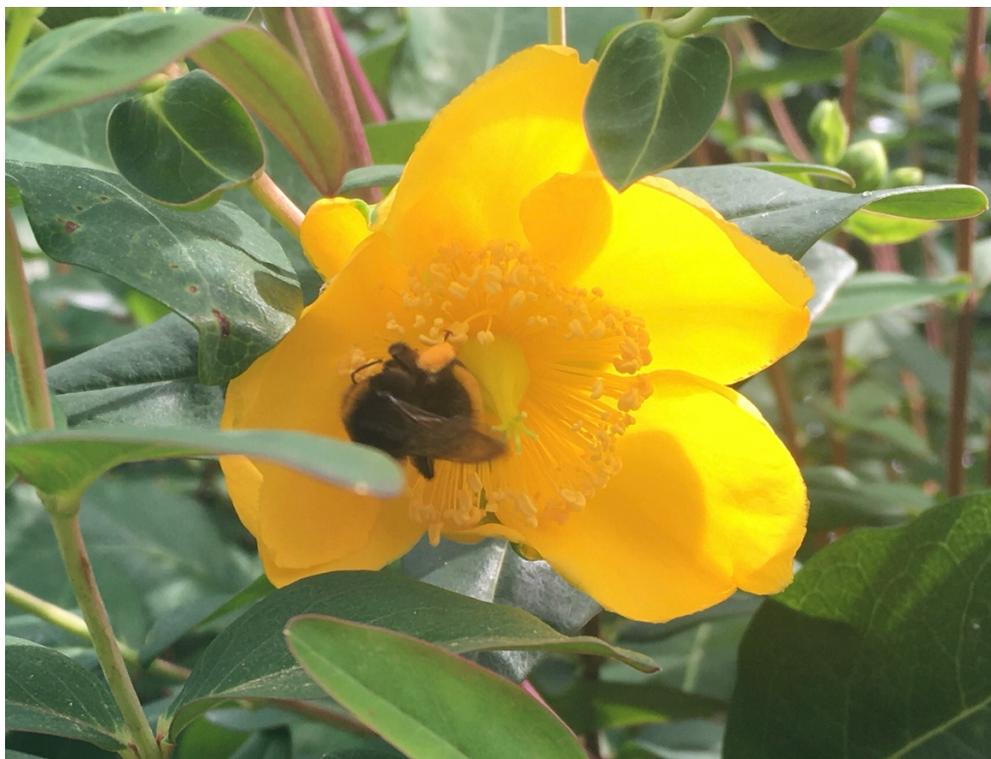




**Chrystal Chronicle  
Newsletter  
August/September 2020**



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

**Tel 01556 610156 or 07592 530161**

**[www.stmarysgreyfriars.org.uk](http://www.stmarysgreyfriars.org.uk)  
Scottish charity no. SC00943**

## From the Locum Minister

In our early years as a manse family we would holiday abroad, following a rule of thumb on most things, “when something comes your way, just do it!”. In truth, we recognised that there was a need annually to really “get away” from it all. With holidays abroad in 2020 not a real prospect, I have found myself looking back on family holidaying abroad of yesteryears.

In particular, I recall two week trips to Turkey in consecutive Summers. For the second of these trips we were based in the harbour town of Foca, north of Izmir, from where we took a three-day excursion by way of ancient Troy and the beaches of the Gallipoli landings, to Istanbul, formerly Constantinople.

Constantinople was founded by the Roman Emperor Constantine who named it after himself. He was the first Roman Emperor to convert to Christianity and was responsible for the convocation of the seminal [First Council of Nicaea](#) in 325, which produced the important statement of Christian doctrine known as the [Nicene Creed](#). In Jerusalem, the [Church of the Holy Sepulchre](#) was built on Constantine’s orders on the reputed site of the tomb of Jesus.

Constantinople became the Capital of the whole Roman Empire from 330–395 and remained the capital of the Eastern Roman (Byzantine) Empire from 395-1202 and 1261-1453. In the gap years 1202-1261, most of the territory became the Latin Empire of Constantinople, a [Crusader state](#) founded by the leaders of the [Fourth Crusade](#) on lands captured from the [Byzantine Empire](#). The [Fall of Constantinople](#) to the Ottoman Empire in 1453 ended the Byzantine Empire. As regards the Western Roman Empire, following attacks upon it by the Goths and other invaders, it was much weakened and the Empire finally came to an end in 476 CE when the last Emperor, Romulus Augustulus, capitulated to barbarian Flavius Odoacer who proclaimed himself King of Italy.

In Istanbul, formerly Constantinople, our family visited the magnificent domed former Church of Hagia Sophia, [dedicated](#) to the [Wisdom of God](#), the [Logos](#), the second [Person](#) of the [Trinity](#). The World's largest extant church built between 532-537 CE by Roman Emperor Justinian, it remained the largest church of the [Eastern Roman \(Byzantine\) Empire](#) until 1453, when it was converted into a [mosque](#) upon the [fall of the city](#) to the Ottoman Empire. Centuries later, in 1935, following Turkey being declared a Muslim secular state by former Turkish President Ataturk, the Church became a secular museum. The former Church of Hagai Sophia is spectacular in both appearance and scale, both externally and internally, and is replete with magnificent Christian murals come again to light with Islamic overlays of later centuries removed. These mosaic murals include that of "Christ the Pantocrator". Turkey's President Erdogan's Government, however, in a current effort to reassert the place of Islam in Turkish society, has recently declared controversially that the Church of Hagia Sophia shall reopen as a mosque again this year, 2020. Since writing this Locum's letter, the reopening of Hagia Sophia as a mosque for Muslim prayer has taken place, this on Friday 14 July 2020. I would refer you to the BBC Report at <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-53506445>

Enough of the history lesson! As regards the first year's Turkish trip, this had seen us based in Kusadasi. It was a double whammy as far as holiday illness was concerned. First, I was struck by a tummy bug early on. The pharmacist we consulted had misunderstood the account given him of my symptoms and instead of prescribing antidiarrheal medication, gave me a prescription for the opposite – an effective laxative which came under the brand name "Ersefuryl", necessitating a return visit to the pharmacy! At the same time, Hilary was suffering from a perforated eardrum, following the flight out to Turkey, and was housebound for a few days. To ensure she got time to rest, I took the children by public transport to Izmir (Smyrna in New Testament times) and Sart (formerly Sardis), the locations of two of the ancient seven churches of Asia Minor mentioned in Revelation, the last book of our bibles. Later when Hilary was largely over her troubles, all

four of us visited Ephesus and Bergama (Pergamum) bringing to four the number of the ancient Seven Churches visited.

In contrast to the ruins of the ancient church of Smyrna in the busy modern coastal city of Izmir, the ruins of the ancient city of Sardis, at Sart, are in a rural situation and made a particular impression in the scenic landscape. I recall crossing with the children a shallow flowing river close to the ruins which native tortoises were also traversing. On the other bank people taking time out from harvesting were sitting on the grass. The impressive remains of the ancient city of Ephesus on an expansive sloping site overlooking the Mediterranean include the ruins of the Theatre and of the Temple of Artemis, centre of the Artemis of the Ephesians cult worship. Resembling Athens in appearance, part of the ancient city of Pergamum was built on an acropolis which housed a Library constructed between 220 and 159 BC, second only in importance to the famed Library in Alexandria.

I commend to you all the reading of the risen Christ's letters, dictated to John the Apostle, and addressed to each of the Seven Churches of Asia Minor, the letter texts of each being contained in the second and third chapters of Revelation. In the letters Jesus Christ addresses the particular church situation of each Christian community raising issues of concern as far as the Lord was concerned.

With regard to Church of Ephesus, the Church has proved itself to Christ over the years to be a vital, hard-working fellowship for Christ's Kingdom. Some have embraced, however, current heresy, a situation which needs addressing. Primarily the issue as far as Christ is concerned is that individually and corporately his followers have fallen away from their first love of their Lord. It's like in our own personal relationship with each other, we need at times to remember our first love for those closest to us to allow mutual affection to be rekindled and renewed. William Cowper the hymn writer puts it this way, "Where is the blessedness I knew when I first saw the Lord? Where is that

soul-refreshing view of Jesus and His word? The dearest idol I have known, whate'er that idol be, help me tear it from Thy throne, and worship only Thee.”

With the Church at Smyrna Christ shares a word mainly of commendation and encouragement to a materially poor but spiritually rich people, by Christ acknowledged to have been sorely oppressed on account of the Jews, described as a “synagogue of Satan”, stirring up controversy and untruth against the new Christian community. Their faithfulness and loyalty to Christ would not go unrewarded. Here the Church’s leader Polycarp embraced martyrdom for Christ. Before being consigned to his execution by fire, Polycarp exclaimed “For eighty and six years I have been His servant and He has never done me wrong. How can I blaspheme my king who has saved me?” The reference to his 86 years has been seen as supporting the view that infant baptism was the practice of the Church from earliest times. The ancient Church of Smyrna, now Izmir, is only one of two of the seven ancient churches in which witness to Jesus as Saviour and Lord continued down through later centuries. Several Christian congregations are still active in Izmir. Until 1922, Izmir was a particular stronghold for Christian communities. The Young Turks Group of Reformists, however, overthrew Abdulhamid II and took control of the Ottoman state between 1909 and 1918, embracing a new form of Turkish nationalism that discriminated against non-Turkish ethnic and religious minorities. Their policies went so far that they brought about a [massacre of Armenian Christians](#) in Izmir during World War I, with persecution of Christians in particular continuing thereafter. In the 2000’s, the status of Christians improved thanks to Turkey’s efforts to join the European Union. President Erdoğan has since reversed the liberal policies that he once initiated and at present there is a worrying trend to view Christians as “collaborators with foreign powers” to undermine Turkish identity. We need to support the active church in Izmir and elsewhere in Turkey in these times.

To the Christian Church in Pergamum, then a centre for the worship of Greek Gods, there is Christ's commendation for not renouncing Christ in a hostile religious environment where there had been martyrdom for Christ's cause and where, the risen Christ declares "Satan has his throne". Some in the Church had, nonetheless, courted the heretical and deviated from Christian morality, practice and teaching. The Church is urged to return to Christ in faith new. Through Christ they will yet know reward.

The Church of Thyatira, from where that inspiring woman Lydia of the early Church came (Acts 16. 11-40), is described by the risen Christ as characterised by its loyalty, love, service and endurance and achievements. Christ identifies, however, a major threat to the fellowship from within, by one person. She is a self-proclaimed prophetess by the name of Jezebel who has wreaked havoc in the fellowship, a malevolent seducer, a controlling figure, in the same mould no doubt as a woman sharing the same name Jezebel, wife of King Ahab and persecutor of God's servants Elijah and Naboth in her time. She has led members of the fellowship astray and away from Christ, his Person and teaching. Warning is given by Christ. The seduced will meet the same end as her.

To the Church at Sardis, there are direct words from the risen Christ challenging the Church's lifelessness, complacency and lethargy in terms of witness to His Person and truth. The Church has a reputation of being alive but is dead. It's their wake up call. "Strengthen what remains and is about to die", Christ states, "for I have found your deeds unfinished in the sight of my God. Remember, therefore, what you have received and heard; hold it fast, and repent." A faithful few of them are assured, nonetheless, of being with Christ in Heaven.

To the Philadelphian Church, Christ says those who berate them will yet kneel before them. The Church at Philadelphia shares with the ancient Church of Smyrna the distinction of receiving nothing but praise from [Christ](#). There is commendation for past missionary endeavour in

regard to which, through Christ, the Door, further opportunity will yet be given to witness to the ascended, risen Christ of Heaven, with the promise at life's ending here to be with Him in Heaven. Holding to Christ they will surely be held by Christ. The ancient city of

Philadelphia came to be known as Alasehir where witness to Christ continued through the Greek community there until early in the Twentieth century. At the close of the Greco-Turkish War of 1919-

1922, the city was razed to the ground and thousands of its Greek population were either killed or fled. A suburb of Athens, "New Philadelphia", is named after the Greek refugees who fled there from Alasehir.

By contrast the Ancient Church at Laodicea has earned the reputation down the centuries of being the "peelie-wallie" church. Christ condemned their lack of response and commitment toward Him as "neither hot nor cold", neither one nor the other, but "lukewarm", even indifferent. Christ counsels them yet to source true gold in His person and truth, to seek eyes of faith Him to behold, and covering their nakedness with the white clothing of His Person. As Paul puts it in Romans 13. 14, "clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ, and do not think about how to gratify the desires of the flesh." The Laodiceans may have been rich in material terms but they were poor in their lack of response to Christ who gives His all. Christ is standing knocking on the door of their hearts, and ours, pleading to be invited in.

Each of the Seven Letters evidences personalised words to individual churches. Jesus' words of entreaty are accompanied by warnings and rewards.

I put it to you that as individual congregations, each church in the world community today is addressed in similar terms. With which of the Ancient Seven Churches situation might we as congregations today identify most? We should, in seeking answer, remind ourselves that

there is no perfect church and quietly affirm that Christ remains faithful and merciful!

In this regard the Psalmist speaks reassuringly in Psalm 103 of God “who forgives all your sins and heals all your diseases, who redeems your life from the pit and crowns you with love and compassion who satisfies your desires with good things so that your youth is renewed like the eagle’s” ..... adding that “as far as the east is from the west, so far has (God) removed our transgressions from us.” The Apostle John reminds us in 1 John 1.9: “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.”

In our own time and place, as we come out of lockdown, important decisions are having to be made by Christian congregations, including our own, regarding the future. In the Church of Scotland, this is the prerogative of individual Kirk Sessions. In our own situation here as linked congregations such decision-making will be made by the two Kirk Sessions in conjunction with Fiona Wilson, our Interim Moderator. As Locum Minister, I am not privy to their deliberations or party to any decision-making. Nonetheless, I consider it right to point out that we need individually to let the Lord pose the question to us, each one, in the situation we find ourselves in today, the question asked at the end of each of the Seven Letters to the Churches “Whoever has ears, let them hear what the Spirit says to the churches.” What is the Holy Spirit saying to you and me?

We continue to pray for our eldership that Christ’s imperative be heeded and that right decisions are made under Christ who is truly, of whom Hebrews 13. 8 speaks, “Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.

Your Locum Minister and Friend,  
Douglas Irving

# Map showing Seven Churches of Asia Minor



## Theatre of Ancient Ephesus



## Ruins of Church and Temple of Artemis at Ancient Sardis



## Ruins of Temple of Trajan on the Acropolis of Pergamum



### Church Register

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

### Deaths

Mrs W Harper on 1/6/20

Mr W McGowan on 9/7/20

Mr W Wilson on 19/7/20

Mrs A Field on 19/7/20

## From the Editor

Because our church buildings remain closed, and we are still waiting for guidance from the Church of Scotland and our local Presbytery about when services might resume, 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 these online-only editions but we would urge you to let others know they are available and how they can see them.

## Can you help?

A small working group has been busy gardening at the church, including weeding the gravel area at the front of the church, and also on the left hand side, both of which are in need of some attention. If you have some spare time, please come along, whenever suits you, and remove some weeds. Although we don't know yet when the church building will reopen, it would be nice to keep the surrounding paths looking good. Thanks in anticipation!



The merry band working on the flower beds in front of the church



And their young(er) assistants, cousins Katie and Alice

## **Congratulations!**

Not one but two Golden Wedding Anniversaries! Congratulations to Loftus and Rosemary Brown who celebrated their Golden Wedding Anniversary on 11<sup>th</sup> July. And also to Peter and Mary Bell who celebrate theirs on 8<sup>th</sup> August.

And congratulations to Anne and Michael Hunt on the birth of their granddaughter on 17<sup>th</sup> July.

Our congratulations also go to Heather O'Connor who graduated from Glasgow University MA Honours (First Class) in Theology and Religious Studies with English Literature.

## **From the Session Clerk**

Dear fellow Members,

I know that many of you are wondering when our church will open its doors again, and the answer is - not yet. I have had guidance notes from 121 George St Edinburgh and, to be honest, there is no quick solution to reopening. There is a great deal of work to be done before that can happen. We need a Building Inspection, thorough cleaning, using appropriate products, safe seating indicated, Kirk Session has to meet and approve progress, then a Presbytery Committee has to approve our efforts so far. We are not allowed use of books, no hymn singing, and no tea/coffee after the service. None of this sounds appealing I know, but remember - this will not last forever, and there will be relaxations ahead - hopefully not too far.

While I do not want to paint a gloomy picture here, you all need to be aware of what it will take to get our church up and running again. It's not a case of a bit of damp dusting, and let's open the doors now. There may be some members who may not feel safe attending public worship again, and that is a choice many of us will have to make. Rest assured that we will do our best to meet all conditions necessary to make our church the safe, welcoming place it has always been. Meantime, let us give thanks to God for bringing us safely this far through the pandemic.

Anne Mackie  
Session Clerk

## **Alzheimer Scotland**

We have just received news that the collection taken throughout the year for Alzheimer Scotland at the instigation of the Moderator of the Presbytery of Dumfries and Kirkcudbright, Sylvia Livingston, has raised just under £1,200, which will be going to the local Dumfries branch. A great total.

## Quiz

For those of you who had a go at solving the quiz set by Janette Kirkpatrick in the June/July newsletter, here are the answers (in bold).

1. Which is the first book of the Bible alphabetically?  
**Acts (of the Apostles) – it could be argued that sometimes it is known with the word ‘the’ in front of it, which would make Amos the first book**
2. Where in the world would you expect to find a car with the vehicle registration code ‘V’?  
**Vatican City**
3. Which is taller: Westminster Abbey or St Paul’s Cathedral?  
**St Paul’s Cathedral (365 ft (111m) tall, Westminster Abbey is 225 feet (69m) tall)**
4. According to the book of Genesis, who was the eldest son of Jacob?  
**Reuben**
5. Which is the last book of the Old Testament?  
**Malachi**
6. The Reverend Richard Coles was formerly part of which 80s pop duo?  
**The Communards**
7. In biblical terms, the Decalogue is another word for what?  
**The Ten Commandments**
8. According to the Gospel of Matthew, for how many silver coins did Judas Iscariot betray Jesus?  
**Thirty**
9. How many days after Easter Sunday is Pentecost celebrated?  
**49 (Fifty if you count Easter Sunday itself)**
10. How is the equivalent of Shrove Tuesday known in France?  
**Mardi Gras (Fat Tuesday)**
11. On which date is St. Patrick’s Day?  
**17th March**

12. What was the vocation of Saint Patrick?  
**Missionary/bishop**
13. According to the proverb, who is not recognised in his own land?  
**A prophet**
14. Which book of the Bible tells the story of Samson and Delilah?  
**Judges**
15. Which British sitcom was set at the fictional 'Bayview Retirement Home'?  
**Waiting for God**
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" ?  
**How Great Thou Art**
17. In Judaism what is meant by the Hebrew word 'Mitzvah' ?  
**Commandment (Referring to the 613 commandments given in the Torah)**
18. In which two books of the Bible are the 'Ten Commandments' listed?  
**Exodus and Deuteronomy**
19. 'In the Bleak Midwinter' is a Christmas carol based on the work of which poet?  
**Christina Rossetti**
20. What colour smoke can be seen coming from the Vatican chimney when a new Pope has been elected?  
**White**
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?  
**Abide With Me**
22. At what age does a Jewish boy become a 'Bar Mitzvah' ?  
**Thirteen**
23. How many books are there in the protestant Christian Bible?  
**66**
24. Mecca, the holy city of Islam, is located within which country?  
**Saudi Arabia**

25. Name all of the 'Seven Deadly Sins'.  
**Pride, greed, lust, envy, gluttony, wrath and sloth.**
26. Which book of the Bible is a collection of 150 songs and poems?  
**Psalms**
27. What is the name of the Hindu festival of lights?  
**Diwali (or Deepavali)**
28. In which modern-day country was Mother Teresa born?  
**Republic of Macedonia (She was born in Skopje, which at the time part of the Ottoman Empire – many sources state that she was Albanian – she was born to an Albanian mother, but Skopje is now part of Macedonia)**
29. What religion is the Dalai Lama?  
**Buddhist**
30. What is the ninth month of the Islamic calendar, during which Muslims observe a month of fasting?  
**Ramadan**
31. When does the Jewish Sabbath begin?  
**Friday**
32. Which Bible figure is most closely associated with leading the exodus from Egypt?  
**Moses**
33. Which Bible figure is most closely associated with willingness to sacrifice his son for God?  
**Abraham**
34. What religion was Mother Teresa?  
**Roman Catholic**
35. What religion was Joseph Smith?  
**Mormon**
36. Whose writings and actions inspired the Protestant Reformation?  
**Martin Luther**

## Update from the Manse garden

Catrina Logan's hard work is paying off! These are some of the veg she grew and picked recently. She says they made a very tasty leek and potato soup.



## For reflection

Answer me when I call to you (Psalm 4)

Unto us a boy us is born

Great is the Lord, and most worthy of praise (Psalm 48)

Unless the Lord builds the house, its builders labour in vain (Ps 127)

Sing joyfully to the Lord, you righteous (Psalm 33)

The earth is the Lord's and everything in it (Psalm 24)

\*\*\*\*\*

Shepherd of your flock, we know that you will always guide and support us

Especially at this time

Praise be to you oh Lord for all your many blessings

Thank you God for being with us each day

Especially at this time

Merciful God, we ask forgiveness for all our wrongdoings

Be with us, gracious God, as we go about our daily lives and we pray for those who are suffering

Especially at this time

Rejoice in the Lord always and again I say "REJOICE"

## Next newsletter

The deadline for our October/November issue is **Sunday September 20**. 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.

**Editor:** David Bennett

**Write:** 2 Wolfgill Drive, Dumfries DG1 4XY

**Call:** 263106

**Email:** [magazine@stmarysgreyfriars.org.uk](mailto:magazine@stmarysgreyfriars.org.uk)

## **Useful contacts**

### **Minister**

Rev Douglas Irving: 01556 610156 or 07592 530161

### **Session Clerk**

Anne Mackie: 266186

### **Treasurer, Gift Aid and freewill offering envelopes**

Rod Williamson: 251876