



**Chrystal Chronicle
Newsletter
April/May 2022**

HAPPY EASTER!



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

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Scottish charity no. SC009432

Locum Minister's Easter Message

From the perspective of the Twenty First Century of the Christian Era, we look back on the landscape of human history to see the Cross of Calvary still towering over it all, commanding humankind's attention. Would that men and women and the young of today but spare the Cross of Jesus a glance at least and yet be moved! On the Cross, in substitutionary death for all humankind, Jesus, innocent of any fault, embraced human suffering at its worst through cruellest mental and physical torture, abandonment, dying and death. As the hymn writer, Cecil Frances Alexander put it:

“He died that we might be forgiv'n, he died to make us good,
That we might go at last to heav'n, saved by his precious blood.
There was no other good enough to pay the price of sin;
he only could unlock the gate of heav'n, and let us in.”

The contemporary Christian songwriter Ian White, in his song “The Cross is still there”, written specially for the Billy Graham Crusade in Glasgow's Celtic Park in 1991, speaks of the reality that “even after all these years, the Cross is still there, calling to you, calling to me, calling to everyone to turn and believe.” It is a powerful song that our organist and gifted soloist Robert Lind offered as an introit at our service in SMG on 27 March 2022, a reminder during Lent of Jesus' sacrifice for all humankind, you and me included.

In my Pastoral Letter of Christmas 2021, I shared the poignant image (below) of the Babe of Bethlehem, whose tiny form was laid by his parents in a stable crib, showing the holy infant already under the shadow of the Cross. Jesus, born to die.



Impacting upon the future and the present, the Cross is to be seen as touching on times and peoples preceding it. First, powerfully in terms of Jesus' own earthly life, from its very beginnings, the shadow of the Cross breaks into his consciousness at various times in later life, such as when He is recorded by the Gospel writer Luke (12.50) uttering that deep cry wrung out of his humanity as the near prospect his baptism of fire dawns upon him, "But I have a baptism to undergo, and what constraint I am under until it is completed!" (Luke 12.50). Second, the Cross reaches back in its effects on the lives of all who have lived on earth before Jesus, encompassing humankind from earliest times.

The writer to the Hebrews (3.39 & 40) speaks of the retrospective aspect of the Cross when he looks back upon faithful men and women of God and those of their generations who had lived on Earth before Jesus. "These were all commended for their faith, yet none of them received what had been promised, since God had planned something better for us so that only together with us would they be made perfect."

The Cross also reaches down from Jesus' time through succeeding generations to our own. In Paul's opening words to Christians in Corinth, much read since, he writes, "For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God." (1 Corinthians 1. 18)

At Easter, it is our privilege as Christians to share with others sent our way, best news, news of Jesus triumph over sin and death, shown in emptied Cross and emptied Tomb, as reflected upon in these two images.



But what of Jesus's resurrection from the dead? Still, even in the Christian Church, one finds those who find difficulty in accepting the bodily resurrection of Jesus, in spite of much witness testimony in the Gospel Accounts and in the first written account of Jesus' appearances to the discipleship in resurrection body in Paul's writings, 1 Corinthians 15. 3-11, in which he also recounts Jesus' appearance to him in resurrection body: "For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, ⁴ that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, ⁵ and that he appeared to Cephas, and then to the Twelve. ⁶ After that, he appeared to more than five hundred of the brothers and sisters at the same time, most of whom are still living, though some have fallen asleep. ⁷ Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles, ⁸ and last of all he appeared to me also, as to one abnormally born. ⁹ For I am the least of the apostles and do not even deserve to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. ¹⁰ But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace to me was not without effect. No, I worked harder than all of them—yet not I, but the grace of God that was with me. ¹¹ Whether, then, it is I or they, this is what we preach, and this is what you believed."

No doubt, during our own celebrations this Easter Sunday, we will be able sing, or heard sung, Edmond Budry's hymn of Easter triumph:

"Thine be the glory, risen, conquering Son,
endless is the victory thou o'er death hast won;
angels in bright raiment rolled the stone away,
kept the folded grave-clothes, where they body lay."

The reference to "folded grave-clothes" is one of the details of the emptied tomb events that I have picked up on this year in my reflections on Scripture as an inexhaustible source of truth. John speaks of Peter's visit to the emptied tomb that first Easter morning, John 20. 6, 7 "Then Simon Peter came along behind him and went straight into the tomb. He saw the strips of linen lying there, ⁷ as well as the cloth that had been wrapped around Jesus' head. The cloth was still lying in its place, separate from the linen."

Peter, on entering the emptied tomb came upon an orderly scene which showed no sign of disturbance. The grave clothes were neatly folded. This was in contrast to the resurrection appearance of Lazarus (John 11) who emerged from his entombment wearing grave clothes, the additional burial cloth still wrapped around His head. Jesus, however, had apparently passed through His grave clothes and head covering in much the same way as He later made appearance to the discipleship in a locked room. The question arises, had Jesus, new risen, folded the grave-clothes Himself?

In 2010, Hilary and I were privileged to see the Passion Play at Oberammergau, being held this year 2022, two years later on account of Lockdown. The play is a long performance, perhaps seven hours in length, with an hour or so break. Anyway, towards the end of the performance we attended, an American in the audience, sitting just a few places along from us, was audibly heard to say, "I wish they'd hurry up, we all know how it ends!" He turned out having to eat his words though. The end was as superb as it was theatrically unexpected. On a darkened stage, a figure, portraying our Lord, new risen, was seen to emerge from the tomb with a lit candle in His hands. From this one lit candle source, the vast company of actors on stage, one after the other, passed on the flame of their own candle to other actors holding theirs, until the stage was ablaze with light. What powerful portrayal to Christ's resurrection power in the Holy Spirit's flame at work in generations since!

May we, in our time, prove to be faithful witnesses, candle bearers of Christ's Person and Light to those of our time and to generations yet unborn!

A joyful Easter to you and yours!

Your Locum Minister and friend,
Douglas

From the Session Clerk

Dear Fellow Members,

As you will know, the Church of Scotland is undergoing a massive reform. Part of this is the amalgamation of Presbyteries, and, in September, Dumfries and Kirkcudbright will become part of the new South West Presbytery, one of only twelve in Scotland. I would like to share with you the draft Presbytery Plan, due to be approved in June, which indicates the level of change affecting all our local churches.

In Nithsdale - Kirkmichael, Tinwald, and Torthorwald, will link with Ruthwell, Cummertrees, and Mouswald.

Sanquhar, Kirkconnel, Thornhill united with Durisdeer, Penpont, Keir and Tynron, Glencairn and Moniaive united with Dunscore, Closeburn will have a Team Ministry.

Dumfries-St Mary's Greyfriars' - Dissolution as recommended by your Kirk Session.

Caerlaverock - Guardianship of one day per week plus Sunday.

Troqueer - left as is, but with the added parish of SMG.

St George's - linked with, or united with, Northwest, linked with Kirkmahoe

Max West - linked with Lochend and New Abbey

St Michael's and South - linked with Irongray, Lochrutton and Terregles

Here at SMG we have a beautiful church which, unfortunately, is very difficult to access, which needs expensive maintenance and, most importantly, which lacks the people willing to commit to the posts essential to its running. Sadly, this means that we are probably coming to the end of our life here, although this depends on Presbytery's approval of the draft plan. There will be a Congregational Meeting, to be arranged by Presbytery, when a vote on our future will be taken. Until then, we continue as usual. We will welcome two babies into the Church in the next few weeks, we will have international curlers attending worship on 10th April, followed on Sunday 17th April by Easter Day, the most joyous day of the Christian

year, and the day on which our faith depends. The day our Lord rose from the dead to everlasting life. Our Communion Service will be on Sunday 24th April and you are all warmly invited to share in the Lord's Supper.

On 2 Sundays in March we took a collection for Aid for Ukraine and SMG gave generously to help bring aid to those so desperately in need. A total of £1,150 was raised, including £300 from the Guild.

While we feel sad about some of the changes coming our way, we could also think of this as a time of opportunity. For new ways of worship, new places of worship, perhaps with new people but always with the same God our Father, and His son Jesus, the same yesterday, today and tomorrow.

Every Blessing as we look forward in faith.

Anne Mackie
Session Clerk

Church Register

New Member – Welcome!

Mrs M Downie

Deaths – “I am the resurrection and the life”

3/12/21 Mr R Haining
21/12/21 Mrs M Wallace
28/12/21 Mr S Hogg

28/1/22 Mrs G Morgan
8/2/22 Mrs A Dickie
16/2/22 Mrs E Ferguson
10/3/22 Mrs V Haining

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

Congratulations!

To Max and Agnes Fraser who celebrated their Diamond Wedding Anniversary on 28th March.

Thanks for flowers

We are once again able to distribute the church flowers after the Sunday service. Thanks have been received from Freda Hunter, Rosemary Brown, Mrs L Gourlie, Mrs M Wallace, Mrs J McCourtie, Mike and Maggie Stenhouse and Cherry Saad.

Just for fun!

Question – Who had a computer in Bible times?

Answer – Eve had an Apple and Moses had 2 tablets.

Question – How do we know Moses often wore a wig?

Answer – Because he was sometimes seen with Aaron and sometimes without!

Question – How does the Apostle Paul make coffee?

Answer – Hebrews it!

Question – Why didn't Noah like going fishing?

Answer – Because he only had 2 worms.

Flower rota

April	3	B Jardine
	10	L Tanner
	17	F Hunter
	24	M Cannon
May	1	M Thomson
	8	M Bennett
	15	Vacant
	22	Vacant
	29	D Edwards
June	5	M Wilson

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

News from the Guild:

The Guild is known for its forward thinking so hopefully we can be forgiven for taking as our theme for the AGM in March “Wind back in Time”! We opened the meeting by partaking of mince pies, sausage rolls and German Christmas biscuits! After the business part of the meeting was dispensed with we sang carols and listened to humorous Christmas readings ably accompanied by Robert Lind on the piano. No Guild Christmas party would be complete without a Quiz and our Convenor Janette tested our Bible knowledge on a Christmas theme. All agreed that our postponed December meeting was well worth waiting for.

Our outing is to Kirkcudbright on June 21 when after “free time” we will meet for afternoon tea together.

Gardening Club

The syllabus for the forthcoming session is as follows:

Date		Speaker	
April	6	Anne Radley	Encouraging Wildlife
	20	Marty Noga	Border Forest Trust
May	4	Keith Kirk	Wildlife Photographer
	18	Robert Lind	An audience
June	1	Outing	TBA

And Dorothy Edwards sent this report.

We have made an interesting start to 2022.

Once again each club member now has a most attractive copy of our syllabus, thanks to the considerable talents of Bill Holland, and it is filled with enticing topics to look forward to.

At our first meeting Andre Barallon's beautiful photographs evoked pleasant memories of our club outing to Stockarton Gardens last July.

A belated Burns Celebration in February involved the varied talents and interests of club members. Our church organist, Robert, joined us and sang most beautifully for us - how fortunate we are to have such a willing participant in the life of the church.

March began with a visit (photographically!) to some Fabulous Gardens. With Mrs Sally Burn, an entertaining and accomplished speaker, we explored the stunning formality of French Chateau gardens, and the wonderfully imaginative plantings of Powys Castle

in Wales and Monet's Giverny. Sally's husband provided the glorious photography.

For our most recent meeting we welcomed once again Mr Ian Warner. Ian is a talented gardener and a lover of nature in all its forms. He regaled us with a whole host of gardening ideas, good practice and anecdotes in his usual easy fashion. Then, the icing on the cake, he entertained us on his accordion, playing well-known melodies to which we could sing or hum along.

In this time of tumult in our world it is fitting that we should set aside time to enjoy the pleasures of music, and the words and experiences of others. The appearance of spring flowers, the insects, the birdsong and the wonderful sunshine all help to keep us grounded, and we give thanks that Nature has everything under control.

To quote Dorothy Frances Gurney –

'One is nearer God's heart in a garden than anywhere else on Earth.'

Reflection

As we look forward to Easter may we remember Jesus' ultimate sacrifice for us and we pray that you Lord will

Uphold our thoughts and prayers in these troubled times
Knowing that you are with us at all times O Lord brings us all comfort
Risen Lord, we rejoice in your Resurrection
Alleluia we sing to you in our Easter praise
Inspire us Lord by your great goodness to do what you would have us do
Nature is all around us as we come out of the dark days of winter into the light of spring, and we give you thanks for the changing season
E A S T E R

We give you thanks Lord for all your goodness, strength and understanding.

News from Eva at Arpad Ter

A week ago my Janos, Marcsi and me went to the Ukraine border, Zahony, to help with the refugees. We have been working at the railway station from 8am to 8pm making sandwiches, coffee and tea all day.



Useful contacts

Locum Minister

Rev Douglas Irving: 01556 610156

Session Clerk

Anne Mackie: 266186

Treasurer, Gift Aid and freewill offering envelopes

Rod Williamson: 251876

Next magazine

The deadline for June/July issue is **Sunday May 22** for items through the church – and 3pm that day for those sent direct. Many thanks as always.

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