



**Chrystal Chronicle
Newsletter
August/September 2021**



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

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www.stmarysgreyfriars.org.uk

Scottish charity no. SC009432

From the Locum Minister

It was great to have family to stay as July drew to a close. With the relaxation of restrictions, my mother-in-law and younger sister-in-law and her husband came over from Northern Ireland, to stay with us for four nights, attending SMG with Hilary on Sunday 18 July. In times past, we enjoyed family holidays in my late father-in-law's rectory on Northern Ireland's Ards Peninsula, sandwiched between the Irish Sea and Strangford Lough, where he served as rector in two linked parishes. Once we took his touring caravan down to the South of Ireland. Hilary was heavily pregnant with Jean, and Roan and I sailed out from the Ring of Kerry on becalmed seas and under cloudless blue skies to visit Skellig Michael. Celtic Monks, from possibly as early as the sixth century, following the model of early Egyptian Christians and their famous eremitic son St Anthony (251-356 CE), believing that union with God could be best achieved by living the solitary life of prayer, meditation and fasting came here. These Celtic monks built still extant stone-built bee-hives into which they retreated from the world and family on the mainland, often for as much as a year at a time. St Fionan (470 – 549) is regarded as the founder of the ascetic monks' settlement, with St Michael in the tenth century giving his name to the island. It was not until the thirteenth century that the settlement on Skellig Michael was abandoned, with climate deterioration and increasingly severe storms at sea determining factors. There's on record a dialogue between an early visitor to the island with a cell occupant. As the visitor knocked on the cell door he asked "Anybody in?" to which question came reply, "Aye, I'm in my-cell!"



Monks fashioned stone steps up to the settlement, with many a nesting puffin lining the route. The Celtic monks' cells in their remote location have stood almost intact for centuries, long surviving the later built, now roofless chapel, of the Augustinians.

It was monks such as on Skellig Michael and the Celtic Church on the Western frontiers of Europe which largely kept the lamp of faith in Christ burning in the Church on the Continent in darkest times when Christianity faced near extinguishment in Europe as barbarians, pagans and Visigoths rampaged all across Europe, culminating with the sack of Rome in 410 CE.



And so to present times. To whom does God look to keep alive the living flame of faith in the Person of Jesus Christ, His Son, our Lord? Who will stand up to the amassed secular forces surrounding us? Aggressive atheism, agnosticism and humanism, repressive governments and regimes, weaponry of political correctness, psychiatry, fanaticism and extremism from among the holders of contrary creed, dogma and ideology, the dastardly, and from within, interior forces of apathy, ignorance, indifference, sloth, the demonic, and still strange aligned forces, COVID and Cyber and other sinister attacks as they sweep across Europe and our World, all on our doorstep, it seems.

Through Peter in his First Epistle, chapter 5, our Heavenly Father affords us words of instruction and encouragement: "All of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, because, 'God opposes the proud but shows favour to the humble.' ⁶ Humble yourselves, therefore, under God's mighty hand, that He may lift you up in due time. ⁷ Cast all your anxiety on Him because He cares for you. ⁸ Be alert and of sober mind. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a

roaring lion looking for someone to devour. ⁹ Resist him, standing firm in the faith, because you know that the family of believers throughout the world is undergoing the same kind of sufferings. ¹⁰ And the God of all grace, who called you to His eternal glory in Christ, after you have suffered a little while, will Himself restore you and make you strong, firm and steadfast. ¹¹ To Him be the power forever and ever. Amen.”

We need to remind ourselves of the power our Lord invests in our prayers inspired of the Holy Spirit as we give ourselves, each one, to pray unceasingly in these last times. John 16.23 “Very truly I tell you, my Father will give you whatever you ask in my name. ²⁴ Until now you have not asked for anything in my name. Ask and you will receive, and your joy will be complete.”

We need, all the more now, to engage in spiritual warfare and contend with many enemies, not forgetting the enemy himself, in the struggle.

Among them, our prayers that Christ give His Church His own compassion, that the Lord continue to defend His Church, as she makes her stand on the true. May the Lord refine the Church everywhere, ourselves included, to a truer beauty of His hand. May the Lord give us new boldness in our confession of Him before the World as Saviour and Lord! May we avail ourselves of every opportunity to share Him. May we always have large place in our heart for the lost and marginalised, the poor, those “going through it”, yet seemingly uncomplaining. We would remember to provide encouragement and backup to front liners in the fight. May we be receptive to the Holy Spirit’s inner promptings in prayer as the press and media inform us of so much need throughout this troubled World and give every situation into our God’s responding. And may we make the words of God’s songster our daily plea to God:

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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for You a mighty weapon
make our intercession
for You a mighty weapon
O Lord, teach us to pray.

(Daniel Brymer, 1990)
Songs of Fellowship No. 917
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Your Locum Minister and friend, Douglas



Church intimations

Our Locum Minister, Rev. Douglas Irving, will be on annual leave on the 2 Sundays 8th and 15th August. Our Session Clerk, Anne Mackie, will be taking the services at St Mary's-Greyfriars' and Caerlaverock on 8th August and our Interim Moderator, Rev. Fiona Wilson on 15th August. Any pastoral matters should be referred to Anne.

Church Register

Deaths – “I am the resurrection and the life”

June 28: Mr W Jardine

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

From the editor

If anyone would like to contribute any items to the newsletter, especially humorous/light-hearted memories connected to their Christian upbringing, please send them to Marion Bennett at the above address.

Congratulations

Congratulations to James and Marion Gall who celebrated their Diamond Wedding Anniversary in June.

Thanks for flowers

We are once again able to distribute the church flowers after the Sunday service. Thanks have been received from Alan Franks, Mary Bell, Mr and Mrs Howat and Rosemary Chambers. And Lorna Bell wrote “Thank you for the lovely flowers Maureen brought yesterday. I don't feel able to be with you now but I'm there in spirit. Keep on “keeping on:” and keep as well as you can.

Flower rota

August	8	J Swan	September	5	J Train
	15	J Thomson		12	L Jardine
	22	D McCaig		19	H Edgar
	29	M Dalrymple		26	Harvest
			October	3	G Boyes

Flower Team contacts: Maureen Wilson (255008), Moira Cannon (720394), Betty Jardine (257691) and Margaret Thomson (253484).

And while we're thinking of flowers.....



“The task before us is never as great as the power behind us.”
Quoted by the Moderator of the General Assembly this year,
originating from John Miller, a past Moderator.

Guild update

The Guild will be starting again soon, with the first meeting on Tuesday 14 September. We look forward to welcoming everyone back to the Guild and especially any new people. All meetings this session will be at 1.30pm.

Liz Tanner

Gardening Club

The Gardening Club have now drawn up their syllabus for the forthcoming Autumn session. The Club re-starts on 8th September, probably in the large hall, depending on COVID rules at that point.

Date		Speaker	
September	8	Bill Holland	Nature unrestricted
	22	Members' Day	Volunteers needed!
October	6	Willie Taylor	Snowdrops & Honey

Outing to Stockarton Garden

Miraculously the weather was great! In spite of the dire forecast there was sunshine but not too hot. These conditions were perfect for the Gardening Club's outing to Stockarton Garden, near Kirkcudbright on 28th July.

The garden, started in 1995 by Carola Cliff, has many unusual shrubs and trees and is a typical example of someone who loves plants and is extremely knowledgeable about them. Members had their own knowledge (be it so little!) tested trying to identify the numerous species of flowers.

Mrs Cliff and her son were very welcoming and pleased to share their story of living at Stockarton.

It was particularly happy for members of St Mary's-Greyfriars' Gardening Club to be meeting up with each other again after such a long time and in such beautiful surroundings.

Afternoon tea at Threave was enjoyed by everyone, whilst Stockarton, with its tranquil Lochan and graceful swans, attended to our spiritual well-being.

Thanks are due to the committee for the work they put in arranging the outing and subsequent work on the new syllabus. Particular thanks to June Taylor for being an excellent co-ordinator.

We invite new members to join us where the main emphasis is - fellowship.

Eunice Sutherland

Rev. Douglas Irving took some photos of the outing.



Tommy and Betty



All smiles from Eunice, Mary and Margaret



Swans and cygnets on the lochan



Mrs Cliff beside a white summer rhododendron, Polar Bear, of which she is very proud.



This woodland plant is called veratrum.

Bethany Trust donations

Gillian Boyes received this letter from the Bethany Christian Trust.

Dear all,

I would like to thank you for your generous donations of toiletries to Bethany Christian Trust Dumfries.

Your gifts are much appreciated by the people who use our drop-in each week. Many of our visitors are experiencing severe difficulties in their lives and your kindness makes such a difference.

With many thanks,

Pamela Crosbie
Drop-in coordinator
Bethany Christian Trust Dumfries

Next magazine

The deadline for our October/November issue is **Sunday September 19** for items through the church – and 3pm that day for those sent direct. Many thanks as always.

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