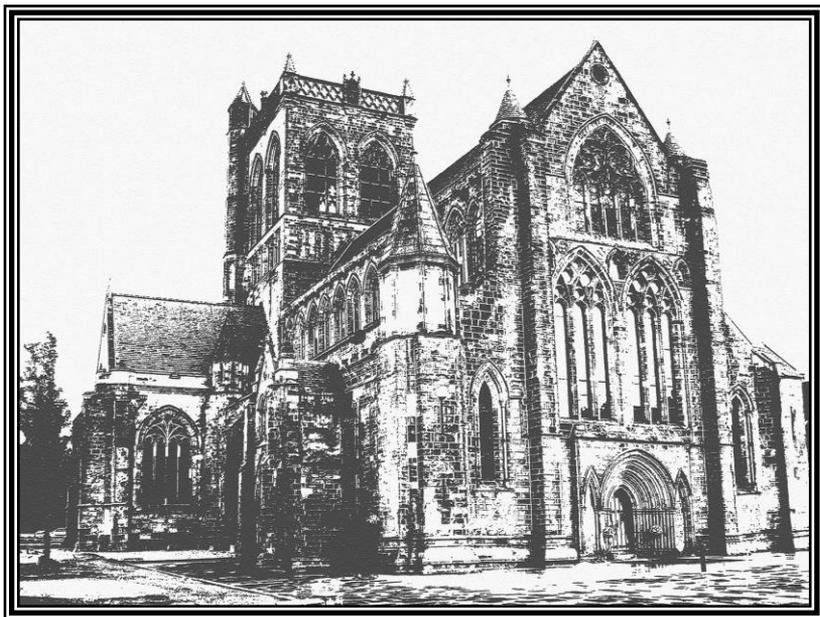


# Paisley Abbey



## Abbey Herald



**November 2020**

It hardly seems possible that the month of November is almost upon us. Each year seems to *pass from beginning to end with ever increasing speed. Is that just an indication of growing older as I've heard so many people say?*

November, of course, marks a time of National Remembrance. Wreaths will be brought to church and then laid at the memorial in the cloister garden. We wear poppies and a generation of younger men and women will don their service medals and for a couple of minutes we will try to keep silent in order to honour the ultimate sacrifice of so many as we ponder the human cost of every war and conflict past and present. This we do – once a year.

*“Hear, O Israel: the Lord is our God, the Lord alone. You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might. Keep these words that I am commanding you today in your heart. Recite them to your children and talk about them when you are at home and when you are away; when you lie down and when you rise. Bind them as a sign on your hand, fix them as an emblem on your forehead, and write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates”.* Deuteronomy, chapter 6.

In Jewish tradition, these words are indeed placed on the doorposts of homes within little prayer-boxes. These containers hold these sacred words over every room in the house reminding those entering that ‘The Lord is their God, the Lord alone’. Jewish people wear other items too, to remind them of God’s presence. Instead of a special one-off day of remembrance, Jewish tradition provides a more constant, consistent reminder of what they believe is really vital to keep central.

A few years ago, along with Lorna Hood our Interim Moderator, I made a return visit to Bosnia where previously I had served with the Army. We visited the factory at Srebrenica where 8,472 men and boys were murdered while women and girls were raped and beaten by soldiers of the Serbian army over a period of only four days in July 1995. We then visited the cemetery opposite the factory where we were privileged to meet a mother and son who managed to survive. Srebrenica is the greatest genocide the world has witnessed since the end of the Second World War.

Ever since that visit, I have wondered: if faith encourages us that ‘to love God is to love each other’ then, that is what must be the catalyst for peace. And if that is so, maybe we need a more constant, consistent remembrance of ever things are to change. How fortunate we are, therefore, to be able to celebrate another festival which – in its own way – also allows us another form of remembrance. Before long, we shall celebrate Advent and, then, Christmas. We need to remember that the child, whose birth we celebrate then, is the same child that had to be smuggled out of the country for fear of being murdered by the authorities, The same child, too, who then had to grow up and live under the oppression of an invading power which, eventually, had him put to death by crucifixion.

Yet, in the midst of all that, Jesus lives a life dedicated, not to the power of Man, but to the power of love for all human beings.

So often, just when we have been buoyed up by seasonal goodwill, the demands of our everyday living have a habit of interfering and bursting the bubble of our joy. As a result, we quickly revert to living life as though nothing had just happened.

Love requires effort. Its not easy to love someone you don’t happen to like or against whom you may hold a grudge.

Nor can love simply be taken for granted. Any long-married couple will vouch for that.

Yet, without love, peace and harmony are not possible.

St Paul writes, ‘Love endures all things.’” If that is true, there is hope for us all. In spite of my natural cynicism, maybe one day we human beings might just manage to learn that lesson and the day of peace might actually dawn.

What a joy that would be!

Peace and joy to all.

Jim Gibson  
Locum Minister.

Dear Friends,

As I write this update on the vacancy, the ballot papers for the nominating committee are winging their way towards you. I have to say it is unusual to have quite so many nominations for the thirteen places but Covid has resulted in quite different experiences and outcomes for all of us and the church is no different. It also means the whole process is far more protracted with ballot papers being sent out rather than individuals having to be present at morning worship when the nominating procedure would have taken place. However, we will know the result of the ballot by 4<sup>th</sup> of November and the committee will be able to proceed with the enormous responsibility of filling the vacancy.

It is impossible to say how long this will be as it depends on the number and suitability of applicants. One congregation in our Presbytery very recently appointed a sole nominee within a couple of weeks of being appointed. Other vacancies have lasted many months and some years. Please pray for the committee as they take up their responsibilities and for God's guidance and direction in their task. Please however don't question individual members about their progress or lack of it. One of my first duties will be to remind them of the confidentiality of their task.

In the meantime, worship and mission at the Abbey continue although limited, as are all other congregations in Scotland. Rev Jim Gibson continues to lead you in worship, Sunday by Sunday and I know Jim's preaching has been appreciated by so many of you. I look forward to being with you on 15<sup>th</sup> November.  
With every blessing,



Very Rev Dr Lorna Hood OBE  
Interim Moderator

## MUSIC FOR NOVEMBER 2020

### 1 November 2020

Kyrie  
Psalm 34 1-9  
Anthem

### All Saints' Day

Cantor: Flora Ritchie  
Leighton

Pie Jesu (Requiem Mass) Faurie

### 8 November 2020

Introit  
Kyrie  
Psalm 20  
Anthem

### Remembrance

Cantor: Colin Murray  
I vow to thee, my country Holst  
MacMillan (St. Anne's Mass)  
Plainsong  
Let us now praise famous men  
Vaughan Williams

### 15 November 2020

Kyrie  
Psalm 128  
Anthem

### Second Sunday before Advent

Cantor: Valerie Turnbull  
MacMillan (St. Anne's Mass)  
Responsorial  
Qui sedes ad dexteram patris (Gloria)  
Vivavldi

### 22 November 2020

Kyrie  
Psalm 90 1-7  
Anthem

### Christ the King

Cantor: Euan McDonald  
McPhee (Scottish Church Society)  
Plainsong  
How shall I sing that majesty  
Este's Psalter

### 29 November 2020

Kyrie  
Psalm 80

### Advent Sunday

Cantor: Joshua Stutter  
Philip Moore  
Responsorial

Anthem

Zion hört die Wächster singen BWV  
140 J.S. Bach

# A CELTIC PRAYER

PRIORY

The Choir of Paisley Abbey, Director: George McPhee,  
Organ: David Gerrard, Bass Flute: Ewan Robertson



**THE PERFECT CHRISTMAS PRESENT!  
NEW CD OF SCOTTISH CHORAL MUSIC BY THE  
CHOIR OF PAISLEY ABBEY & DR GEORGE MCPHEE**

**£11.99 AVAILABLE NOW IN THE ABBEY SHOP, OPEN  
WEDNESDAYS & FRIDAYS 1PM-3.30PM**

**SPECIAL OFFER: BUY 'A CELTIC PRAYER', GET A  
DIFFERENT CD HALF PRICE!**

The CD was recorded in January, prior to lockdown, and Renfrewshire Council kindly stopped the Town Hall clock chimes during the recording sessions.

**“Classics Unwrapped”** on BBC Radio Scotland at 9pm on Sunday 1<sup>st</sup> November will be including an item on “A Celtic Prayer” playing some of the tracks and live interviews with George and Eddie McGuire. It’ll be available on BBS Sounds shortly after the broadcast.

## **SUNDAY 8 NOVEMBER – REMEMBRANCE DAY**

The early service will take place at 10.50 am on Remembrance Day. To comply with Covid 19 regulations, only 50 worshippers can be accommodated.

Places should be reserved by the previous Thursday.

The second service will take place as usual at 12.30pm

## **CHANGE OF SERVICE TIMES**

Starting on Sunday 15 November, the 12.30 pm service will move to the earlier time of 12 noon.

## **PRESBYTERY REPORT**

Clyde Presbytery have selected the Rev Dr. Peter McEnhill to be the new Presbytery Clerk. It is anticipated the Rev. Dr. McEnhill will take up the appointment in January 2021. In the meantime, Rev Dr Alistair Shaw will continue his duties as Presbytery Clerk.

Rev Dr McEnhill is currently minister at St Andrew’s Church of Scotland in Rome. Previously he was minister at Anderston in Glasgow, Director of Studies in Systematic Theology at Westminster College, Cambridge, minister at Kilmacolm Old Kirk and clerk to our old Presbytery of Greenock and Paisley. Rev Dr Shaw said Peter brings to the clerk’s role a sharp mind, a deep understanding of church practice and procedure and an ability to think strategically.

John Kitson  
Presbytery Elder

## SHOP NEWS

A selection of Christmas cards is now available in the gift shop. Abbey cards include a winter wonderland photograph of the church and beautiful stained-glass images. These come in packs of 10 for £3.95, exceptional value!



We also have a selection of Advent calendars and Christmas decorations are starting to make their way onto the shelves.

Our special offer is not one to be missed. The Sheila Fleet range of jewellery has **20% off marked price**, Christmas gift problem solved! – *or just treat yourself.*



## ABBEY SHOP - SUNDAY SHOP OPENING

The Abbey shop will now be open in a modest way for a short time **after** each Sunday service. Social distancing will be observed and entry will be controlled with only a maximum of 3 customers allowed to enter at any time.

The shop continues to be open on Wednesdays and Fridays from 1-3.30pm. with entry via the Cloisters in Abbey Close.

## **THE FLOWER GUILD**

As we all get used to our limited Sunday Services so it is with our flower duties. However, last month we had wedding flowers to do for a small wedding held in the St. Mirin Chapel which was a happy duty and cheered us up. This month we had the Harvest Service and next month Remembrance Sunday on the 8th will mean the usual Poppy Pedestal will be provided.

Looking ahead to December, the social distancing rules and the limited use of the Church means we will not be decorating the Church as we normally do with every one involved. Perhaps we will have a miracle and this virus will vanish

Margaret Neil

## **PARISH REGISTER – OCTOBER 2020**

### **New Members**

Dr David Davidson

Lynda Gray

Allan & Carine Halliday

### **Death**

Alison Rennie (Date unknown)

# PASTORAL COMMITTEE

## HARVEST FESTIVAL

### WATERAID.

Last year our donation to WaterAid amounted to **£670. 21..**

This year I feared that, for obvious reasons, we would be giving a much lower amount to the Charity – but I was very wrong! Incredibly, the congregation (greatly reduced in number because of the prevailing restrictions) has given just 21 pence less than last year. An amazing **six hundred and seventy pounds** has been collected and is about to be sent to WaterAid – and because even more of that amount has been gift aided this year (£445.00 up from £398.00) WaterAid will actually receive more from the Abbey in 2020 than it did in 2019. Under the circumstances that is remarkable.

I know that WaterAid will be delighted and I can only thank everyone who contributed so generously and helped to achieve this wonderful sum.

Thank you all.

SGC



## **EASY FUNDRAISING**

Now that we are in November of this very strange year you might be thinking about Christmas

No-one really knows what kind of Christmas we will be having except that it will be very different from normal.

If you are buying presents for the family it could be worthwhile ordering things online and using Easy Fund Raising. I would think many more people will be doing that this year.

Easyfundraising is a platform that helps good causes raise FREE donations simply by shopping online. Over 4,300 sites including John Lewis & Partners, Argos, Uswitch, eBay and M&S will give you a donation at no extra cost.

Paisley Abbey is one of the charities registered with Easy Fundraising.

If you do not already use Easy Fundraising it is quite simple to register. Just go online to [www.easyfundraising.org.uk](http://www.easyfundraising.org.uk) and register then choose Paisley Abbey as your charity.

You can then search for a particular retailer and if they take part in the scheme you can order from their website and the Abbey will benefit from your donation.

Why not have a look at the website and see what is available!

## **‘THE VIRUS HAS NOT SHAKEN MY FAITH’**

Jackie Macadam meets Scotland’s National Clinical Director of Health Quality and Strategy Jason Leitch, who has been at the forefront of the battle against Covid-19 and learns about his Christian faith.

“IT’S been hard. Businesses, jobs and loved ones, all lost to this virus.”

Professor Jason Leitch is National Clinical Director of Healthcare Quality and Strategy and advisor to the Scottish Government. Our first interview was cancelled at the last minute because he was called in to an urgent meeting with Scotland’s First Minister, Nicola Sturgeon.

A few days later, the Aberdeen outbreak of a resurgence of Covid-19 was confirmed, prompting a temporary reversion into earlier lockdown restrictions.

But that’s Jason’s life at the moment. He never knows what tomorrow will bring. “I’ve been in meetings with the executive leaders of Scotland’s retail sector to discuss PPE and face coverings, and the executive heads of the tourism and airports industry.

I’ve done three media interviews today, and after this interview, I’m meeting the managers and captains of the Scottish Premiership, and I’ve another two interviews in the evening. It’s full-on,” he says.

It’s a life Jason probably did not imagine when he took the job in 2015.

“I’ve never known a time like it,” he says. “But then that’s true for all of us.”

Born in Airdrie, Jason's parents moved during his childhood to Leicester for a few months, and then to north Devon until he was seven years old, at which time the family returned to Scotland.

As Baptists, Jason and his family were always involved with their church, and Jason says he can't remember a time when it wasn't part of his life.

"I was always very involved with the church," he says. "And still am to this day. I was in the youth choir, all kinds of groups and took on a leadership role in Airdrie Baptist Church, a role I'm still proud to have today." You can't help think, as you speak to this active man, that even he might be pushed to keep up with the always changing face of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Jason attended Airdrie Academy and later Glasgow University, where he studied dentistry.

"I guess I chose dentistry because I was looking for a profession and something that was interesting and provided a career path. Dentistry seemed to be a reliable job. People are always going to need dentists! "I loved my time at university. I made lifelong friends there."

Jason wasn't a regular dentist for long though – after a post-qualification year on the 'High Street' – he took a post at Glasgow Dental Hospital and worked in the Victoria Infirmary in Glasgow, where he honed his skills and trained to be an oral surgeon. "I became an Oral Surgery Consultant," he says. "Some consultants are medical, some are dental and some have both qualifications."

He stayed there for around 15 years but realised he was reaching for something else in his life.

"I was feeling I was getting a bit stale." He smiled. "In 2005, I was offered the chance to go to the USA and study for a Fellowship at the Harvard School of Public Health in Boston and the Institute for Healthcare Improvement. It gave me a great deal of insight into

systems improvement and how they affected health and care systems. I don't think I had a plan as such, but when I began, I think my ambition was to improve hospital dentistry and surgery initially.

“It was great helping people individually, but once you start working with public health systems, you can help people from a population perspective, and make life better for everyone.

“We studied system design, and worked on trying to improve what systems were currently working and what could be improved, and how they could be tweaked to make them more efficient.

“Gradually I began to see the bigger picture, how everything was connected, and when I got back to Scotland, got a part-time job with the Scottish Government as the National Clinical lead for Patient Safety while still maintaining my job as a surgeon for half the week. The bulk of that job involved designing the Scottish patient safety programme, being part of the team that designed what was probably the largest patient safety programme in the world at that time.”

It was the tragic outbreak of *Clostridium difficile* infection at the Vale of Leven's Hospital in the years of 2007 and 2008 that killed a number of elderly patients that set Scotland and Jason on the course of tackling patient safety.

“The Vale of Leven tragedy was terrible and when the SNP Government was newly elected, Nicola Sturgeon was given the post of health minister and a new Head of Policy, Derek Feeley, was appointed. As we worked together, he became a great friend of mine. We made a decision to concentrate on patient safety, particularly in hospitals, which was a global problem, but we decided to really focus on Scotland and I became the Clinical Lead for Patient Safety as a result.

“When you begin to see the results of the changes we put in to place with the collaboration of the health boards, doctors and nurses, the government – when you see all of them working together to bring

about changes, we were able to see real change, and genuine reductions in infection rates, reductions in mortality, reductions in stillbirths, and a lot of the data began moving in the right direction, it's really worthwhile."

Gradually Jason moved into different and more senior advisory roles within the Scottish Government, becoming the Clinical Lead for Quality, not just safety that took him into a broader set of challenges so he started to do things like person centred care like more open visiting and other elements. More recently he became the National Clinical Director.

"It's one of the three clinical leaders who provide advice to the politicians," he says of his role. "We work for the Chief Executive of the National Health Service. There's also a Chief Medical Officer and a Chief Nursing Officer. We all have slightly different roles but we have responsibility for the clinical advice to the Government of the day. It's not a political role. As an advisor to politicians, I've had to learn to work in the civil service environment but I've never wanted to be 'in party politics. I have come to really appreciate the nature of what government, and government alone, is able to do. My particular responsibility is for safety and quality, the CMO for medical leadership and the CNO for nursing leadership, so we're all busy, even in 'peacetime'."

Asked if he believed the battle with Covid-19 was a 'war', he said: "I'm not sure that's the right metaphor."

He added: "We're certainly fighting against something, and it's a unique situation – no one has ever faced this before. So far about 20 million people worldwide have had a positive test for this virus – and nearly 750,000 people have died.

"It's unprecedented. It's not like anything we've had to combat before. And remember, we're only six months in to it. No one has seen a global pandemic in the modern era like this."

Jason is having to get used to being seen on the national news too. He's a regular at the side of the First Minister when she does her briefings and Jason is often called upon to speak directly to the cameras to talk to the public directly

“This virus is touching every sector, every single individual,” he says. “When you have something of this scale, it has affected every person in the country. No one's life should feel normal yet. It should still feel odd, and restricted, and that's necessary to keep the population safe.”

With the schools reopening it feels like a step forward – but even then, Jason urges caution.

“Travelling to and from school will not seem normal and even school itself will feel different to how it felt before this horrible virus.

“We decided on the basis of our advice and research that it is safe for the schools to reopen, but I appreciate it is not without risk. There may be some element of an increase in numbers over the next little while but Test and Protect, which is our mechanism for looking for outbreaks will hopefully be able to catch any outbreaks quickly and stamp on them.

“Test and Protect is precision public health – it is a way of finding the individual causing the cases and isolating both them and their contacts and thus stopping the transmission of the virus.

“It's a crucial tool on the road out of lockdown, and in Scotland, so far, it's going well. We can't be complacent because it doesn't take much for this virus to reignite unfortunately, but so far, Test and Protect is doing well.

“People talk about ‘herd immunity’ but that will only come, in my opinion, with a vaccine, and not with allowing the population to mix.

“A vaccine is vital, as is, quite frankly, a way to treat this virus. It principally attacks the respiratory system, causing breathing problems, especially among the elderly and those with pre-existing conditions that will open them up to it. It is very complex in its make-up and the way it affects the body. It seems to hit those with vascular disease – the circulatory system – or condition, like heart failure, those who are obese, and those with especially Type 2 diabetes.

“Since the first World Health Organisation reports in January and February, about a novel coronavirus from China, we very quickly started to pay attention. As four countries (in the UK) we have a range of groups who provide early warnings, committees like SAGE (the Scientific Advisory Group for Emergencies), another one called Nervtag that looks specifically for respiratory viruses appearing around the world, so we often pick up signals from global public health organisations, including the WHO, and it quickly became apparent that the virus was beginning to spread around the world and we now know the virus came to Scotland about that time, maybe February, or the beginning of March.

“Realising the actual severity of the virus was something of a gradual process. There wasn’t a specific ‘moment in time’ but the news coming out of Wuhan and the spread to other parts of China and then it began to attack Europe. When Spain and Italy were overwhelmed and we saw how their intensive care systems were unable to cope, we began to prepare the NHS and the population. There were some very difficult choices which needed to be made both to prepare the NHS and the populations for what became a global pandemic. The WHO helped us do that and guided us and provided us with as much knowledge as we could gather.

“To be fair, the population has reacted and responded in the main, very well to what they’ve been asked to do. Some people have lost everything – including loved ones – but this is a very, very serious illness. We absolutely should not underestimate what it has done – and what it could potentially do.

“The population behaviours, which has been our principal ‘treatment’, because we don’t have a cure, have been the changes to the way we behave. That has worked; it has reduced the viral numbers; reduced the number of deaths; reduced the transmission rate – but it has been at a price. It has caused other harms. It’s caused great economic suffering and affected people in other health ways.

“We’re trying to find a way of opening up the economy while still protecting the population.”

Somehow though, Jason still finds time to spend on the two charities he holds close to his heart – the Indian Rural Evangelical Fellowship, which runs children’s homes, schools and colleges in India and as a Trustee of the Nazareth Trust, a UK charity that runs a hospital in Nazareth for the Arab-Israeli population.

“This virus has not shaken my faith in the least,” he says. “It has, in some ways, made me more reliant – more relentless. It’s taken a toll for sure, on my family life and my leadership role in the church. My wife, Lynn, is a teacher, so she’s on the front line herself. We’ve both been working from home more, but at the moment, my life is absolutely full-on and quality time together is scarce.

“We will all get through this,” he said.

“But we might have to accept that we will get a new version of ‘normal’.

*THIS ARTICLE FIRST APPEARED IN THE OCTOBER 2020 ISSUE OF LIFE AND WORK*



In Flanders fields the poppies blow  
Between the crosses, row on row,  
That mark our place; and in the sky  
The larks, still bravely singing, fly  
Scarce heard amid the guns below.

We are the Dead. Short days ago  
We lived, felt dawn, saw sunset glow,  
Loved and were loved, and now we lie,  
In Flanders fields.

Take up our quarrel with the foe:  
To you from failing hands we throw  
The torch; be yours to hold it high.  
If ye break faith with us who die  
We shall not sleep, though poppies grow  
In Flanders fields.

John McRae  
1915