubinstein from MOOL (Massive Outpouring Of Love) to our February meeting who gave us a very informative and inspiring talk on the work of this local charity.

The Guild ladies were much in evidence at the first of the Lenten Lunches at St John's Church in aid of Christian Aid at the end of February. Lots of their soup was consumed and they were kept busy with their waitressing and kitchen duties.

The Nithsdale Guilds Together AGM was held in our hall and a good number of Guild members from the area attended. The speaker for the evening was from the Seema project in India which is one of the National Guild Projects running at the moment.

On the first Saturday in March the Guild held its annual coffee morning and raised £743.40. There was a great atmosphere in the Hall. Needless say, our March meeting was cancelled but our speakers have promised to come next Session and our AGM planned for April has been postponed. Guild members are keeping in touch with each other by telephone, email and text, so we hope that no one feels too isolated.

From the Buzz

On January 20 we had a talk on Robert Burns. “Tam O’ Shanter” was read by Fiona Hyslop. The first Burns Supper was held in 1810 and now they are held all over the world. “Ae Fond Kiss” was played on the harp and some of the words from Burns’ poems were read out, We finished with “Auld Lang Syne”.

On February 3 a police officer talked to us about scams and advised us to be on our guard against suspicious phone calls and fake websites. She reminded us never to reveal bank details and to have strong passwords, which should also not be revealed. It was a good talk, with plenty of helpful information.

On February 17 Margaret Thomson demonstrated cake decoration and showed us how to make decorations in the shape of flowers and animals. She gave us heart-shaped biscuits to decorate for Valentine’s Day.

On March 2 Bill Holland gave us an interesting talk and slideshow of his holiday in the Orkney Isles. Palm trees grow there, which is very unusual. And some bushes only grow to a certain height, as the tops burn in the wind. We saw pictures of the little Italian Chapel, which looks brick-built but is actually made of papier-mâché.

Spot the elder (and Session Clerk)!

Two well respected elders found their past catching up with them when the Dumfries and Galloway Standard published some photographs from days gone by. Here they are being pushed along on a bed with five other nurses as part of a charity concert at the infirmary in their early days on the ward. Keep up the good work Anne and Bette!



For reflection

Heavenly Father, we humbly ask you to
Open our hearts to you, that we may listen to you and
Pray for others in these uncertain times,
Especially those living alone.

Always you are with us. We know that when we
Trust in you all will be well.

Ever living God, we worship and
Adore you. Grant us patience and
Strength to live with daily challenges. Let us always remember
Those who are worse off than ourselves. Be with them and us this
Easter time when we celebrate the
R I S E N L O R D

Next newsletter

The deadline for our June/July issue is **Sunday May 24**. As we do not know if the church services will have resumed by then, any items will need to be sent direct. Many thanks as always.

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