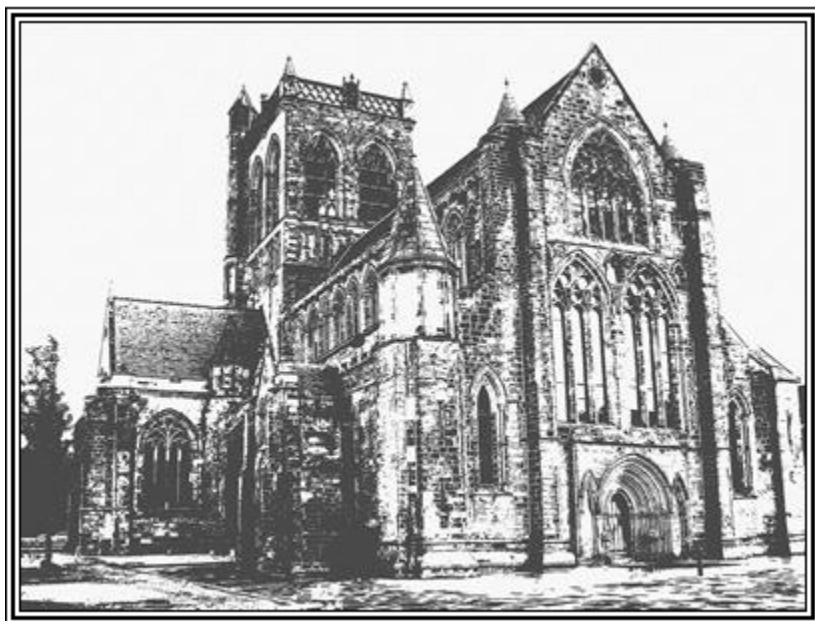


Paisley Abbey



Abbey Herald

April 2021

EASTER 2021.

I spend a great deal of my time involved with words. Speaking them, reading them, writing them, listening to them. Whenever we want to communicate news and ideas words are used. They are the only means by which that can be done. And, yet, words are such tantalising things: they fascinate, infuriate, exaggerate, enlighten and obscure. They hardly ever express all we may want to say and hardly ever tell us all we may want to know. It was ever thus. In ancient times, the words of the Law and the Prophets had to be passed-on by word of mouth and, then, laboriously written down. For words were the means by which people could know God and know about God.

When St John attempts to explain the significance of Jesus' birth, he says 'the Word became Flesh'. In all four Gospels, the life and ministry of Jesus is reveals something of what God is like and what I should be like leading me to understand something of God's purposes for humankind. All that is expressed in words. But what words can adequately explain the cataclysmic happening of the resurrection?

To my mind, evidence of the resurrection lies with the Apostles and the early Christians. from being a group of frightened men and women at the time of Jesus' arrest, trials and crucifixion, they are suddenly afraid of no-one; and ready and willing to die for their

faith. It's then difficult to explain the then explosion of faith throughout the Mediterranean lands unless substantial numbers thought they had witnessed the risen Christ. The differing accounts in the Bible present no more difficulties for me than they must have done for those who had the task of deciding which writings should be included in the Bible and which should not. After all, it would have been very easy to take a few lines out of St Luke leaving 'in' their recognition of Jesus in the hostelry on the road to Emmaus and leaving 'out' their lack of recognition whilst on the road. Just as it would have been very easy to take 'out' that verse in which Mary mistakes Jesus for the gardener or the one where Jesus appears in the room apparently without opening the door. The fact that these verses have been left is strong evidence of their authenticity. Why? because they are trying to explain what in finite words cannot ever be fully explained.

It's the reported actions of Jesus, rather than the words, which impress me most. For when all is said and done, the cross demonstrates that despite everything, God loves me and in the power of his love nothing is impossible.

Happy Easter!

Jim Gibson.
Locum Minister.

PARISH REGISTER

Funerals

26 March Mrs Jean Pettigrew

29 March Mrs Jean Russell



PRESBYTERY REPORT

Rev Dr Alistair Shaw has been nominated as the next Moderator of the Clyde Presbytery from September 2021

The Basis of Union between Paisley Glenburn and Paisley Stow Brae has been agreed at a date to be determined by Presbytery.

The Basis of Union between Paisley Martyrs with Paisley St Columba, Foxbar and the Union of Sandyford with Wallneuk North have been approved.

A Mission Post to coordinate the work of the 9 Local Mission Groups within the Presbytery is being considered and will discuss priorities and opportunities for mission throughout the Presbytery. This will focus on local work to develop Mission in each local area.

John Kitson
Presbytery Elder

RESUMPTION OF SUNDAY SERVICES IN THE ABBEY:

At last, we have been permitted to have congregational worship in the Abbey and, how appropriate that this has taken place in time for Easter!

Since January our Locum, Revd Jim Gibson, has led weekly services via the Abbey website on YouTube and those of us fortunate enough to access these have not only been uplifted and challenged but have continued to feel part of the Abbey family. We are grateful to all those who have contributed in any way – musicians, cantors, readers, photographer, editor and those who made the preparations for the recording.

Unfortunately, not everyone has been able to share these online services but from Easter Day on, two socially distanced services, each for 50 worshippers, will take place every Sunday in the Abbey - at 10.30am and at 12 noon.

Entry to the Abbey is via the Cloister Gate in Abbey Close. In order to comply with Test and Trace, places must be booked in advance either by phoning the Abbey office at 0141 889 7654 and leaving a message or emailing info@paisleyabbey.org.uk by 2pm on the preceding Thursday.

Marion Sommerville

PILGRIMAGE - Iona and Oberammergau - Paisley Abbey (3-10 August 2022)

Normally, at this time of year the loyal band of Paisley Abbey Pilgrims would be looking forward to resuming for their pilgrimage walks. Unfortunately, currently, this is not possible of course. We finished our last walk through the amazing Kilmartin Glen just four walks from our destination of Iona. Hopefully we shall manage to reach Iona this year.

The history of the Oberammergau Passion Play is almost four hundred years old. A plague was raging through Europe and the little German village of Oberammergau, in Bavaria was not spared. It was in 1633 that villagers of Oberammergau promised God that they would perform a play every tenth year which would deal with the suffering, death and resurrection of Christ. Having struck a promise with God, that no one should suffer the plague again, in 1634 the first Passion Play was performed. The text of the play is taken from four manuscripts dating from the 15th and 16th centuries. Ever since its first production, it has been performed on open-air stages in the village.

The play covers the short period of Jesus' life from his first visit to Jerusalem up to the final period of his life and his death on the cross. There was a more recent precedent for the inability to perform the play at the right time. In 1918-20 there was an outbreak of Spanish Flu. The illness and deaths were first documented in Kansas USA in March 1918. In April, France, Germany and the UK were affected. During WW1 neutral Spain's news was uncensored. Whether it was true or not, as far as news reports were concerned, the grave illness of King Alfonso XIII at the time possibly resulted in Spanish Flu being named as such.

The Passion Play on this occasion was performed in 1922 and exactly 100 years later in May 2022 the same will happen. Last year on Wednesday 7th October 2020 I was invited by McCabe Pilgrimages to a very special Webinar meeting of Oberammergau

group leaders. The whole experience was amazing. We were shown the theatre, which now has a glass covering over it. (Apparently on one occasion Jesus had suffered frostbite.) We were then shown around the village and viewed the interiors of the Roman Catholic and Lutheran Churches.

Ultimately the last interview was with Frederik Mayet who will perform the part of Jesus next year

“I was in the play for the first time in the year 2000, when I played John the Apostle. I was invited by the director, Christian Stückl, to attend some castings and after turning up several times I was surprised – and more than happy – when he suggested that I played the role of John. Cast members show a real dedication to being part of the Passion Play. We start with the beard and hair-growing around one year ahead of the premiere. The first half of this year is spent rehearsing, while the other half is filled with performances. Almost half of our whole village is involved, and our aim is to bring a great Passion Play to the stage for our visitors.”

The 2020 play will have been delayed for two years. The first performance will be on the 14th May to 2nd October 2022. Last year Meg Campbell very kindly made arrangements for seventeen pilgrims to go to Oberammergau. Unfortunately, this could not go ahead. Obviously, some have dropped out whilst five people decided that they would still like to go on the trip. There are plenty more spaces for others who may wish to take up the opportunity.

Please let me know if you would like to join us on this trip.

I can be contacted on: sylviajenks3@gmail.com



Sylvia Jenks

ALL IN THE TIMING

The Very Rev. John Chalmers reflects on death, loss and the importance of signs.

In 1789, speaking about the new United States Constitution, Benjamin Franklin said” our new constitution is now established, and has an appearance that promises permanency; but in this world nothing can be said to be certain, except death and taxes”.

In this last year, Franklin’s vision of the permanency of the American democracy has been tested to the limits but his understanding of both death and taxes remains a pretty solid truth.

In these days of extraordinary public borrowing and spending, it is tempting to write an article about the moral propriety of paying out taxes and there is a particularly rich theme round the need to understand that taxation, as it applies to humble individuals or major corporations should be seen as a contribution to the common good rather than some kind of necessary evil. Given that the Bible has much more to say about money than it does about most other topics – a meditation on whose relationship we have with our purses and wallets will no doubt feature soon enough. However, with Easter in view this is an opportunity to think about how we understand the first of Franklin’s certainties – death.

Bereavement, especially in this last year of pandemic, has been no stranger to any one of us. It is unlikely that there is anyone reading this article who has not known the deep pain and the searing loss of someone close. The Gospel of John records how Jesus experienced this deep sense of loss – weeping as he stood at the place where his friend Lazarus had been buried. There ia no shame in tears, indeed it can be be said that there is great strenth to be derived from our weeping.

Aside from the deep sense of loss expressed in the story of Lazarus it is a pivotal story in the development of the Christian understanding of death as part of a continuum - where life that comes from God returns to God. It is an interesting feature of John's account of Jesus' life that he describes the extraordinary things that happen around Jesus as signs rather than miracles. In John's gospel there are seven signs – of which the raising of Lazarus is the seventh. You can be sure, therefore, that in the mind of this old mystic there is a sub-text.

You see, the Old Testament says singularly little about an afterlife. The ancient Hebrews believed that the souls of the just and the unjust went down to the “place of shades” (sheol) – they had no formed ideas of heaven or hell, they lived noble lives or scurrilous lives with no sense of ultimate reward or punishment. By Jesus' time, however, there is an emerging belief that is being confirmed in the text of this story. Jesus asks Martha if she believes in the resurrection of souls – if she does, then she is siding with an emerging faction of unorthodox scholars who believe in the resurrection. I think we can safely say that in this last of the seven signs of his Gospel John is placing Jesus in the school of this belief that death is not the end.

But there is more to this sign. Almost everything in what is being played out at Bethany is a sequence of events that will mirror the story of Jesus' own death and resurrection. There are, in fact, enough things happening in this story that will make the Easter experience more readily accessible when it happens. Everything about this sign is in the timing. If Jesus' Kingdom is not going to come by the spectacular route of political overthrow and if he is to be dead within the month- then some living signs of a different Kingdom has to be left behind.

The sign of Lazarus and the message of Easter is the hope that death has lost its sting in the victory of God in Christ.

This article first appeared in the April 2021 issue of Life and Work

APRIL CHARMS

When April scatters charms of primrose gold
Among the copper leaves in thickets old,
And singing skylarks from the meadows rise,
To twinkle like black stars in sunny skies;

When I can hear the small woodpecker ring
Time on a tree for all the birds that sing;
And hear the pleasant cuckoo, loud and long --
The simple bird that thinks two notes a song;

When I can hear the woodland brook, that could
Not drown a babe, with all his threatening mood;
Upon these banks the violets make their home,
And let a few small strawberry vlossoms come:

When I go forth on such a pleasant day,
One breath outdoors takes all my cares away;
It goes like heavy smoke, when flames take hold
Of wood that's green and fill a grate with gold.

William Henry Davies

MUSIC FOR APRIL

4 April **Easter Day**

10.30 and 12.00pm Holy Communion

Communion Setting: MacMillan (St. Anne's Mass)

Cantor Colin Murray

Anthem: Rise heart, thy Lord is risen R. Vaughan Williams

11 April **The Second Sunday of Easter**

10.30 and 12.00pm Morning Services

Kyrie eleison MacMillan (St. Anne's Mass)

Cantor Colin Murray

Psalm 118 Responsorial

Anthem Come, my Way, my Truth, my Life

R. Vaughan Williams

18 April **The Third Sunday of Easter**

10.30 and 12.00pm Morning Services

Kyrie eleison MacMillan (St. Anne's Mass) Cantor Euan McDonald

Psalm 4 Plainsong

Anthem Auf, auf! Mein Herz, mit Freuden

J.S. Bach

25 April **The Fourth Sunday of Easter**

10.30 and 12.00pm Morning Services

Kyrie eleison Scottish Church Society Service) Cantor Flora Ritchie

Psalm 23 Gelineau

Anthem Love's redeeming work is done

Melody by Pierre Bonnet

2 May **The Fifth Sunday of Easter**

10.30 and 12.00pm

Kyrie eleison MacMillan (St. Anne's Mass)

Cantor Mollie Kyle

Psalm 22 25-31 Responsorial

Anthem O praise the Lord

M. Greene