



**Chrystal Chronicle  
Newsletter  
February/March 2021**



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

**Tel 01556 610156**

**[www.stmarysgreyfriars.org.uk](http://www.stmarysgreyfriars.org.uk)**

**Scottish charity no. SC009432**

## From the Locum Minister

Worship, giving God worth, is at the heart of the Christian response to God. Worship in everyday service of others in God's Name - and the worship of the Sunday service in the sanctuary. Memorably, before a first New Year Sunday Service in Comber, County Down, Northern Ireland, Hilary and I attended some years ago, we heard the organist play as a voluntary the tune to the Stevie Wonder song of 1984 "I just called to say I love you." This seemed to say much about what lies at the heart of the worship of God of the sanctuary. During the lockdown of the pandemic, service of God and service in God's Name has, praise God, continued in many diverse and imaginative ways, large and small. We have learned new and novel ways of showing love in Holy Spirit imagination and prompting to love a neighbour, the person sent our way. The communication, the telephone call, the smile, the minding. Sadly, all of us through fear or introspection, can let such worship of service lapse, with inner conscience, gladly, moving us to do something about our omission of duty.

In terms of worship of the sanctuary, radio and television have stepped up a bit when it comes to sanctuary worship. Have you tuned into the BBC Radio 4 early Sunday morning service or BBC Scotland's "Reflections at the Quay" from Glasgow waterfront or BBC's Songs of Praise, with last Sunday's 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Edition, with HM the Queen featuring, in her attendance at a previous special anniversary edition marking 150 years of Scripture Union? Over the last months of pandemic there has been in fact a burgeoning of streamed Christian worship services, live and recorded, with Holy Spirit inspired and imaginative use by churches of YouTube services. We at Dumfries:St Mary's-Greyfriars' and Caerlaverock have joined their number for what is nearly a year unbroken with Roan, Hilary's and my son, recording weekly our Sunday readers from both congregations and my own message, editing the content, supplying the visuals and putting the YouTube messages into the public domain.

Thereby, we have met in part with the Scriptural injunction of "not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching" Hebrews 10.25. The writer speaks of situations in the

early Church even when Christian assemblies were already being forsaken of choice, as in our generation to a massive extent. And all in the face of Christ's promised second coming, "the Day" which many see in these troubled and troublesome days as being sooner than later.

When the "war of the pandemic" has prevented us from meeting together, have personal devotions and prayer to God among us increased, in your small corner as in mine? As Tennyson once remarked "More things are wrought by prayer than this world dreams of, wherefore, let your voice rise like a fountain for God night and day." I believe our fervent prayers, including for the nation, the nations and nations' leaders have been inspired and outworked in these times, in the potential further evil we have been delivered from and seen wreak havoc among humankind.

And so, our own Christian witness at SMG and the Christian witness of our sister congregation of Caerlaverock is online, with a potential to reach so many in distant corners of the world even, in a way that will be preserved for posterity and any future generation.

YouTube has been a new experience for me, a steep learning curve, in like manner to when the computer became available and the technology mastered. It has been challenging to me giving a weekly message into a lens at the top of a computer screen as opposed to engaging with the living dynamic of an audience in the sanctuary. With a screen alone to speak to and tied to a script to be read, I am unable to engage in freer Holy Spirited delivery from the pulpit or lectern with the many reactions of a congregation ranging from the apparently disinterested, the engaged in part and fully, the bland, the encouraging, those who never speak encouragingly, the hostile even. And yet God still speaks online. Even to me when I play the recording back. Thanks be to God. He is always speaking. He seeks to make Himself known to the wayward in every generation that all can say God wants to speak even to me!

Your Locum Minister  
Douglas

## From the Session Clerk

Dear Members

At our last church service on Sunday 3rd January, wishing the congregation a Happy New Year had a bit of a hollow ring to it. In this year of pandemic there is not a lot of happiness about. As you know, we had to shut the church again after that service, which was very sad, so soon after all the effort to get going again.

Over the past year we have lost a lot of members, some have moved away to be near family, some left after the letter you all received last year, about the future of our Church, and of course many have died. I think we have to face facts and wonder how long we can keep going as an ageing congregation, in an ageing building. This year may see some hard decisions having to be taken, in which we will all have a part.

On a brighter note, I am sure that if you did manage to come to church, you would have enjoyed the fellowship, hearing Robert's lovely solos, and choice of musical items chosen by Douglas. Everyone abided by the rules, as I would expect from SMG members, and if we could shift that into society, maybe we could get on top of the virus sooner.

Remember the old mission hymn "What a Friend we have in Jesus"? I am sure most of you could still sing all the words, so give it a try, it may help get us through this time of pain and loss.

"When the days are heavy and my strength is small,  
Let my heart vibrate with your constant call.  
Let me know that it is true, I am Loved and belong to You."

Anne Mackie  
Session Clerk

## Church Register

### Deaths – “I am the resurrection and the life”

December 31: Mrs A Weild

January 20 : Mr P Bell

January 25: Mrs H Gray

January 27: Mrs H Little

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

### From our friends in Debrecen

Greetings have been received from our twinned church, Arpad Ter, in Debrecen. Their church magazine comes out every three months and there is usually an article about St. Mary's-Greyfriars in it. This is obviously in Hungarian but people's names are recognisable! They are permitted to hold services and are socially distanced in the church too. I know that we are constantly in their prayers and hopefully some of their congregation will be able to visit next year.

Liz Tanner

### Christian Aid

There is a Christian Aid Scotland event on Tuesday 16th February. All are welcome but booking is needed to get the log on details. There is a link on the Christian Aid Dumfries and District Facebook page.

If this isn't a good time, there is also a UK wide conference, again online, with lots of sessions between 22nd and 26th February  
[Changemakers Conference - Christian Aid](#)

On Covid 19 Christian Aid has a special appeal and online campaign about healthcare in poor countries (or better put the lack of good health care) and prayers on the website.

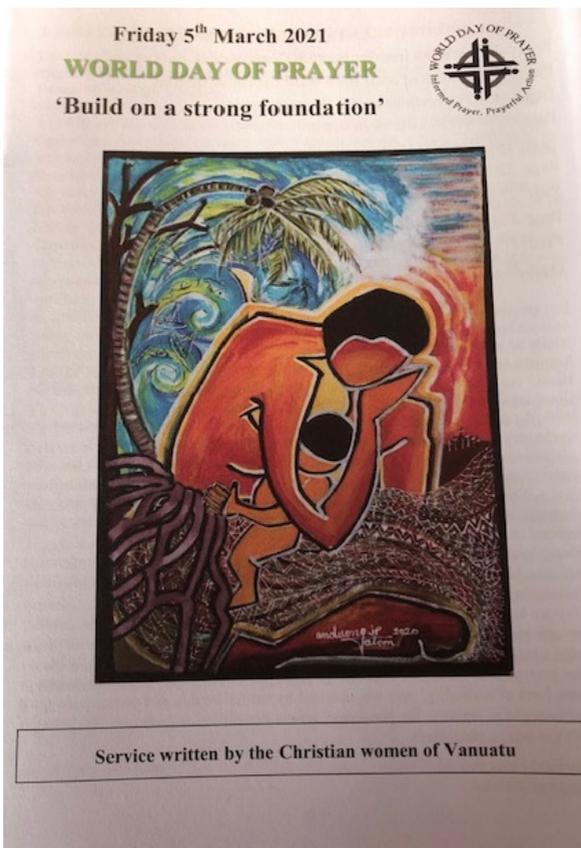
## Our Christmas gifts - and Caerlaverock's - to pupils of Caerlaverock and Brownhall Primary Schools

Just before Christmas, Caerlaverock and Dumfries: St Mary's-Greyfriars' congregations gifted to each pupil of both Caerlaverock and Brownhall Primary Schools, of which Douglas Irving is Chaplain, a copy of the Christmas story. Junior school pupils received Scripture Union's "God became like ME?" and senior pupils "The Greatest Gift of all Time". The latter describes Jesus as God's best present, gift above all other. Jesus is 100% God and 100% human. The "God became like ME" booklet is largely written in verse and includes the following: "I know it sounds crazy, weird when you say, God became human that first Christmas Day, He did it on purpose, make no mistake, He did it for real, it wasn't a fake", the poetry concluding with the words, "God wants you to know he's not far away. He came down to earth so that you could say, and know, and feel, and taste, hear and see that: "Christmas is when God became like me".

Readers will recall that before Lockdown and Easter 2020, our two congregations gave all Brownhall and Caerlaverock Primary School pupils Easter mini Easter eggs and "Happy Easter" story leaflets. It is hoped that with our gifts at Easter and Christmas children, and parents, will realise that we cannot separate the Crib from Cross, Jesus' birth from His death, and vice-versa. Each gives the other fullest meaning.



# World Day of Prayer



The World Day of Prayer is on Friday 5th March. The service is written by the people of Vanuatu and will be online. Details will be on the WDP web site and also their Facebook page.

If you would like a copy of the service sheet please let me know and I will get one to you.

If there is to be a service online from Dumfries, then the details will be posted on the SMG website and Facebook page nearer the time. It is suggested that perhaps the service can be held later in the year when we can all safely gather together - watch this space!

Liz Tanner

## In the garden

As our church garden group cannot meet at the moment, we asked Dorothy Edwards to write a few lines about the garden.

Looking out of the window at our miserable rain-soaked garden I was dreading the thought of starting the gardening season - all that clearing up! Then my eye was caught by a gleam of white in a corner - the first snowdrops! Straight away my spirits rose. As Gertrude Jekyll wrote, "The love of gardening is a seed that once sown never dies".

But "Gardens are not made by sitting in the shade" pointed out Rudyard Kipling, adding, "Adam was a gardener and God who made him sees that half a proper gardener's work is done upon his knees." Even on soggy ground.

"Of course," wrote Karel Capek in 1929, "at a distant fleeting glance, you will not see any more of a gardener than his rear end." And the vigorous wielding of a fork and trowel.

Charles Dudley Warner suggested that "What a man needs in gardening is a cast-iron back with a hinge." Great idea! And you can always keep your hinge in good condition using the oil made from nasturtium seeds, a popular remedy for aching muscles in days gone by.

And the reward for all this effort?

"The garden is never dead," said Canon H. Ellacombe in 1901, "growth is always going on, and growth that can be seen, and seen with delight."

So, "Sow seed generously:  
One for the rook and one for the crow,  
One to die and one to grow."

Time to polish my fork and trowel.

## Other lockdown pursuits

With no Arts and Crafts Group, Buzz Group, Gardening Club or Guild, has this last year of largely home confinement afforded you time for pursuit of your other interests?

My own interests include bee-keeping, gardening, philately and Rotary. Bee-keeping has been a pursuit of mine since 1984, the year I was ordained and inducted to Kilbirnie: Auld Kirk, the first of my two pastoral charges. In parish ministry in North Ayrshire and in Kirkcudbright in the Stewartry, hive colony management offered relief from the unrelenting demands of the parish. There's something calming about watching bee flights to and from the hive, resembling take off and landings at a busy airport, a lot of colony often seen returning yellow-legged with pollen brought back on their back legs. Working with bees is totally absorbing and helped me "get away from it all" in busy parishes, whilst helping the planet at the same time. Just started feeding the bees today (27 January 2021) with fondant from the bakers on seeing the bees take first flight in 2021, out and about with the milder, sunny weather.

Gardening produces clear tangible results for effort in a manner parish work often did not. New plantings, trees growing, flowers, fruit and vegetables all have something to show for one's labours. Here in my Dalbeattie garden, self-seeded native trees in our garden are brought on in pots prior to planting in the nearby woodland. These include oak. New trees coming on in our garden here and planted over the last four years include native, Chinese and Kashmir rowan, crinodendron, stachyurus, hazel, both witch and contorted, magnolia, almond, crab apple, ginkgo and walnut.

I joined Rotary first in the Garnock Valley in 1984. In Dalbeattie Club, we normally have a weekly evening meal and speaker but, for the moment, weekly meetings are on Zoom. These have been attracting weekly an almost full attendance in the mid-twenties. Last week I was privileged to host the Dalbeattie Club's Burns Celebration on Zoom, with at least sixty joining. Participants included our own organist Robert Lind, who sang so memorably at our recent SMG sanctuary services during Advent and Christmas.



Robert Lind

Robert last Thursday sang to Rotarians by invitation three Burns songs, “Mary Morrison”, “Afton Water” and “Ae Fond Kiss”, which were well received, contributing to a programme of an hour and a half which also included accordion and fiddle music, poetry, prose and a fine Immortal Memory delivered by Mike Duguid, a former President of the Burns World Federation and a Rotarian from Kirkcudbright Club.

In the last twelve years while working in the parishes I discovered stamp collecting. I remember late one winter’s evening in the Kirkcudbright manse looking at some stamps I had been given. The next time I glanced at the clock again it was 2 a.m. I had been lost in another world for hours! Later membership of both Kirkcudbright and Dumfries Philatelic Societies fuelled enthusiasm and interest. This year our two societies were to have hosted the Association of Scottish Philatelic Societies Annual Congress in Perth in April 2021 but, as happened last year, ASPS Congress has had to be cancelled on account of COVID-19. However, not all is lost. As an alternative to the physical Congress this year at the Dewar Centre, Perth, members of philatelic societies across Scotland are being invited to submit scanned displays and these will be shown on the ASPS website in

April and during ensuing months. Thereby, potentially, there will be opportunity to reach a wider public audience and raise at national and local level the profile of stamp and postcard collecting. Over the years I have found that in the doing of it, philately is a wonderful stimulus to both historical and geographical enquiry. For example, I had a trainee minister from Togo work with me for a time in Kirkcudbright. I didn't even know at that time where Togo was. It's of course in West Africa. It was formerly the German colony of Togoland. During the First World War it fell to the British and French and was jointly administered by them. Afterwards, the territory was divided between the two nations. British Togoland was incorporated into the Gold Coast and later became part of Ghana. French Togoland was to secure its independence from France in 1960. The history of Togo was chronicled in stamp issues over the years with fine stamps in the late nineteenth century portraying the Kaiser's Yacht in German Colonial times, to characteristically fine tasteful French designed stamps as a French colony, giving way to the more garish stamps of more recent years.

The pursuit of further interests in life is enriching. We discover new horizons both in the world out there and in humanity. New friendships are secured. New opportunities also for us as Christians to engage with others in matters of faith. I pray that our readers will have found that to be true in their own experience this past year in Christ's Kingdom's cause.

Douglas Irving

## A different image of the church

This model of the church was commissioned recently by her daughter for a former member, Mrs Jessica Armstrong, who was married in the church on 30th March 1962. Sadly her husband, Peter, died in 1997.



## For reflection

A different kind of reflection this time. Try thinking of a word e.g. topical or religious and taking its letters write down what comes to mind!

**P**salms, Proverbs, praise  
**A**mos, adoration, Andrew  
**N**ehemiah, Nathaniel, Noah  
**C**hrist, Corinthians, cross  
**A**bsolution, apple, Adam  
**K**ing, kinship, knowledge  
**E**zekiel, Elijah, Ephesians  
**S**amuel, supplication, Solomon

Lord God, our Father, help us to worship you and to study your word. As we enter the season of Lent, we think of the suffering that you endured for our sakes. We ask you to give us strength and to be with us all each and every day. Amen

## Next magazine

The deadline for our April/May issue is **Sunday March 21** for items through the church – and 3pm that day for those 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

### Session Clerk

Anne Mackie: 266186

### Treasurer, Gift Aid and freewill offering envelopes

Rod Williamson: 251876