

Paisley Abbey



Abbey Herald

April 2026

As I write this we are half way through Holy Week. If I ever doubted, I realise now how fortunate I am to be part of the ministry team at the Abbey. Attendance each evening has been encouraging and the music suitably solemn and evocative. People have kindly voiced appreciation of the meditations. I cannot tell you how good that is to hear. For this is a time to look seriously, through the lens of the Gospels, at who the person of Jesus is and what drove him on – in spite of his hesitations and doubts – not only to enter Jerusalem in the manner he did, but to almost deliberately upset its powerful Establishment in Temple and State. What better time to ask serious, profound questions about Life and Faith than at this time when the world seems so turbulent and uncertain.

In response to Iran's recent apparent political belligerence over their nuclear capability, the agonising spectacle of Mr Trump, the American President, unleashing military firepower on Iran without the support, moral or otherwise, of European Allies in N.A.T.O has exposed the weakness of the Alliance that has helped keep peace in Western Europe for eighty years. Though Israel, for reason of its own homeland security, has joined with the United States, the European Allies have not. This non-reaction, particularly by the Government of the United Kingdom, has infuriated Mr Trump. A man of uncertain reaction, we are left wondering what will happen next as the horror intensifies of long-range missiles and armed military drones criss-crossing the skies above Israel, Cyprus and the Gulf States. Threatened oil and gas shortages in the West may yet mean more military action against Iran in order to free passage through the Straits of Hormuz. The possible consequence of all this action is unthinkable. The more palatable being that, eventually, a re-alignment of Gulf States may mean a stronger accord being agreed with Western nations. It may be trite to state but we live in times of massively worrying uncertainty.

Jerusalem, even in the ancient days of Jesus, was never a *'peaceful'* city. It was – and is – a city of power. As he entered that first Palm Sunday, Jesus wept over it. Today, tears are still be spilled as Israel and Palestine and, now, others in the Middle East engage in seemingly unending conflict. Throughout it all, innocent people suffer terribly. Of all ages. What will the future hold for them – for us all ?

Who knows? Certainly, not I.

Practices of a religious belief which, in its very nature, is fanatical can provide no answers other than the enforcement of those practices. It is a warped view of what the purpose of religion is. All the Great Religions of the World advocate peace on earth and harmony between peoples. That basic tenet of faith has no greater demonstration than Jesus entering Jerusalem and, then, confronting false situations concocted by members of the city's power-base. Their acts of violence were faced with the desire for peace: their jealousy and hate faced with a silence, motivated by forgiveness and love.

Good Friday will be a difficult day. It is always a difficult Day for Christians. Goodness and love are crucified. But such is their power: goodness and love are not extinguished. Easter Sunday heralds '*resurrection*'! Because of that, today we have a faith to proclaim. People need to be part of that. People need to hear the message of Love. People need to practice it. Only then, will peace have a chance. What a resurrection that will be!

May you enjoy a peaceful Easter
And may you know goodness and love always.

Jim Gibson
Minister at the Abbey.

ELDER DUTY TEAMS

April	John Kitson's Team
May	David Davidson's Team
June	Marion Sommerville's Team

RENFREWSHIRE FOODBANK

Over the last five years, the number of emergency food parcels provided to people in crisis by the Trussel Trust has increased by 73% and last year Renfrewshire Foodbank distributed 5595 food parcels to our local community.

Renfrewshire Foodbank is part of the Trussel Trust's UK-wide network of food banks, they provide food and practical support to help people in crisis, including offering advice and signposting people to other services, like debt advice that can help them break free from poverty.

The Abbey collects food for the Foodbank on the last Sunday of each month. The April collection will be on Sunday 26th You will see trolleys in the Cloisters. The congregation is very generous with their donations of non-perishable goods and money which can be gift-aided. (a form can be provided) If you do not currently contribute, perhaps you could note the date in your diary each month and bring along a few items from the shortages list which is printed in the Intimations in the Order of Service.

The staff at the Foodbank are always really grateful to receive our donations. Every little helps. Thank you.



LENT APPEAL DONATIONS

Now that Easter is approaching, I hope you will be contributing to The Abbey's annual Lent Appeal.

The Lent Appeal is an essential event in the Abbey's fundraising activities and is a tangible way of everyone remembering and being involved in the 40 days leading to the celebration on Easter Sunday.

Most people will not yet have given to the Appeal and there are several ways to do this.

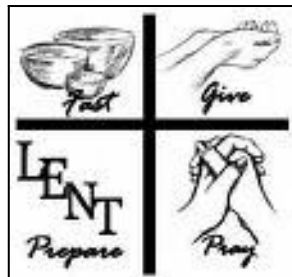
- Wait for you elder to collect your contribution
- Transfer your money directly into the Abbey's bank account and put the reference 'Lent Appeal'
The Abbey bank account details are
Account Name *Kirk Session of Paisley Abbey*
Account Sort Code *82 54 04*
Account Number *40318018*
- Leave the collection box or 'yellow envelope' marked Lent Appeal in the Abbey office or in the Sunday collection plates.

We had hoped to raise around £8,000 and with the Gift Aid reclaim from the Government, this would raise the total to around £10,000 - a very valuable sum.

Thank you for your support, not only this year but over many years in the past

Stewart McDougall

Abbey Treasurer



ALLOVUS SYLLABUS

Meets every second Wednesday afternoon from 1.30pm to 3.00pm in the glorious Panel Room of the Place of Paisley. The all-age group is comprised of non-Church members as well as folks who have been members of the Abbey for decades. The groups purpose is to enable people to enjoy the company of friends while meeting new folks. In short, everybody is welcome.

8 April

Easter Surprise!

22 April

The Science of Bee-Keeping
Jacqueline Ferguson

6 May

**Outing to Sma' Shot Cottages/
Afternoon Tea**

20 May

End of Season Party!



EASTER FLOWERS

The ladies of the Flower Committee would like to say thank you for all donations to the Flower Fund helping us celebrate Easter with fresh flowers in the church.

Your gifts are very much appreciated.

*Cath Love
Flower Committee*



ABBEY GIFT SHOP

There are lots of nice new gifts available in the Abbey shop for Spring and Easter.



LET THERE BE LIGHT!

The lights in the display in the shop were in need of an upgrade, and what better man for the job than our multi - talented church officer Alex Garrott.

Alex, who worked for many years as an electrician, replaced the old lights with LED strips which not only give a bright warm light but are also cheaper to run and are unlikely to need replaced.

Camera shy Alex declined to be photographed beside his work, preferring to let the new illumination take the glory.



11th PAISLEY BOYS BRIGADE

The boys of the 11th Paisley BB had an evening visit to the Abbey on Thursday 19 March.

The boys learned of the history of the Abbey and how the monks who founded the Abbey lived and worshipped.

Officer in Charge of Company Section, otherwise known as 'Squire Struan', told the boys about how knights in medieval times would have been dressed for battle, and the type of weapons they would have used, and no visit to the Abbey would have been complete without a mouse hunt, we all discovered.

Many of the boys had never been in the Abbey before but said they would love to come back.



SATURDAY LUNCH HOUR CONCERTS

Concerts at 12.30 pm
Admission is £5 payable at the door

18 April
Abbey Strings

23 May
Choral Scholars of Paisley Abbey

20 June
*Aimee (Soprano), Diane Merson - Jones (Violin),
Callum Johnston (Piano)*

SUNDAY ORGAN RECITALS

Recitals at 3 pm
Admission is £10 payable at the door

3 May
George McPhee
Director of Music Paisley Abbey

17 May
David Hamilton
Royal Conservatoire of Scotland

24 May
Marjorie Bruce
Holy Trinity Church, St Andrews

31 May
Mark Browne
Paisley Abbey

MUSIC FOR APRIL

12 April
11 am
Jubilate Deo
Anthem

4 pm
Responses
Psalm 30 1 - 6
Canticles
Anthem

19 April
11 am
Te Deum
Anthem

26 April
11 am
Communion Setting
Anthem

3 May
11 am
Benedictus es
Anthem

The Second Sunday of Easter
Morning Service

Surgens Jesus

Stanford in Bb
Philips

Choral Evensong

Smith of Durham

Scio enim quod Redemptor

Murrill in E
Lassus

The Third Sunday of Easter
Morning Service

My beloved spake

Stanford in Bb
Hadley

The Fourth Sunday of Easter
Holy Communion

The Lord is my Shepherd

Duruflé 'Cum Jubilo' Mass
Berkeley

The Fifth Sunday of Easter
Morning Service

Haec Dies

McPhee
Byrd



PEACE WITHOUT VICTORY

***Blessed are the peacemakers:
for they shall be called the children of God***

From the Beatitudes within the Sermon on the Mount,
recounted in the Gospel according to St Matthew:
Chapter 5, verse 9.

One of the great blessings in Paisley Abbey is its dedicated band of volunteers. They keep the Abbey going. Most importantly, they welcome our visitors.

Meeting and greeting folk in the church, gift shop, and coffee shop adds a human touch to the appeal of history, architecture, and art. It provides a special ingredient to the blend that so appeals to visitors discovering Paisley Abbey, perhaps for the first time.

Ensuring that the Abbey Experience lives up to its promise is vital to the business of being the “jewel in the crown” of visitor attractions in the west of Scotland. It is our “marketable product,” and we rely on its commercial success to generate the income that is needed to maintain our buildings and to support our worshiping church.

In the coming months, we will be launching the Abbey Experience online for the first time. It will be bookable by travellers from all around the world. That visibility in the tourism marketplace will attract new footfall from overseas visitors especially.

Paisley Abbey is under-discovered. Tourists are invariably astonished to realise the wonderful attraction that we are and often express their surprise that we are not better known. This new facility will help to address that enigma. It will create the means to book and pay for a visit in advance. We will in turn be able to plan and resource the visits with tour guides and services as required.

This is a provision both necessary and fit for the 21st Century. Will it affect the way that the Abbey’s volunteers work? We do not think so. We are hugely grateful for and appreciative of the work that they do, and we anticipate that their role will continue as always: fulfilling our endeavour to meet, if not exceed, the expectations of visitors to Paisley Abbey.

No volunteer will have worked in the Abbey for long before encountering one of our visitors proudly revealing their direct descent from Robert the Bruce! The massive growth in interest in family history associated with the relative ease of genealogical research, including DNA testing, have increased awareness of such ancestry in recent times. It would be easy to dismiss or belittle the claim - after all, it is calculated that there are hundreds of thousands, and possibly millions of people alive who rightfully share it – but, of course, we indulge the visitor and flatter them with the impression that we are suitably impressed.

Many of our visiting claimants with blue blood (albeit diluted by nearly thirty generations) coursing through their veins, hail from the United States of America. Americans are obsessed with their ancestry, and of those holidaying in our country, surveys have shown that almost 40% claim Scottish descent and cite it as a reason for visiting. In this year of celebration of the 250th Anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence, thoughts turn naturally to the contribution that Scots made to the birth of their nation and its subsequent development to be the world’s number one superpower.

As his memorial in the North Aisle of the Abbey attests, John Witherspoon, minister of the Laigh Kirk in Paisley, left Scotland in 1768 to become president of the College of New Jersey in Princeton. Soon after, he embraced as “providential” the growing call for independence of the American colonies and quickly became a prominent and influential figure at the Philadelphian epicentre of the developing American Revolution. That led to his being the only active clergyman and the only college president to sign the Declaration. He served in the provincial and state legislatures, as well as the Continental and Confederation Congresses throughout the Revolution, and in the New Jersey Convention that ratified the Federal Constitution in 1787.

Witherspoon never led an army into battle, but the British considered Witherspoon to be the chief leader of the revolutionary cause. Famously, an English newspaper commented that “cousin America has run off with a Presbyterian parson” and he, along with George Washington, were burnt in effigy during the occupation of New York City.

According to one of his modern biographers “By any fair measure [Witherspoon] deserves to be classed among the founders of [the American] republic. By signing the Declaration of Independence and the Articles of Confederation and by ratifying the Constitution, he had a direct hand in passing three of the four Organic Laws of the United States . . . and the two most celebrated founding documents: the Declaration and Constitution.”

Equally impactful was his influence as President of the College of New Jersey (later Princeton University). During his tenure, Princeton produced thirty-nine representatives, twenty-one senators, twelve state governors, a Vice President, and one President, James Madison. Madison is regarded by many as the “Father of the Constitution,” but much of the thought imbued in the drafting of the Constitution of the United States and its first ten amendments contained in the Bill of Rights can be traced to the teachings of Witherspoon.

Madison was just one of the Presidents of the United States with Scottish ancestry. Indeed, it is said that of the forty-six men who have served as President, thirty-five have been of either Scottish or Ulster-Scots descent. At least two of these had ancestral links to Paisley. Many readers will recall the 1991 visit to the town by Ronald Reagan whose ancestors were married at the West Relief (later Castlehead) Church in 1807.

Witherspoon never assumed high political office in the United States but remained President of the college that was to become Princeton University until his death in 1794, the year after Thomas Woodrow was born in Paisley. Thomas Woodrow also became a minister and his grandson, born in 1856, the son of his daughter Janet, was given his name - Thomas Woodrow Wilson. Better known as Woodrow Wilson he, like Witherspoon, became President of Princeton University, serving in that role from 1902 until 1910. He was then Governor of the State of New Jersey until his election as President of the United States in 1913, which office he held through two terms until 1921.

While Witherspoon had wholeheartedly supported the prosecution of the War of American Independence, Woodrow Wilson strove to maintain American neutrality during World War One and was re-elected for his second term in 1916 having run on the slogan "He Kept Us Out of War." In January 1917, he delivered his landmark speech to the U.S. Congress insisting that America must maintain its neutrality and revealed his vision for a just and peaceful world in which the United States would serve as a broker of peace. His most important and most idealistic concept was his call for a different approach to peace – a peace that did not impose "a victor's terms upon the vanquished" but would instead force peace in place of punishment on the loser – "peace without victory." True peace, he argued, could not be achieved by resort to war, but instead through international cooperation and a collective commitment to work towards a stable world order. He advanced his idea that all nations should have rights similar to those enshrined for his fellow citizens in the American Constitution: "that no nation should seek to extend its polity over any other nation or people, but that every people should be left free to determine its own polity."

He had brought his idealistic vision into the spotlight just as unimaginably greater horrors were unfolding on the Western Front. The European powers pitched against Germany were locked into the need to justify, if not avenge, the wholesale slaughter and their minds were determinedly set on achieving victory. His speech had been memorable, more so perhaps than any other during his presidency, but its timing was inopportune. One Senator dismissed it as outright folly while another remarked that "the President thinks he is president of the world." Less than three months later, and in the face of increasing political pressure consequent on the sinking of American shipping by German submarines, Wilson was forced to declare war against the German Empire and bring his country into the conflict.

Notwithstanding, Wilson continued to advance his theories and proposals for peace settlements within Europe, promoting them at the Paris Conference in 1919 that had been called to establish the terms of peace following the armistice. The Treaty of Versailles proved a bitter disappointment to him, and his frustrations were exacerbated further by his own government's refusal to ratify the treaty or support the newly formed League of Nations./

He suffered a crippling stroke later that year from which he never recovered. The award of the Nobel Peace Prize for his ultimately futile efforts must have rung hollow with him and, in any case, he was too ill to travel to Oslo to receive it.

The Paris Peace Conference has been characterised as a colossal failure on the part of the three great powers engaged in the tortuous negotiations that eventually concluded in the Treaty of Versailles. Some historians now argue however that Woodrow Wilson, Clemenceau, and Lloyd George have been harshly treated: that the difficulties they faced were implicitly insurmountable, and that it was beyond the scope of diplomacy to reconcile the competing interests and demands at play. The consequence was that a Second World War, or what many now regard as a resumption of the First World War, was inevitable.

A century has elapsed. What is happening in the world today? What have we learned from the past?

*Then Jesus began to speak, and taught them, saying:
"Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God."
David C. Davidson*

ABBEY CONTACTS

Minister:	Revd. Jim Gibson
Director of Music:	Dr. George McPhee
Church Manager:	Linda Barrett
Church Secretary:	Karen Kerr
Session Clerk:	Marion Sommerville
Depute Session Clerk:	Dr David Davidson
Treasurer:	Stewart McDougall
Abbey Herald:	Karen Kerr

The Abbey office can be contacted on 0141 889 7654 or by email at -
info@paisleyabbey.org.uk

*The Abbey, shop & café are normally open
Monday to Saturday from 10 am - 4 pm with last entry at 3.30 pm
Tuesday, Thursday & Saturday tours are normally at 2 pm.
Please check the website for up to date information.*

Abbey website - www.paisleyabbey.org.uk

Facebook - [@paisleyabbey](https://www.facebook.com/paisleyabbey)

Instagram - [@paisleyabbeyofficial](https://www.instagram.com/paisleyabbeyofficial)

X (formerly Twitter) - [@paisley_abbey](https://twitter.com/paisley_abbey)

