



**Chrystal Chronicle
Newsletter
June/July 2020**



**St Mary's-Greyfriars' Parish Church
Locum Minister: Rev Douglas Irving**

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Scottish charity no. SC00943

From the Locum Minister

The other week there was a sharp late May frost. Young plants and trees alike fell victim to Jack Frost's devilish attack, not least a walnut tree (*Juglans Regia*) in the garden of our Dalbeattie home. The walnut was planted nearly three years ago. It had been raised from seed, from a single walnut, from parent stock belonging to Hilary's late uncle John who lived in County Down. The parent stock came originally from Hilary's grandparents' home in Portarlinton, County Laois. Hilary's grandfather, William Albert Bell, was among the first recruits and one of only a few Protestant officers in the Garda, the new Irish Police force established in 1922. First stationed in Clogheen, County Tipperary, he was to serve the rest of his police career in the Garda in Portarlinton, County Laois, where he and his wife raised a family of four, the eldest of whom was Hilary's late father.

The eighteenth century saw a sizeable influx of French Calvinist Protestant Huguenot settlers from France to Ireland, with over five hundred settling in Portarlinton, in the then Queen's County, in around 1702, with French becoming the most spoken language locally! This resettlement followed the revocation in 1685 by Louis XIV of the Edict of Nantes which had prior to that year guaranteed limited rights to France's Protestants. The Church of Ireland church building in Portarlinton is still known today as the French Church. It was the French Huguenot settlers who brought the first walnuts from their homeland to Ireland. Centuries later the continued "Walnut Diaspora" saw several saplings find their way in 1998 across the Irish Sea, planted in the grounds of Kirkcudbright Parish Church and the Manse Garden. Both specimens still flourish. The walnut usually begins to fruit after eighteen years, so Kirkcudbright is overdue a harvest of home produced walnuts! It seems I will have to make it into my late eighties to see home-grown walnuts here.

As with the work of the Kingdom of God, we plant seeds and seedlings not to do us just for our time but for future generations,

including generations as yet unborn. How we have benefitted from men and women of vision of generations past, sowing to the Holy Spirit, planting even for eternity! Each Christian Year affords opportunity for sowing seeds of the Kingdom and annual evaluation. How the Church nationally and world-wide is being challenged in this Christian Year in this regard, in these Coronavirus times! These times, however, “time out in lockdown”, can help us all to “think out of the box”, to look to a church which will serve for more than just our time, a future church secured and secure in Jesus Christ!

But back to our walnut tree! The other week I thought our own walnut had begun to die back, its leaves withered, this, in all probability, I thought, on account of the recent rain shortages. I spoke, however, to a near neighbour who’s involved in forestry about my fears. He pointed me to the burnt leaves on his beech hedge and said that ten days earlier he had been out early one morning and saw hard frost on his car windscreen. “The damage to my beech hedging was caused by a very late frost,” he said. “No doubt the hard frost got to your walnut tree too.” Interestingly, he mentioned in the passing about there being a walnut tree in the garden of the unoccupied house next door. The owner, who died last year, had settled in County Clare and reportedly had brought the walnut, then a sapling tree, over from Ireland years ago for his late mother who lived in the house then. Another walnut tree in the Huguenot line and a tree perhaps more susceptible to late frosts here than in its native France, something our Francophiles Charles and Dorothy Edwards might be able to confirm or otherwise!



Today, as I look out of the study window, I see that weeks on from its “frost bite”, our walnut appears to be on the mend, with new green shoots appearing. We can be permitted drawing an analogy in terms of ourselves mending as humans. The God of all creation has ensured that the human body has an inbuilt, inner capacity to heal and repair itself, with human intervention through surgery and antibiotic treatment and medication when our immune system is overwhelmed, all God-given, to come to our aid. The likes of Coronavirus and autoimmune disorders, in the absence of available treatment, bring us into the realm of prayer and miracle. Largely, in God’s provision of inner capacity to fight, the body recovers, the broken or bruised mends itself, the cut heals, the diseased mind can respond to rest and changed circumstance, the broken spirit in receiving Christ through the Holy Spirit can supremely be made whole.

As regards the blighting of trees, this has its parallels in the Gospels, in particular in the account of Mark 11, 12-15. Here, Jesus was overheard by his disciples to curse a fig tree in an act that was to prove both miraculous and parabolic. Later that day Jesus and his disciples pass the fig tree again and note that the tree has withered and died. Biblical commentators remind us that in the Old Testament the people of Israel were sometimes portrayed by the prophets as figs on a tree. Did the absence of any fruit on the fig tree Jesus saw prompt his curse upon it in judgement of the people of Israel for their rejection of both Man and Message? Like the miracle of the healing of the Gaderene demoniac and the sending of the legion of evil spirits out of the demoniac and into a herd of pigs, the miracle of the cursing of the fig tree is also directed at what people own as opposed to people themselves. In the Gospel account of the cursing of the fig tree we too should be challenged in the area of our Kingdom fruit-bearing, in our need to sow to the Spirit, as enunciated by Paul in Galatians 6, 7-10: “A man reaps what he sows. ⁸Whoever sows to please their flesh, from the flesh will reap destruction; whoever sows to please the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap eternal life. ⁹Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not

give up. ¹⁰ Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers.”

So let us yet take heart. Our God, who was the Psalmist’s present help, of whom the Psalmist speaks (Psalm 46), is still our present help “God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble. ² Therefore we will not fear, though the earth give way and the mountains fall into the heart of the sea, ³ though its waters roar and foam and the mountains quake with their surging. ⁴ There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God, the holy place where the Most High dwells. ⁵ God is within her, she will not fall; God will help her at break of day. ⁶ Nations are in uproar, kingdoms fall; he lifts his voice, the earth melts. ⁷ The Lord Almighty is with us; the God of Jacob is our fortress. ⁸ Come and see what the Lord has done, the desolations he has brought on the earth. ⁹ He makes wars cease to the ends of the earth. He breaks the bow and shatters the spear; he burns the shields with fire. ¹⁰ He says, ‘Be still, and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth.’ ¹¹ The Lord Almighty is with us; the God of Jacob is our fortress.”

And in these times of God’s giving, let us praise our God in the same Holy Spirit who inspired the words of Hlengiwe Mahaba’s song of our time, (Youtube recording, source Musixmatch) available by on clicking <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bzxWhUv8dyg>

Let Your living water flow over my soul
Let your Holy Spirit come and take control
In every situation that has troubled my mind
All my cares and burdens on to you I roll.
All my cares and burdens on to you I roll.
Jesus, Jesus, Jesus
Spirit, Spirit, Spirit
Father, Father, Father.

Your Locum Minister and Friend,
Douglas Irving

Church Register

Please let me know of any changes of address: **Marion Bennett**, 2
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Deaths

Mrs M Snowdon on 20/1/20

Mr J Moir on 29/3/20

Mr N Kirkham on 16/4/20

Mrs E Winning on 18/4/20

Mr T Hannah on 10/5/20

From the Editor

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

Christian Aid

Christian Aid Week was very different this year, with no house to house or church collections, but people were still able to give a donation – either online at <http://www.caweek.org> or by using an e-envelope. There is more information on the Christian Aid – Dumfries and District Facebook page.

Christian Aid has been responding to the spread of coronavirus in the very vulnerable places, for example the world's largest refugee camp in Cox's Bazaar, Bangladesh. India and Bangladesh were struck recently by Super Cyclone Amphan.

From the Session Clerk

Dear Members of SMG,

It is hard to believe that our church has been closed since 17th March and that we have not shared worship together there for eleven Sundays.

We are grateful to our Locum Minister, Rev. Douglas Irving, for his weekly online reflection, which I have heard is much appreciated by members able to access it. In addition, the media have helped enormously during lockdown with Sunday Worship Services, Reflections from the Quay and, as usual, Songs of Praise. In fact, at times I feel I am having more Church than usual, with the benefit of my favourite chair and a cup of coffee as we go.

All this helps us to stay connected at this time, and I am grateful to the Elders and members who keep me informed about any illness, accidents, or other mishaps in our Church family.

As requested by 121 George St Edinburgh, I check the church and hall buildings every fortnight, obviously for insurance purposes, but also for peace of mind that security is intact until our eventual return.

We have been blessed with good weather, so our leaky roof has held up till this week, but a carefully placed jug should deal with any drips until we can sort out any problems.

As soon as I hear any news of return to normal service, I will share it with you all. Until then, may God bless and keep you.

Anne Mackie
Session Clerk

Congratulations!

To Catriona Logan on her appointment as Scottish Regional Co-ordinator for Parish Nursing Ministries UK. We are all delighted for Catriona and know she will fulfil her role admirably.

And to Bill and Helen Holland, who celebrated their Diamond Wedding Anniversary on 27th May. They've sent this letter:

Helen and Bill Holland thank you all for the lovely cards and good wishes on the occasion of their 60th Wedding Anniversary. We had a tremendous family gathering via ZOOM and were able to see our new great grandson in Rotterdam. Thank you all for your kindness.



The happy couple on their wedding day

News from the Manse

So, here we are in the middle of lockdown, a situation that we never imagined in our wildest dreams. Like many folk, lockdown has frozen my plans as well. As I shared with you all, I had been hoping to head off to my new house in Dundee in May, but with all the restrictions that have been put in place, that simply isn't going to happen. The builders are not as yet allowed to progress, the removal company are in lockdown as is the shop that was going to do my carpet and flooring. Hey-ho, such is life.

However, I am very blessed indeed to find myself 'stranded' in such a beautiful place. Indeed, I am particularly grateful to the church for allowing me to stay on in the Manse. I have been putting my time to good use. Amongst other things, I have turned part of the Manse garden into an allotment. I have planted purple sprouting broccoli, sprouts, potatoes, leeks, carrots and courgettes. Ironically, if my plans progress as I hope, I will not get to harvest them but do hope that someone from the church will be able to put them to good use. One plants and another harvests...



The building company are now hoping to have the house ready by August.....I will just have to watch this space. Our times and seasons

are in the good Lord's hands and I know that when the time is right for me, He will open the door for me to move.

One exciting bit of news that I am happy to share with you all is that I have now been given the post of Scottish Regional Co-ordinator for Parish Nursing Ministries UK. This means that I now have responsibility for managing Parish Nursing the length and breadth of Scotland. This, in reality, isn't nearly as grand as it sounds - there are only eleven of us.

I am looking forward very much to taking up my new post. I love working with people and trying to help and support them in their struggles. It is still a great honour, even if there are so few of us. As regional coordinator, I will be expected to work from home, and as such it doesn't matter where I am living. I will be able to commence the job here and still pick it up once I have moved house.

I do hope that we get to all meet up again as a church before I leave, but if not rest assured, I will remember you all with much love and gratitude.

Catrina Logan

Garden News

"Spring the sweet Spring, is the year's pleasant king"

The spring of 2020 will long be remembered for the grim reality of you-know-what, but the glorious weather and unaccustomed leisure time have given many people the opportunity to connect with nature and enjoy the sights sounds and perfumes of this time of year. For the first time in 20 years we have experienced springtime in Dumfries, and we have taken great pleasure in watching the progression of an entire season unfold. The joy of seeing the first snowdrops, followed by daffodils, tulips, primulas, camellias, lily-of-the-valley and many more appearing in our garden has been matched by the constant delight of watching its wildlife. The birds have benefited from uninterrupted feeding this season, and are a constant source of fascination - the three minute goldcrests furiously fighting off their reflections in the windows, the newly-fledged gapey robin which is fast becoming a confident teenager-with-attitude, a noisy gang of young starlings sampling the various foods on offer, a pair of great spotted woodpeckers visiting the peanut feeder several times a day, friendly blackbird parents conscientiously collecting meals for their demanding offspring.

And then there's the pond, teeming with aquatic life, and described by our son (a chef), as being "on a slow simmer", the ingredients consisting of thousands of tiny wriggling tadpoles. I watched a blackbird enjoying beakfuls of them one day, finishing off with a thorough splashy bathe in the water. In this warm, dry weather the little sparrows seem to prefer dust-baths.

Thrushes and blackbirds still entertain us well into the evening with their wondrous songs.....but I'm still waiting to hear a cuckoo! Yesterday our first foxglove opened its flowers for business, and already the bees are buzzing gleefully around it. Sumptuous summer is almost with us. Even more balm for the soul.

Dorothy Edwards

VE Day celebrations

Two of our church members were in the news when the 75th anniversary of VE Day was celebrated on 8th May. Edna Wells and Dick Geddes, both of whom attended church regularly (before the current situation when we had to stop our services for the time being), featured in the Dumfries and Galloway Standard and Edna on the BBC, too!

Edna, who served in the Navy during World War II, has finally received her veteran's medal - 75 years later. She was presented with her award in time for the VE Day anniversary celebrations. The ceremony took place outside her home due to the coronavirus pandemic which also forced a Scottish parade in Edinburgh to be postponed. Edna, who was a member of the Women's Royal Naval Service, was caught by surprise when television star Joanna Lumley sent her a video message telling her to go to her front door and when the former WREN opened her door, there was Captain Chris Smith, regional Navy commander for Scotland and Northern Ireland, waiting outside with a drummer and piper. Captain Smith then presented Edna with her medal - but had to place it on her windowsill due to social-distancing rules. She said: "It was a complete surprise, I hadn't a clue, but it was the best day of my life." Neighbours and members of Edna's family watched and applauded from surrounding balconies and several filmed the presentation of Edna's official medal for serving in the war. She added "I was a steward in the Navy which took in domestic work and was serving in Newcastle then all over Scotland before finishing in Inverness. It was a good job and I liked it. It was a good thing that I did." Captain Smith said on the night "I cannot shake hands with you, but it is my pleasure to give you this medal."

The little bear in the photo on the left below was a gift from the Wrens Association, as it is their centenary this year. And the farthing attached to it is from the year Edna joined the Wrens.



Edna in her younger days

Edna joined up at the age of 18 in 1943 after being refused two years earlier. She had worked as a dressmaker before the war broke out and in 1946 she returned to her job unaware that she qualified for a medal. Years later, a relative said that she could receive a replica veteran's badge which incorporated three medals for the 1939-1945 conflict and that she qualified. He applied on her behalf for her 80th birthday. Now she has the official medal and said: "It is quite an honour. The captain joked that I had waited a long time for it and now I have two."

The original plan was that there was to be a concert, parade and a fly-past in Edinburgh for the 75th VE Day and the medal would be presented at a VIP party beforehand. However, the event had to be called off due to the Coronavirus and so Legion Scotland started to organise other events.



Dick Geddes, with his great-granddaughter, Alice Parry, outside his house, with the VE Day decorations inside and outside.

Dick's daughter, Bette Archibald, wrote a few words about her Dad's war service:

"My Dad Richard Geddes served in the Royal Corps of Signals from 5/10/43 until 30/06/46. He was wounded by a mortar shell (shrapnel). After the war ended he was awarded 1939-1945 Star of Italy and the Defence Medals. (Interestingly a number of years ago, after having a scan, doctors were puzzled by unidentified spots on the scan. This was some of the shrapnel which could not be removed, then or now.)"

And Dick's great-granddaughter, Alice, got a lovely surprise when she won a competition organised by Morrisons in conjunction with the Dumfries & Galloway Standard, for the best-dressed VE Day window.



Quiz

Janette Kirkpatrick has sent us this quiz which she thought might keep our brains ticking over while we have extra time on our hands. Good luck! The answers will appear in the August/September newsletter.

1. Which is the first book of the Bible alphabetically? (4)
2. Where in the world would you expect to find a car with the vehicle registration code 'V'? (7,4)
3. Which is taller: Westminster Abbey or St Paul's Cathedral? (16)
4. According to the book of Genesis, who was the eldest son of Jacob? (6)
5. Which is the last book of the Old Testament? (7)

6. The Reverend Richard Coles was formerly part of which 80s pop duo? (3,10)
7. In biblical terms, the Decalogue is another word for what? (3,3,12)
8. According to the Gospel of Matthew, for how many silver coins did Judas Iscariot betray Jesus? (6)
9. How many days after Easter Sunday is Pentecost celebrated?
10. How is the equivalent of Shrove Tuesday known in France? (5,4)
11. On which date is St. Patrick's Day?
12. What was the vocation of Saint Patrick? (10)
13. According to the proverb, who is not recognised in his own land? (1,7)
14. Which book of the Bible tells the story of Samson and Delilah? (6)
15. Which British sitcom was set at the fictional 'Bayview Retirement Home'? (7,3,3)
16. Which Christian hymn begins with the words "O Lord my God, When I in awesome wonder, Consider all the worlds Thy hands have made"? (3,5,4,3)
17. In Judaism what is meant by the Hebrew word 'Mitzvah'? (11)
18. In which two books of the Bible are the 'Ten Commandments' listed? (6,3,11)
19. 'In the Bleak Midwinter' is a Christmas carol based on the work of which poet? (9,8)
20. What colour smoke can be seen coming from the Vatican chimney when a new Pope has been elected? (5)
21. "I fear no foe, with Thee at hand to bless, Ills have no weight and tears no bitterness." These are words taken from which hymn? (5,4,2)
22. At what age does a Jewish boy become a 'Bar Mitzvah'? (8)
23. How many books are there in the protestant Christian Bible?
24. Mecca, the holy city of Islam, is located within which country? (5,6)
25. Name all of the 'Seven Deadly Sins'. (5,5,5,5,4,4,8)
26. Which book of the Bible is a collection of 150 songs and poems? (6)
27. What is the name of the Hindu festival of lights? (6)
28. In which modern-day country was Mother Teresa born? (8,2,9)
29. What religion is the Dalai Lama? (8)

30. What is the ninth month of the Islamic calendar, during which Muslims observe a month of fasting? (7)
31. When does the Jewish Sabbath begin? (6)
32. Which Bible figure is most closely associated with leading the exodus from Egypt? (5)
33. Which Bible figure is most closely associated with willingness to sacrifice his son for God? (7)
34. What religion was Mother Teresa? (5,8)
35. What religion was Joseph Smith? (6)
36. Whose writings and actions inspired the Protestant Reformation? (6,6)

Arpad Ter – back in business!

Our friends in Arpad Ter Church, Debrecen in Hungary were allowed to go back to church on Sunday May 24, providing they sat 1.5 metres apart and wore face masks if they so wished. There was no shaking of hands or hugs and a maximum of 90 were allowed to attend the service. They sat in alternate pews and were so happy to be able to worship together again after 9 weeks of closure. They all send their greetings to us.



And this is Gergo who visited Dumfries with his parents. His mother is Eva ,our main contact at Arpad Ter. His Dad, Janos ,is the Session Clerk. Bette and Anne stayed with Eva, Janos and Gergo when they went to Debrecen and Stan and Liz Tanner stayed with them in 2011 and 2013. They were all due to come over with the Debrecen presbytery visitors this year but obviously their visit has been cancelled. Stan and Liz call Gergo their Hungarian grandson and they are known as Liz Nagyi (Granny) and Stan Papi!



Information from the Church of Scotland

Although both these events are past, we thought they might be of interest. There's always lots of information and news on the Church of Scotland website and on their facebook page. Why not have a look?

On **Saturday 16th May** at 11am Rev Dr Martin Fair was installed as Moderator of the General Assembly. The ceremony took place in the Assembly Hall with only a few people physically present because of the Covid restrictions but followed by thousands of people across Scotland and across the world. This was an historic occasion and a clear statement that the Church is alive and active in these difficult days.

Sunday 31st May - Pentecost

The Moderator led a service to mark the birthday of the Christian Church with contributions from many different places. Like the disciples on that first Pentecost here it was an invitation to step confidently into whatever the future holds. See the Church of Scotland website for more information.

From the Gardening Club

On 11 March we had a presentation from Ian Wilson on Coastal Norway. It represented the Norwegian Coast from Bergen northwards in winter, covering a 32 ports ferry service. Many were short stops of 10-20 minutes to disembark and/or embark just a few people. Other stops were longer e.g. Trondheim was 6 hours – so worth doing some sightseeing. Many were small picturesque villages – remote with mountains, snow and fjords. One had a magnificent cathedral. The Northern Lights were regularly in evidence. We were also shown

slides of dog sleds in use. The pictures and scenery were striking and beautiful. Mr Wilson was warmly thanked for his presentation.

Unfortunately, this meeting brought our session to an abrupt halt – as the Coronavirus started soon after. We will be resuming the Gardening Club as soon as it is safe and practical to do so. We will probably try to use some of the speakers who were already in our syllabus. We hope you are all surviving safely without too much trouble.

For reflection

Virtual choirs are being created everywhere just now so here's your opportunity to praise the Lord and make a joyful sound.

Praise, my soul, the King of Heaven
Eternal ruler of the ceaseless round
Now thank we all our God
Tell out, my soul, the greatness of the Lord
Eternal Father strong to save
Come down, O Love Divine
One more step along the world I go
Summer suns are glowing
The Lord's my Shepherd, I'll not want

May the God of peace and hope go with us all.

Next newsletter

The deadline for our August/September issue is **Sunday July 19**. 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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