



**Chrystal Chronicle
Newsletter
February/March 2022**



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

Tel 01556 610156

www.stmarysgreyfriars.org.uk

Scottish charity no. SC009432

From the Locum Minister

On one of the evenings of our short break in London, Hilary and I much enjoyed a memorable performance of Verdi's "Nabucco" at the Royal Opera House Covent Garden. The opera's main character, Nabucco, is a portrayal of Nebuchadnezzar, 6th century B.C. King of Babylon, conqueror of Judah.



Historically, the Babylonians under Nebuchadnezzar invaded Judah in 598 B.C. and besieged Jerusalem, forcing the capitulation and later deportation to Babylon of Jehoiachin, King of Judah, along with thousands of his military and civilian elite (2 Kings 24). Jehoiachin's uncle, Mattaniah, was installed in place of Jehoiachin, taking the regnal title of Zedekiah.

In 587 B.C., the Babylonians attacked Jerusalem again and this time Zedekiah was taken captive. The Babylonians had Zedekiah blinded and his sons put to death. Jerusalem was reduced to rubble and the blind Zedekiah and the remaining elite of Judah were exiled to Babylon (2 Kings 25). The so-called Babylonian Captivity of Judah was complete.

The destruction of Jerusalem is portrayed in the first part of the opera with sizeable pillar-like structures on stage being pushed over.

For the most part, however, the opera focuses on internal divisions and political intrigue within the Babylonian Royal House. Nabucco's daughter makes attempt to depose her father as king. There is a plot to have all the exiled Hebrews killed.

The highlight of the opera, however, for audiences comes towards the end of the almost three-hour production when "Va, Pensiero", the Chorus of Hebrew Slaves, is sung. During the performance we saw, the chorus members offered song in a circle formation, as shown in the illustration.

Incidentally, after I had shared this "Nabucco" experience with the congregation on 23rd January, Robert Lind, our organist, who has long wanted to see the opera himself, delighted us by giving us, at close of service, an impromptu rendering on the organ of the theme to the Hebrew Slaves Chorus.

The words of the Chorus entitled "Va, Pensiero" were written in Italian for Giuseppe Verdi (1813-1901) by the librettist, Temistocle Solera (1815 – 1878) and can be translated:

"Hasten thoughts on golden wings.
Hasten and rest on the densely wooded hills,
where warm and fragrant and soft
are the gentle breezes of our native land!
The banks of the Jordan we greet
and the towers of Zion
O, my homeland, so beautiful and lost!
O memories, so dear and yet so deadly!
Golden harp of our prophets
why do you hand silently on the willow?
Rekindle the memory of our hearts
and speak of the times gone by!
Or like the fateful Solomon,
draw a lament of raw sound;
or permit the Lord to inspire us
to endure our suffering."

The words echo the words and sentiments of the Psalmist inspired to song in Psalm 137:

“By the rivers of Babylon we sat and wept when we remembered Zion. There on the poplars we hung our harps, for there our captors asked us for songs, our tormentors demanded songs of joy; they said, “Sing us one of the songs of Zion!” How can we sing the songs of the Lord while in a foreign land. If I forget you, Jerusalem, may my right hand forget its skill.”

According to the Old Testament accounts, Nebuchadnezzar is seen to be an agent of God, bringing punishment upon God’s apostate people. Later, God was to use Nebuchadnezzar’s successor, King Cyrus, as facilitator of the Hebrews’ return to Jerusalem and of restoration of the nation’s fortunes. In the meantime, during God’s people’s tribulation, Ezekiel and Isaiah were God’s powerful spokesmen, sharing God’s assurance that He would bring His people again to know their former glory. In later times, Nehemiah was to be God’s instrument in rebuilding the ruined fortifications of the city and to ensuring good governance was put in place. Ezra was charged by God in these later times with overseeing the regulation of the life and worship of the community according to the Law of Moses, with the Book of the Law, rediscovered during the reign of the earlier sixth century B.C. King of Judah, Josiah, read anew and adherence to it proclaimed. Thus God’s Covenant People experienced the joy of liberation and release from captivity in Babylon and return to the Land long promised to their forefathers.

God seeks that His word be spoken into humankind’s every captivity, physical, mental spiritual, in every age. The prophet’s voice will not be silenced in this. God seeks to speak into your situation and mine His own words of comfort, words of deliverance, words of promise. God knows who and whose we really are, all we go through, have gone through, will go through.

God’s New Covenant established in and through Jesus Christ His Son, is God’s means of bringing about our release from every captivity of the human situation, physical, mental, spiritual. Would that we but prove it, taking God at His word, calling upon our Heavenly Father in

the Name of His Son, Jesus, in whatever situation we find ourselves in, to set us free.

Yes, we may declare our own U.D.I. and embark on paths of our own fashioning and making. We may immerse ourselves in lives of our own choice and making alone, pursuits of our choosing, embracing distractions from the real issues in an attempt to soften every pain. But the truth remains. None but God, and God alone, can in response to the prayer in Jesus' Name spoken, set us and humankind free from every ensnarement and captivity to this world and the worldly and to sin and death.

It is our privilege as Christians to experience and affirm this as proven experience, all through the mediation of Jesus Christ and His Atonement. Through Jesus' own sacrificial, substitutionary death, willingly embraced. Through His own voiced plea upon the Cross for humankind's forgiveness of God. Through our receiving of God's forgiving love, every captivity we find ourselves in, every attitude and action which we allow to come between us and God and fellowship with him is demolished.

Charles Wesley puts it well in his hymn, "And can it be that I should gain an interest in the Saviour's blood" as he speaks experientially:

"Long my imprisoned spirit lay
Fast bound in sin and nature's night;
Thine eye diffused a quickening ray;
I woke, the dungeon filled with light;
My chains fell off, my heart was free,
I rose, went forth, and followed thee."

To know real freedom, we have to be captivated by God's Son and, like Him, pursue with willing, God's plan for us. Paradoxically, our freedom from worldly captivity is won through another captivity, the mastery of Jesus Christ over us, our being captive to Jesus Christ.

George Matheson puts it thus, "Make me a captive, Lord, and then I shall be free"

Through the season of Lent, soon to be upon us, may we live more captivated by Jesus' human example, dying to self, to live anew as His in the resurrection life Easter affirms and which is ours in Christ to prove.

Your Locum Minister and friend,
Douglas

Church Register

Deaths – “I am the resurrection and the life”

22/1/22 Mrs I Thom

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

Alpha Course

There is an opportunity to join an online course which will develop and deepen your Christian faith starting on Tuesday 1st February 6.30 - 8pm and lasting 12 weeks. This will be conducted by Andrew Johnstone and will follow a course book which will be provided.

If you would like to explore Christianity further, please contact Rev. Douglas Irving on 01556 610156 or Andrew on 0771 420 7902 to register your interest.

Anne Mackie
Session Clerk

Postage Stamps

Just a reminder that we are still collecting used postage stamps, so please bring them to the church or contact me and I will collect them from your home.

Liz Tanner (tel: 261486)

News from the Guild

We are back in business! Our meeting on 15th February will be at 1.30pm, when our speaker will be a representative from the Guild project “Home for Good”.

On 15th March, again at 1.30pm, we will be holding the AGM which, once the business has been dealt with, will be a fun afternoon.

Liz Tanner

World Day of Prayer

It is very much hoped that there will be a local service again this year on Friday, 4th March. Please see our Facebook page or contact Liz Tanner nearer the time for details.

Thanks for flowers

We are once again able to distribute the church flowers after the Sunday service. Thanks have been received from Rena Ball, Cheryl Smail, Jane Meikle and Mary Bell. And Janet McSherry wrote “I would like to express my gratitude for the lovely flowers received following the unexpected death of my friend Irma in November last year.”

News from Debrecen

Liz Tanner received a copy of the church magazine from our friends at Arpad Ter church. It included a Christmas message from St Mary's-Greyfriars, in Hungarian of course, but also translated into English.

Dear Friends,

We have had our first fall of winter snow and the town's Christmas lights have been switched on. The shops are all decorated and there is non-stop Christmas music filling the High Street. Not long now....

Soon we will celebrate the birth of our Saviour Jesus Christ – after all He is the Reason for the Season.

We often think of you at Arpad Ter and those of us, David, Bette, Anne, Janet, Heather and Liz, reminisce about our happy times with you all.

We, from SMG, send you all season's greetings and every blessing for a happy Christmas and peaceful New Year.

Rev. Douglas Irving (Locum Minister)
Anne Mackie (Session Clerk)

With the magazine Liz also received a box of chocolates which she was happy to share with the congregation after a service.

Liz has also heard that Pastor Janos Veres had major surgery just before Christmas, and we pray for his continued recovery.

Flower rota

February	6	Mr Rogers
	13	C Proudfoot
	20	E Sutherland
	27	M Dalrymple
March	6	M Woods
	13	D McCaig
	20	A Mackie
	27	Mrs Gourlie
April	3	B Jardine

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

Useful contacts

Locum Minister

Rev Douglas Irving: 01556 610156

Session Clerk

Anne Mackie: 266186

Treasurer, Gift Aid and freewill offering envelopes

Rod Williamson: 251876

Gardening Club

The syllabus for the forthcoming session is as follows:

Date		Speaker	
February	9 23	André Barallon	Memories of Stockarton Burns Celebration
March	9 23	Sally Burn Ian Warner	Fabulous Gardens The Covid-free garden



St Mary's  Greyfriars

**GARDENING
CLUB**

Meetings resume
in Church Hall
on Wednesday
09 February 2022
at 2.00pm

Outing
Remembered

All Welcome

Scottish Charity SC009432

Reflection

What do we associate with Spring - longer days, lighter nights (slightly), warmer weather, flowers and (perhaps) cleaning?

Snowdrop

Primrose

Ranunculus

Iris

Narcissus

Grape Hyacinth

We marvel Lord at the passing of the seasons and at the tenacity of some flowers to flourish despite adverse weather conditions. We give thanks for the advent of Spring and know that your goodness is gladdening our hearts.

As we come to the season of Lent we remember the suffering Jesus endured and we are humbled by the knowledge that this was for our sakes. Father God, we pray that we will be worthy of this endurance.

Amen

Next magazine

The deadline for our February/March issue is **Sunday March 20** for items through the church – and 3pm that day for those sent direct. Many thanks as always.

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