

Paisley Abbey



Abbey Herald

February 2021

By the time you have the chance to read this copy of the Abbey Herald, the Free World will have a new leader and the people of the United States of America will have Joe Biden as their 46th President.

Such has been the malcontent caused by the response of President Trump's reaction to the election result, I was recently reminded that four years ago when Donald Trump became President the New York Times printed a piece in defence of hereditary monarchy!

Whatever our personal views of the individuals concerned, the storming of the Capitol building in Washington on January 6th was surely a jaw-dropping moment. Acts of insurgency are hugely dangerous for any democracy. That this act appeared to be verbally encouraged by President Trump himself has led Congress to begin the Impeachment process against him – for a second time.

However, its not just in America that demonstrations of unrest and disquiet have been held. In recent years, political parties of the far-right have made such significant gains in national elections that, for the first times in decades, they have a serious chance of snatching power. The feeling that politicians have somehow failed their electorate seems widespread and has given rise to a new politics of anger: anger at governmental failure to control immigration and to better integrate new migrants; anger at society's inequality leaving a whole generation bereft of hope; anger at financiers who, having brought the global economy to the very brink of disaster, reward themselves as if nothing had happened; anger at the seeming impotence to defeat the spread of extremism and terror.

The late Lord Jonathan Sacks, former Chief Rabbi, has written that there is something deeper behind our dysfunctional politics. He reminds us that for the past half-century we have been living through one of the greatest unstated social experiments of all time: we have been trying to construct a world without identity and morality.

Instead, he suggests, we have been content to leave our problems to the market-economy and a laissez-faire liberalism to sort out.

As a result, multiculturalism has been given prominence over the need for national and personal identity, while people in positions of responsibility and trust have come to the conclusion that, if you can get away with it, you would be a fool not to try. Hence, Trump's 'fake news' allegations and statements of personal vindictiveness and put-down. That is how elites betray the public they are elected to serve; and when this happens, trust collapses and societies decay and die. According to Sacks, the market economy and democratic liberalism are two of society's greatest achievements but, without a strong sense of identity and morality, they will fail.

Lord Sacks has also stated that in order to turn 'crisis' into 'opportunity' we need to rediscover the central insight of our great religious and civic traditions: that society is woven out of shared ideals.

Presently, we are all enduring the effects of the threat of coronavirus infection. Lifestyles have changed.

Enforced isolation and lockdown has brought fear, frustration and disillusionment to so many across the age-range. Many businesses face collapse and young people experience such uncertainty about their education and futures. As the prospect of vaccinations offer the possibility of a way out of such a dire global situation, as this new year progresses, us take hope that through a strong confidence in our identity as individuals of integrity and worth, we can welcome and integrate new waves of immigration; while being strong in our moral wellbeing, we can build, and re-build, businesses and form new trade links, that will strengthen our nation and communities.

Jim Gibson
Locum.

Dear Friends,

I wonder if you remember the vows you took when you joined the church whether in Paisley Abbey or in some other congregation or denomination? Vows about belief are followed by practical promises. I want to remind you of one vow, the vow of supporting the church. The modern version asks quite simply, “Do you promise to support the work of the church using your time talents and money?” In becoming a member of the Church, we have answered “I do”.

As your Interim Moderator during this time of vacancy I was quite taken aback by the financial figures reported to the Kirk Session. Perhaps astounded would be a better word. The number of members who give are a very small number in comparison to those on the congregational roll.

Very soon you will be receiving a letter from the Kirk Session spelling out the dire financial situation the Abbey finds itself in and seeking your help to get us through these very trying times, when so much revenue has been cut off due to COVID restrictions.

That income stream from different sources however has masked the reality of far too many members wishing to remain on the Abbey roll but neglecting to honour their vow of supporting the work of the Church.

The letter from the Kirk Session will lay out the stark figures and the costs involved in the upkeep of such an amazing and ancient building. But I want to remind you that Church is far more than a building no matter how much you love the building itself. So, I’m backing up the Session’s letter with an appeal not just in financial terms but also in spiritual terms. Giving to the work of the Church is one of the ways we express what it means to be disciples and a part of this faith community. By being generous in our financial giving, we express our gratitude for what God is doing in our own lives and

in the world. It is much more than bricks and mortar; it is about our faith and commitment.

On the Church of Scotland web site under Stewardship we read these words, “Giving to God is a privilege and allows us to participate in His plan of generosity in the world. People in the early church gave generously to help those in need (Acts 4:34-35), to support other churches (Romans 15:25-28) and to enable mission and ministry (3 John: 5-8).”

Thank you to those who over the years have taken their vows sincerely and shown their commitment. I appeal to all of you to make good your promise.

Very Rev Dr Lorna Hood OBE
Interim Moderator.

PARISH REGISTER

Funerals since September 2020

2 September	Betty Wilson
10 September	Margaret Lawrie
19 November	Elizabeth Whiteford
21 December	Robin Craig
30 December	Nessie McGill
3 February	Ian Erskine
8 February	Evelyn Taylor

THANK YOU

My family and I would like to thank everyone in the Abbey Family for the letters, emails, phone calls, cards and flowers we received when Robin passed away. We were totally overwhelmed by them. We never thought we knew as many people.

A special thank you to the Rev. Jim Gibson who conducted Robin's funeral service.

I hope it won't be too long till the Abbey is open again and I can thank people in person.

Until then keep safe everyone!!

Cathy, Andrew and Dawn, Aileen and Scott, Michael and Alison, Sam, David, Rebecca, Catherine and Rachel



A NEW YEAR MESSAGE FROM REV IAN JOHNSON, MODERATOR OF CLYDE PRESBYTERY

A new year, and new restrictions! Like the wider community of which we are part, members of Presbytery and all its congregations, are weary and scarred by the effects of the pandemic. Last Sunday's Lectionary reading (Jeremiah 31: 1-14) has something very appropriate to say to us in our current situation.

Jeremiah lived more than 2,500 years ago, in the little land of Judah at a time when it was facing annihilation by the Babylonian Empire. The passage probably came from older prophecies known to Jeremiah but adapted by him for his own day, because it refers to 'Israel', 'Samaria' and 'Ephraim'. To the North of Judah lay the confederation of the 10 Israelite tribes, of which Ephraim was the most powerful, and Samaria the royal seat of power. Israel was slightly bigger than Judah, was certainly wealthier, and the Israelites thought very highly of themselves - until 'the Assyrian came down like the wolf on the fold', and utterly defeated them (100+ years before Jeremiah's time). The policy of the conquerors was to deport conquered peoples, and move other peoples to resettle conquered land – all with the aim of preventing attempts to break away and reassert independence.

The words of the prophet, about restoring Israel, its capital and its leading tribe would have seemed ridiculous in Jerusalem - and unpopular, since Jews and Israelites had a long history of warfare. Jeremiah predicts that it will happen, because God is in charge:

- God has shown in the past that his love for them is constant, faithful and true. He saved them in the past and he will not forsake them now. He will bring them joy instead of sorrow, he will restore broken communities, cities and economies

- God will restore their fortunes, but they will have no cause for arrogance or boasting of their own worth. It will all be of God's doing, God's gift to them, and they must accept it with contrition and humility. It will be a caring and inclusive society

•Before the Assyrian conquest there was constant warfare and conspiracy between Israel and Judah, and they squabbled over which sanctuary was more important – Jerusalem or Samaria. God is looking to reconciliation between them, and joyful worship in one sanctuary, where people recognise and give thanks for his goodness and blessings

Jeremiah lived more than 2,500 years ago, but his message was grounded in his experience of God’s faithfulness in the past and the present. Because of our experience of God’s faithfulness in the past and present, we can look forward with hope, trusting in God’s goodness and promises

PRESBYTERY REPORT

The Rev Peter McEnhill, the new Presbytery Clerk, took up his duties with effect from 5th January 2021.

The Ordination of Rev David Hood to Paisley South Church will take place on 28th January 2021.

John Kitson
Presbytery Elder

ROBIN CRAIG

Members of the Abbey were deeply saddened to hear of the death of Robin Craig on 7th December.

Robin had a life-long involvement with Paisley Abbey and his prodigious knowledge of, and his interest in, its history, its buildings and the members of its congregation both past and present will be irreplaceable.

A dedicated district elder, a meticulous leader of “his” team of duty elders and Editor of the “Abbey Herald” he was also involved in many other aspects of Abbey life.

In recent years he had been an invaluable asset to the various “Abbey Pilgrims” Walks. From their start with the Walk to Whithorn (which commemorated the 850th anniversary of the founding of the Abbey) in 2012/13 through all the various walks since then - to St Andrews in 2014, to Dundonald in 2016 to Edinburgh, to Bute and to the present (sadly not completed yet) Pilgrimage to Iona, Robin participated in them all. More importantly, however, he was a member of the small team who planned the walks and who made the very necessary reccies to ensure the viability and safety of each route. His eye for detail and knowledge of the countryside was unparalleled and played an essential part in the success of these walks.

He was a member of the Whithorn Way Steering Group since its inception and served on the Council of the Society of Friends of Paisley Abbey – both of which groups aim to promote and support the Abbey in various ways.

It is, however, as the Convener of the Visitors Committee that Robin was best known and where he will be most missed. Somehow, by requesting, cajoling and, very occasionally, by making veiled threats – not really - he managed to ensure that, in normal times, the Abbey was manned 6 days a week from 10 until 4 – an enormous task. On

days such as Sma Shot Day, Halloween and Guy Fawkes when the Abbey attracts huge numbers of people and is open from morning till very late evening not only did Robin help to organise the team of volunteers but he himself was there from the start of the day till well after the last visitor had left – and throughout he was warm and welcoming and always willing to impart his love of and knowledge of the Abbey to the visitors.

Many, many Abbey members and friends will have their own happy memories of Robin. These will persist. Sadly, too will the loss to the Abbey. Robin is truly irreplaceable.

SGC

NOMINATING COMMITTEE

The following were elected to the Nominating Committee and they have been meeting regularly online since November in their task to find a new minister for Paisley Abbey.

Peter Bonnar

Deryck Docherty

Irene Doole

John Kitson

Marion McDougall

Margaret Sharp

Marion Sommerville

Cathy Craig

Sue Donn

Sylvia Jenks

Stewart McDougall

Priscilla Routley

Norman Sharp

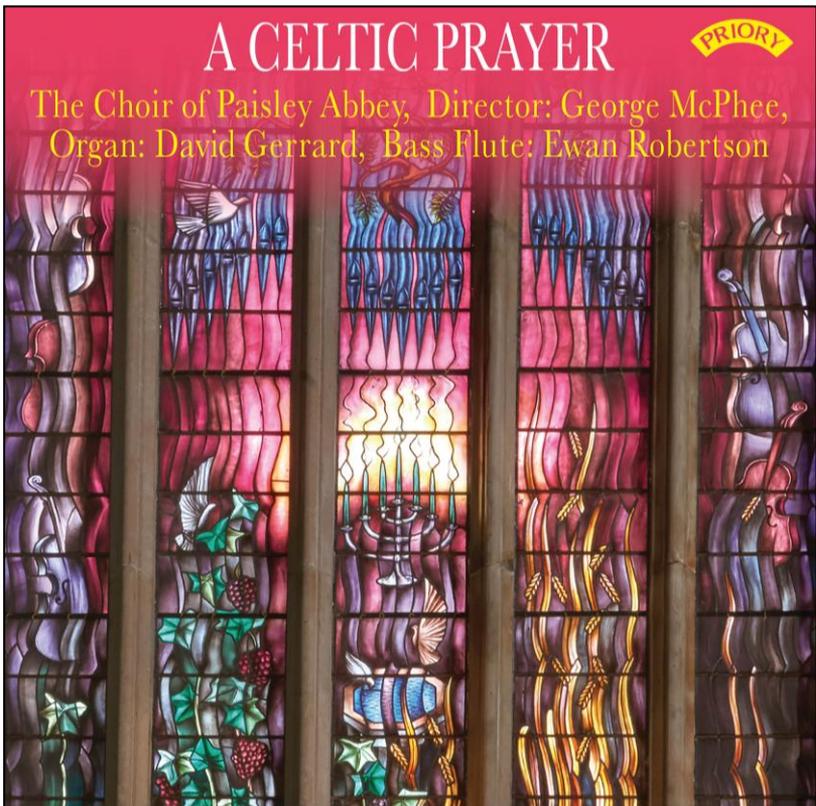
A CELTIC PRAYER CD

Here are a couple of reviews for A Celtic Prayer, the new CD by The Choir of Paisley Abbey and Dr McPhee.

<https://voxcarnyx.com/2020/12/21/paisley-abbey-a-celtic-prayer/>

<http://www.musicweb-international.com/classrev/2020/Nov/Celtic-prayer-PRCD1234.htm>

While the shop is closed the CD is available on eBay at £11.99 with free postage, search for A Celtic Prayer.



THE BEGINNING OF WISDOM

The Very Revd. Dr. John Chalmers explains why love overcomes fear

It is often overlooked that back in the early 1950s Richard Nixon had been Dwight Eisenhower's running mate and served as Vice-President of the United States of America from 1953-1961. It was in 1960 that Nixon lost the race for the White House to John F. Kennedy and it is often said that it was Nixon's appearance in America's first ever televised presidential debate that cost him the election. In 1969 when Nixon became the 37th President of the United States he was already a seasoned politician desperate to hold the reins of power and, as it turned out, perhaps far too desperate to keep a hold of them.

One of the most telling insights into Nixon's character is revealed in his oft quoted words "people" he said, must react to fear, not love, they don't teach that in Sunday School, but it's true." Perhaps what brought Nixon to his demise that his power base was built on that premise and if you live by the sword you may die by the sword.

One of the problems that we are facing in public life across the world is that too many of our leaders galvanise their support by stirring up fear of what "the other side" stands for or of what the "opposition" might bring about. The presentation of those fears is usually exaggerated beyond measure and counter-arguments are usually so insufficient that it leads to the "other side" resorting to the same tactic of describing the fear they have of their opponents.

Once upon a time a common theme from the pulpit was the use of fear. Preachers who claimed to know the inner workings of the boilers of Hell would paint pictures to terrify their congregations. Robert Burns satirised this style in his classic poem *The Holy Fair* where he describes the words of the Rev. John Russell who at the same time was the minister of the High Kirk of Kilmarnock.

"His talk o Hell, whare Devils dwell,

Our vera “sauls does harrow”
Wi fright that day!
A vast, unbottom’d boundless pit,
Fill’d fou o’ lowin brunstane,”

We may think that this was a long time ago but the sulphurous of that kind of theology has lingered and left a distasteful legacy. The idea was that these images would act as a preventative medicine against sin which in turn might drive people into the open arms of Jesus. What a terrible mistake. People moved by such fear can never be truly free to be all that they could be in the grace of God. The very idea of God as an oppressive force is in itself incongruous. God is love declares the writer of the First Epistle of John and surely nothing that feeds on fear, malice or vindictiveness can be attributed to such pure love, it is the samewriter, in the same chapter (1 John 4: 4-18) who nails this down with perfect precision, “There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear. For fear has to do with punishment, and whoever fears has not been perfected in love.” Front and centre of our delight in the Gospel narrative is that it is the story of God’s love and there is no future in any notion that you can frighten people into a life of faith.

There is a proper understanding of the fear of God which the Bible describes as the beginning of wisdom – that is not the fear that John Russell or Richard Nixon had in mind. This use of the term fear is about having a deep respect, reverence and love for the power of God. That kind of fear does not cause anyone to be afraid of God instead that is the kind of fear that leads to love. That’s the kind of fear we all have to work on.

This article first appeared in the February 2012 issue of Life and Work.

A “COLLECTION OF CLUES FOR CHRISTMAS-TIDE” COMPETITION ANSWERS

At the time of “going to press”, the 2 winners of the Christmas Competition are not yet known (the draw is on 7th February) but here are the answers:

BETHLEHEM
REINDEER
FESTIVE
SANTA
WINE
TINSEL
WISE MEN
DASHER
MANGER
WENCESLAS
FROST
PRESENTS
SNOW
HOGMANAY
TINSEL
CHURCH
TREE
ANGEL
EBENEZER
GABRIEL
DECEMBER
NEW YEAR

Thank you so much to everyone who contributed in any way – by giving a donation to the Abbey, by sending in an entry or simply by filling in the clues just for fun. I hope it was enjoyable.

SGC

MUSIC FOR FEBRUARY

7 February 2021

Kyrie elaison

Anthem

Fifth Sunday of Epiphany

Langlais (Messe d'Escalquens)

(Cantor, Joshua Stutter)

Mine Herz ist bereit.

Schötz

14 February 2021

Kyrie eleison

Anthem

Transfiguration

Scottish Church Society

(Cantor, Flora Ritchie)

Die güldne Sonne, voll Freud und

Wonne.

J.S. Bach

21 February 2021

Kyrie eleison

Anthem

First Sunday of Lent

Leighton

(Cantor, Samuel Leggett)

Thy rebuke hath broken his heart,

Behold, and see if

There be any sorrow. (Messiah)

G.F. Handel

28 February 2021

Kyrie eleison

Anthem

Second Sunday of Lent

MacMillan (St Anne's Service)

(Cantor, Mollie Kyle)

My song is in sighting Martin Dalby

7 March 2021

Kyrie eleison

Anthem

Third Sunday of Lent

Leighton

(Cantor, Joshua McCullough)