

Marksman

February / March, 2023



St Mark's Church of Scotland (Oldhall), Paisley

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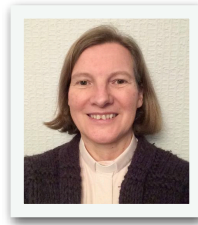
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From the Manse



Happy New Year! I pray God will bless you and your family during this coming year.

I wonder if you made any New Year's resolutions? If so, are you still keeping them? The beginning of a new year, or even a new month, often seems a good time to begin a new pattern of behaviour. Some people try a Dry January – abstaining from alcohol for the whole month, others Veganuary – eating only vegan food for the month. Both at once may be too much! Some of us use the turning of the year to look back, and reflect on what has happened in the previous year. To assess whether plans worked out, whether intentions were fulfilled. Others look ahead, filling their new diary or calendar, while thinking about their hopes for the year ahead.

I wonder what your goals in life are?

Maybe they are focused on your family, your job, (or maybe a future one), or on your hobbies or interests – to develop a current skill more, or learn a new one? Maybe you want to get better at what you do (work or hobby) or be more fulfilled in life, or simply more content? Everyone has different aims and goals in life.

Have you ever stopped to wonder what God's aim is for your life?

Well, it's something truly amazing.

In the letter to the Colossians we read "Put on your new nature, and be renewed as you learn to know your creator and become like him." Colossians 3:10 (New Living Translation)

God wants you to become like him!

In Genesis chapter 1 we read that we are made in God's image, but sadly that image is distorted by sin. But – here's something else truly amazing - God wanted to restore the relationship with us, and all people, and to do this he sent Jesus into the world, so that through our relationship with Jesus, we might be brought back into relationship with God.

So, God really does want us to be like him.

Now maybe the sound of resembling God seems incredible, unbelievable, but that's what God wants for us. Now, we are never going to do this through our own effort ; the only way it can happen is by letting the Holy Spirit take us over, fill us, renew us, day by day. Then we will be able to put on our new nature and look like God.

How is this going to happen?

Our bodies are in a constant state of renewal ; we renew our skin every 28-42 days, (although the older we are the slower the process is.)

Our red blood cells only last about 4 months, but our bodies are continually making more - around 2 million every second. Isn't that amazing too? Renewal is the basis of our physical health. God is in the business of renewal. Without us even thinking about it, he is continually renewing our physical bodies and, if we let him, he will renew our spiritual lives as well.

Do you see how God is renewing you spiritually? If not, ask him to show you, and open yourself up to the working of his Holy Spirit within you. Read your Bible - learning more about God will help you become more like him. Talk to him, ask him to help you, and tell him what you are struggling with – that's prayer.

Take time to think about what he is doing in your life, and in the lives of people around you.

And don't be afraid to stop sometimes and look back, look at how you were a month ago, a year ago, ten years ago, and recognise that change is happening.

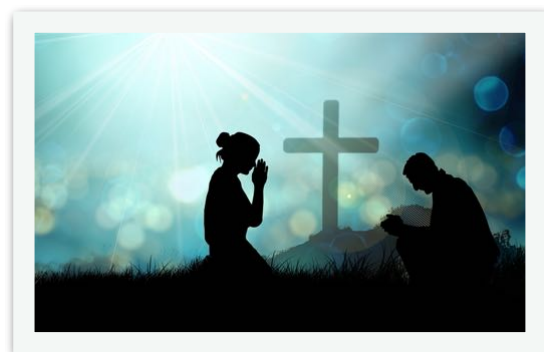
May God bless us in 2023, and help us grow into the people he would have us be, people who truly reflect his image, and who are becoming more like him.

Your friend and minister,

Sonia

Worship Matters

Sunday 19 th February	Thinking Day
(22 nd February	Ash Wednesday)
Sunday 26 th February	Communion
Sunday 2 nd April	Palm Sunday
Monday 3 rd – Friday 7 th April	Holy Week Services



Funerals

8.12.22 Jean McGibbon, Hunterhill Care Home.

15.12.22 Jean Allan, Dunchurch Road.

Also we heard of the death of
Nan McNair, Buchlyvie Road



Winter Connections

Every Wednesday afternoon 1-3pm

Open to all. Come along to the small hall for a bowl of soup, a cup of tea or coffee, home baking and biscuits. Join the chat, meet old and new friends in a warm and welcoming space. Speak to Sonia to find out more, or to volunteer.





Peter's News



TRASH continues to go well with us meeting every week for games, chill out time and, of course, our bible study.

During Advent we looked at the Christmas story and created a timeline of all the events. We had a fun night putting up the Christmas trees in the large hall and side foyer. We also came up with the ideas and put together our tree for the *Treemendous* event.

Over the next few weeks we will be continuing our study of the book of Romans; looking at some of the famous sayings of Jesus and answering some of the big questions the young people had about faith, church, God and the world.

Have a look at the TRASH board in the small hall for some pictures of what we have been up to recently.



It was great to have all the pupils, teachers, parents and friends of **Ralston Primary School** in the church for the two Christmas services.

We heard from the talented musicians of P6 and P7 playing their strings and woodwind instruments. The choir and the P1s also sang some of their songs from their Christmas concert and nativity. Sonia and I gave talks about the Christmas story with the help of some chocolate bars and presents.

I have started to go back into the school to do some support work with the P7s maths work. I do not know many of the current P7 so it will be good getting to know some of them better. This will be useful when I go away with them to Lockerbie Manor at the start of May for their residential week.



Messy Church will be starting back at the end of January and will continue the pattern of meeting on the last Saturday of the month. Last year we worked through the Old Testament so this year we will look more at the New Testament and the teachings of Jesus.

Messy Church will meet on the 25th February and 25th March from 2pm to 3.30pm.

The **Easter Holiday Club** will be running from the 3rd to 7th of April from 10am to 12 noon. We will be using the SU material *Landlubbers* which is a pirate-themed holiday club looking at the story of Paul and the impact that Jesus had on his life.

DVDs and CDs

I have got out of the habit of making the CDs and DVD for members of the congregation as I had seen most of them back in church. I will check with some of the people who used to get them and see if they would still like them. If you are aware of anybody who would like a CD or DVD of the church service, please let me know.

Facebook and Instagram

The church's online presence continues to grow and we have 270 people who follow what we have been up to on Facebook. We have also just set up an Instagram page for the church. Search for St Mark's Oldhall on either of these and you should find us.

Many thanks for all the support given to me in my ministry here at St Mark's.

Peter

Session Report

We are making progress with the church café project and have received permission from Presbytery to go ahead with the necessary work. The renovations have started in the former Session Room and plumbing and rewiring are going ahead as well as the installation of a disabled toilet.

We plan to install patio door style fitments to the end wall of the room facing on to Penilee Road, and this will allow passers-by to see that the café is up and running and easily accessible.

We need further funding to allow us to install the doors, but are confident that this will be forthcoming.

Our *Tremendous* event in mid-December allowed people not normally attending the church to see the versatility of our building and the café style seating proved a hit when the normal Sunday service was conducted with the tables and chairs still in situ. It encouraged a lot of chat which perhaps the normal seating style does not.

Our dementia-friendly café and warm spaces provision are performing well and we will continue the latter into March.

If anyone has any comments or suggestions, please do not hesitate to get in touch with me via the church office.

Colin Reid, Session Clerk



Retiral of Property Convenor

I have passed on to Gordon McLintock the role of Property Convenor.

He can be contacted, in the first instance, at gordonmclintock68@icloud.com or messaged/called on 07764663483.

Graeme Wright is now responsible for the church and halls heating. He can be contacted at heating@stmarksoldhall.org.uk

Andy Grant



The Kirk Session thanks Andy Grant for the work he has performed over the last three years in his role as Property Convenor. Andy will continue to work on the electrical repairs and renovations to our church building and we thank him for this too.



Café Update : January 2023

Work has started - hooray - we are hoping to be open for Easter or by the Spring Plant Sale - likely 13th May (tbc).

So what's happening?

Following your feedback (from the survey and other comments) and working to a reduced scope, we are building it mostly ourselves by refurbishing the existing building. The café will still include a toddlers' play area, booths and tables with dining chairs as well as sofas at the front window looking up Penilee Road, but these will be smaller.

To positive acclaim we now have clear glass externally complementing the ramp and patio. Internally, low energy LED lights, insulation, mood lighting and an accessible toilet are going in and, when funds allow, the front windows will be replaced with patio doors.

Meanwhile the existing fire exit gets a glass top panel and becomes the front door to give barrier-free access from Glasgow Road into the café and church.

The menu will be based around soup, scones, teas, coffee and cake.

But before then we need help.

The servery, ventilation and toilet are next to be fitted, then plumbing and electrical work, and then it's painting, upholstery, and laying flooring.

Externally, some work is needed to dig and form a path at the side and alter a metal gate. If you can help by providing materials or labour or have contacts, please let Gordon, Andy or Jok know.

VOLUNTEER



To keep costs down, we are re-using whatever, and wherever we can. Whilst we have acquired some furniture, in time we will need another couple of coffee tables but, most importantly, we need kitchen units now, so if you or someone you know is changing their kitchen, let us know – we may be able to re-use their old units and counter tops.

We know not everyone can help physically and as we want to buy new crockery, fridges and a commercial café dishwasher, you might be able to help financially.



As well as donating directly you can 'Buy a Brick' with your name on it or as a present, or memento for someone else. These will help decorate an internal wall. Price per brick : £10.00 (or more if you wish).



Jok Everett



Flowers in Church

05.02.23	Isobel Higgins
12.02.23	Mrs D MacKay
19.02.23	Mrs Jean McGugan
26.02.23	Boys' Brigade Junior Dept
05.03.23	Mrs W Browning
12.03.23	Mrs. J. Mackenzie
19.03.23	Mr P MacKay & family
26.03.23	Mrs A McLeod

Ladies Delivering Flowers

05. 02. 23	Mrs. C. Sinclair	
12. 02. 23	Mrs. J. Dempster	
19. 02. 23	Mrs & Mrs R Pollock	
26.02. 23	Mrs. M. Robin	
05. 03. 23	Mrs. D. Grant	Mrs. M. Adam
12. 03. 23	Mrs C Love	
19. 03. 23	Mrs Sheena Tonner	
26. 03. 23	Mrs Irene Pollock	

A huge thank you to everybody who helped to decorate and dismantle all the Christmas decorations in the church. Your assistance is greatly appreciated.

Isobel and Kate



We wish to thank all our many friends in St Mark's Church for the kindness shown to us during our recent Covid illness.

We greatly appreciated the flowers, get well cards and telephone calls.

Douglas and Winnie Keith

On behalf of my family, I wish to thank all those who prayed, sent cards and gave flowers at this sad time on the death of my sister Bette .

Such thoughtfulness is greatly appreciated.

Margaret Currie

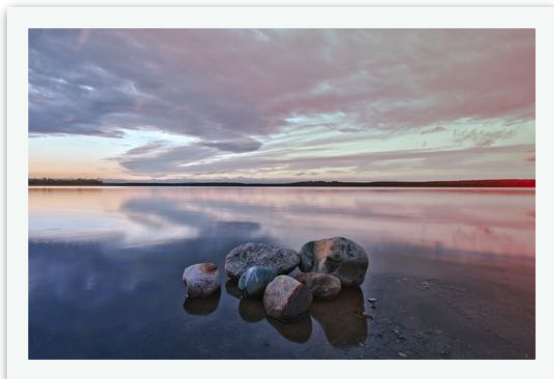
Prayer Guide



		FEBRUARY, 2023
		<i>(These two months, in italics, you will find part of Psalm 23 to meditate on.)</i>
Wed	1	Give thanks for a new month and trust God to lead you through it. Black History month. World Interfaith Harmony Week. Service this morning. Winter Connections this afternoon. Prayer groups on Zoom and in church this evening. Bible study will follow the Prayer Group in church tonight.
Thu	2	Pray for the Finance Team of St Mark's and the work they do.
Fri	3	<i>The Lord's my shepherd, I lack nothing.</i>
Sat	4	World Cancer Day.
Sun	5	We pray for Sonia as she leads our service today. Bless her as she brings your word to us in church and online.
Mon	6	Gartartan Road, Gartmore Road and Glasgow Road are in our prayers this week. Pray for all who attend the Guild.
Tue	7	Remember the homeless in our community and throughout the country.
Wed	8	Service this morning. Winter Connections this afternoon. Prayer Groups meet on Zoom and in church this evening.
Thu	9	It's the Dementia Friendly Café today and we continue to ask you to bless this work and all who come along.
Fri	10	<i>He makes me lie down in green pastures.</i>
Sat	11	Bible Study on Zoom this morning. If you've never come along, why not give it a try. Godly Play Discovery Day at Sherwood Greenlaw today.
Sun	12	As Sonia leads us in worship, may we be receptive to the message she brings. Pray for everyone involved in the service.
Mon	13	This week we shall be praying for Golf Drive, Hawkhead Road and Killearn Drive and all who live there.
Tue	14	Pray for the Flower Team and the work they do each week, and for recipients as they benefit from the gift of flowers.
Wed	15	Singles Awareness Day. Service this morning. Winter Connections this afternoon. Prayer groups on Zoom and in church this evening. Bible study will follow the prayer group in church tonight. 6 members of 39thA Paisley Brownies will make their Promise tonight.
Thu	16	Pray for the Worship Team.
Fri	17	<i>He leads me beside quiet waters.</i> Random Acts of Kindness Day.
Sat	18	20 members of 39thA Paisley Brownies attending <i>RenFriends</i> Fun Day to celebrate Thinking Day.



FEBRUARY, 2023		
Sun	19	All members of Girlguiding units at St Mark's have been invited to attend Thinking Day Service.
Mon	20	Please pray this coming week for those who live in Kinpurnie Road, Lanfine Road and Marchbank Gardens.
Tue	21	39th Paisley Brownies finish their TwitTwoo Challenge Badge tonight and members of the Trefoil Guild will come along to join them and present badges. The two newest Brownies will also make their Promise. Remember them all today.
Wed	22	Ash Wednesday as we begin the period of Lent. Service this morning. Winter Connections this afternoon. Prayer groups on Zoom and in the church this evening.
Thu	23	Remember Peter and Sonia as they lead School Assemblies today.
Fri	24	<i>He refreshes my soul.</i>
Sat	25	Pray for all who will attend Messy Church today. Bible Study on Zoom this morning.
Sun	26	Communion service this morning. Be with us as we remember your death and resurrection. At the start of a new week help us to go into it seeking your wisdom and guidance.
Mon	27	Netherdale Drive, Newtyle Road and Newnham Road are in our prayers this week.
Tue	28	Pray for the Worship Team.



39th A Paisley Brownies

Our Wednesday night meetings started back with a bang and we were delighted to welcome 5 “newbies” who have transferred from Rainbows and one who is brand new to Guiding. Our first night had lots of games and introduction to Brownies.

Since we last shared information with you, we have been busy.

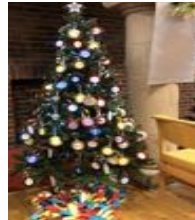
Although most of the Brownies had a holiday from school on 30th November, we decided to go ahead with our meeting. We had a fun night to celebrate St Andrew’s Day. This included, making thistle-themed bunting, a ‘tartan’ design challenge and learning to dance the *Gay Gordons*. Of course, no fun night is complete without food. We enjoyed oatcakes and cheese followed by tablet and snowballs, all washed down with some Irn Bru!

In December, the Brownies were delighted to join with other groups in preparing a Christmas tree for the *Treemendous* event in St Mark’s. We all decorated ‘baubles’ for the tree – red for Rainbows, gold for Brownies and blue for Guides. These were all added to our tree.

Many of the Brownies were able to come along on the day to support the event and vote for their favourite tree. We were so happy that the Guiding tree was the winner!

Our last meeting of the year was a visit to see the pantomime, *Cinderella*. This is the first time in a while that we have been able to support PACE at the great event.

The Brownies and Leaders all enjoyed the night – *oh yes they did!* Sophie was asked up to tell a joke and entertained the audience and many of the Brownies even joined the cast onstage for a song and dance!



As always, many of the Brownies have worked on badges over the holidays and successfully completed Interest and Theme Badges. Well done to them all!

In November, we completed the **Camp Skill Builder** as part of the **Have Adventures** theme and were delighted to present badges to all the Brownies

Be Well Theme Award -
Charlotte S, Lauren I, Ruyi, Zoe

Express Myself Theme Award –
Beth, Evie, Freya, Lauren S

Have Adventures Theme Award –
Charlotte S, Evie, Lauren I, Ruyi, Zoe

Baking Badge – Beth, Lauren S

Aviation Badge – Daisy, Evie

Anniversary Badges

3 years – Katie

2 years – Charlotte C

1 year - Georgia

Bronze Award – Beth, Evie, Freya, Lauren I, Lauren S

Silver Award – Jessica L

Now we can look forward to another busy term as we are working on the Skill Builders in **Know Myself** theme.

In February, about 20 of the Brownies and the leadership team are taking part in *RenFriends* event as part of the *Thinking Day* celebrations.

This is a fun day being run in Paisley by Renfrewshire County Girlguiding.

We are excited to find out about all the activities planned. I am looking forward to sharing some photos with you in the next *Marksman*.

Christine Hair

Brown Owl

39th Paisley Brownies (Tuesday)

Another year, another challenge. This time, back to our roots, and the Brownies are doing the *Twit Twoo* Challenge. This lets us explore the *Brownie Story*, the history of Brownies and some of the traditions, learn about Brownie Friendship, and even learn about owls.



I've been telling the *Brownie Story* for 42 years, and I'm delighted that Isobel Ritchie and others

from the Trefoil Guild are coming along to talk to the Brownies about some of the things they did in times gone by. We'll let the Brownies talk to us about Friendship, so only the owls to sort out. Step forward Bob Tonner, to share his knowledge about British owls with the Brownies. There are of course five species of British Owls (so we'll concentrate on these).

We are also looking at the Explore Skillsbuilder, and encouraging the girls with the *Space* interest badge. I have a Night Sky app on my iPad, so be prepared to see the girls matching up what they see in the sky - finding the planets,

constellations and maybe even the Hubble Telescope or Space Station.

We'll be attending the County event *RenFriends for Thinking Day*, this year to be held in Paisley, and we'll hope to encourage the girls to attend St Mark's for *Thinking Day* service.

Our two newest Brownies should be ready to make their Promise for *Thinking Day*, and we hope to be able to award many Bronze, Silver and maybe even Gold awards.

Sheena Tonner, Brownie Leader

St Mark's Car Run

Thanks to our volunteer drivers, we are again able to offer a car run to and from Church.

Anyone else who would like to volunteer as a driver would be made most welcome.

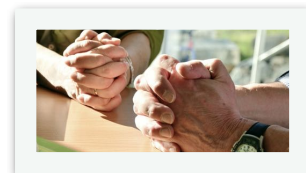


If you need a 'helping hand' to enable you to join the congregation and worship in St Mark's, or wish to volunteer as a driver, please contact me.

Thank you.

Myra McKellar.
Tel : 01415611965

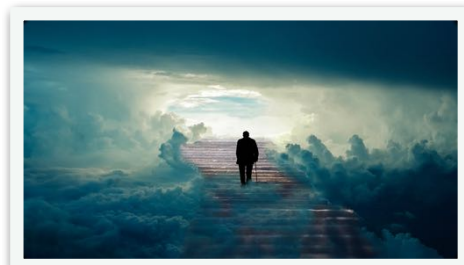
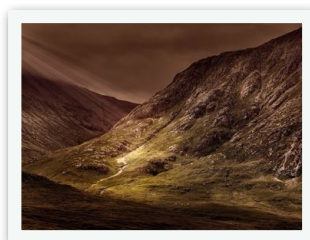
Prayer Guide



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		<i>(These two months, in italics, you will find part of Psalm 23 to meditate on.)</i>
Wed	1	World Music Therapy Day Service this morning. Winter Connections this afternoon. Prayer groups on Zoom and in church this evening. Bible Study will follow Prayer Group in church tonight.
Thu	2	Pray for each of the organisations in St Mark's. Bless the work they do.
Fri	3	<i>He guides me along the right paths for his name's sake.</i>
Sat	4	Pray for all the young folk who come into St Mark's and be with them. Help them to grow in their knowledge and understanding of you, and be with them on their faith journey.
Sun	5	We gather as your people this morning and ask you bless us as we worship and share fellowship together.
Mon	6	The people who live in Oldhall Road, Ossian Road and Penilee Road are in our prayers this week.
Tue	7	Pray for the Pastoral Team and the work they do to support and encourage others.
Wed	8	International Women's Day Service this morning. Winter Connections this afternoon. Prayer groups on Zoom and in church this evening.
Thu	9	Pray for the Green Team and the Garden Team.
Fri	10	<i>Even though I walk through the darkest valley, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff they comfort me.</i>
Sat	11	For times of leisure and relaxation we give you thanks. Help us to recharge our bodies and minds, ready to tackle the new week.
Sun	12	Our prayers are for Sonia today, for her work here, for her family and for her other duties as Interim Moderator and Street Pastor.
Mon	13	Take time to pray for those who live in Ralston Avenue, Roffey Park Road and Rosshall Avenue in the coming week.
Tue	14	Pray for the Fiona in the office and thank you for the work she does in keeping things running smoothly.
Wed	15	Service this morning. Winter Connections this afternoon. Prayer groups on Zoom and in church this evening. Bible Study will follow Prayer Group in church tonight.
Thu	16	Pray for Dawn and the choir as they practise and share in worship.
Fri	17	<i>You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies. You anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows.</i>
Sat	18	Pray for the Social Team as they plan events within the church and the community. Pray for the Presbytery Planning Day today.



MARCH, 2023		
Sun	19	We remember all places of worship in our community and ask you to be with those who lead, and bless the message brought to all who attend in churches or online.
Mon	20	It's the turn of those in Rotherwick Drive, School Road and Southwold Road for our prayers this coming week. World Sparrow Day
Tue	21	World Down Syndrome Day
Wed	22	World Water Day Service this morning. Winter Connections this afternoon. Prayer groups on Zoom and in church this evening. Bible Study will follow Prayer Group in church tonight.
Thu	23	Pray for our local Community, shops and businesses, and other places of worship.
Fri	24	<i>Surely goodness and love will follow me all the days of my life.</i>
Sat	25	Messy Church again and we remember the leaders and helpers who will prepare for the parents and children coming along.
Sun	26	For all who attend, for all who participate, for all we hear and sing, help us bring you our sincere worship and thanks.
Mon	27	Springfield Avenue, Strathmore Avenue and Tylney Road are in our prayers this week.
Tue	28	Be with Stuart as he compiles our magazine and bless the work he is doing. Thank you for his skill.
Wed	29	Service this morning. Winter Connections this afternoon. Prayer groups on Zoom and in church this evening. Bible Study will follow Prayer Group in church tonight.
Thu	30	Pray for those caught up in wars, natural disasters and for refugees throughout the world.
Fri	31	<i>And I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever. Amen.</i>



Making Sure Nobody Faces Dementia Alone

Communicating with someone who has Dementia:

12 Helpful Hints from Alzheimer Scotland

1. Be calm and patient.
2. Face the person, speak clearly and slowly.
3. Make sure that you have their attention by saying their name.
4. Use short, simple sentences and say exactly what you mean.
5. Try to get one idea across at a time.
6. Allow plenty of time for the person to take in what you say and to reply.
7. Try not to confuse or embarrass the person by correcting them bluntly.
8. Use questions which ask for a simple answer.
9. Don't ask questions which test their memory eg. What did you do yesterday?
10. Talk about familiar people, places and ideas.
11. Use the names of the people you are talking about instead of "he" or "she". It will remind the person who you are talking about.
12. Use facial expressions and hand gestures to make yourself understood.



Holy Land Pilgrimage

Bringing the Bible to life



We were a group of 12. Sonia, Eileen, Ron, Gordon, Ruth, Stuart, Andy, Nancy, Simone, myself (Karen), Fiona - Eileen's sister - and Cheryl, Ruth's friend.

We were pilgrims not tourists and boy did we have a pilgrimage to remember!

Organised by Eileen and led by Sonia, we spent eight wonderful days in Israel.

After flying from London to Tel Aviv, arriving very late on Sunday night, we got to our hotel in Jerusalem around 2 a.m. and started the next day at 8 a.m. (stamina is required).

Day one was spent on the coast, visiting Caesarea which was built by King Herod around AD 30. This is the place where Peter baptised Cornelius. Paul was in Caesarea before he was exiled to Rome. We saw the remains of the Roman amphitheatre and the ruins of an Aqueduct which was like a viaduct built from rock. It was 16 miles long and carried water to Caesarea. The engineering prowess from 2000 years ago is truly remarkable.

On our way to Tiberius we visited Haifa; a modern, high tech city of 250K people of all religions. In Israel there are circa 9 million people, of whom 6.5 M are Jews, 1.1M Muslim with the remainder being minorities. A very sobering fact is that only 0.7% of the population is Christian, but it was heart-warming to see many young and many not so young Christian pilgrims as we travelled around throughout the week.

Whilst in Haifa, we visited the Bahai Gardens. This is the most holy of places for the Bahai as their founder Bahá u' llah lived in this mansion and is buried in the beautiful gardens.

We reached the beautiful Sea of Galilee in the evening and spent 3 lovely days in and around this most special of areas, where Jesus's early ministry took place.

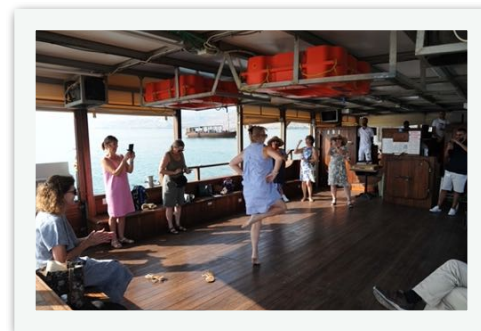
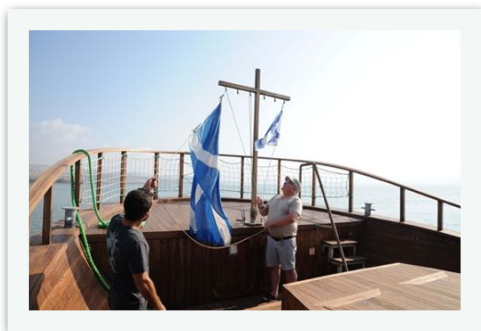
We went to Caesarea Philippi on the Golan Heights - it was here that Simon Peter first proclaimed the Lord when Jesus asked "Who do you say I am?"

This site, like most others, has been built, destroyed and rebuilt over the last 2000 years, but all retain the presence of the living Lord.

Some of us completed a short hike to visit a Druze cooking hut, another of the minority people living in Israel. They not only believe in the afterlife, but apparently note in their wills what living thing they wish to be reincarnated as!

On returning to the hotel, some of us had a swim in the Sea of Galilee - an amazing, tranquil and spiritual experience to swim in the waters where Jesus bathed.

Next day, we had an early morning boat trip on the Sea of Galilee, where Andy proudly raised the Saltire and I tried my best to do a Highland Fling. All of us sang praises to the Lord and gave grateful thanks in prayer on the boat for his peace which passes all human understanding.



We visited the Church of the Beatitudes built on a hillside overlooking the Sea of Galilee. We visited Capernaum where Jesus lived on and off for the 3 years of his ministry.

In Magdala is a newly discovered historic site that was discovered during the building of a plush hotel in the last decade. We saw the ruins of a synagogue that has been dated back to the first century and where the Magdala stone was discovered and learnt that another synagogue had been unearthed nearby just 2 months ago.

All of us were humbled by the presence of the Holy Spirit in the beautiful new church, one of the simplest of designs, with a boat and an infinity water feature.

We visited the Loaves and Fishes church and the most extraordinary Primacy Peter church, right on the shore of Galilee, which houses the rock which tradition says is where Jesus appeared to the disciples after his resurrection. We were blessed here to get moments either alone or as a group when we could contemplate or pray. It was truly amazing, despite the hustle and bustle of other pilgrims and tourists, that we were often granted these special moments of quiet.

That evening, in a chapel in the grounds of the pilgrim's house we were lodging in, we had the most uplifting and spiritual communion, with wonderful acoustics that we will all remember for months to come.

On Thursday we headed to Nazareth, passing through the Jazreel valley where Revelation predicts Armageddon will take place. We passed Cana, the site of the first miracle and in Nazareth we visited the church of the Annunciation.

This was built in 1969 on the site of previous churches, all said to be built over the site of the Virgin Mary's house, where she lived and where Angel Gabriel appeared to her. There is a beautiful picture or carving of Mary as a young girl - something that is not often seen. Inside this beautiful, domed church you can see the remains of Mary's house and remains of the original village of Nazareth. The words portrayed on the front of the church are "Where the Word becomes flesh".

We travelled to Jericho, the oldest city in the world, which is in the Judean desert. Jericho is poor and, although the population is growing, there is little employment. However, our guide told us that God blessed this region with palms that yielded dates.

These trees can last a thousand years and yield thousands of harvests; we can testify that the fruits were delicious. We saw the Mount of Temptation and a sycamore tree, where Jesus saw the short tax collector Zacchaeus and called him down from the tree.

We went to the River Jordan, which is no longer deep and wide, flowing with milk and honey, but still it was moving to paddle in the waters where our Lord was baptised. Jordan and Israel are separated by this river and this area is desert land. And in total contrast to what we were doing in Jerusalem, here we could float in the Dead Sea - the lowest point on earth - another incredible and unforgettable experience.

The next 3 days were spent in Jerusalem.

We went to the Western (or Wailing) Wall, where men and women are separated and where you don't turn your back to the wall, so walk backwards when you leave. Again, here there is a presence, knowing that millions of people have prayed at this wall for millennia.



We walked down the Mount of Olives, stopping at Dominus Flevit (the church built where Jesus wept over Jerusalem.) The altar of this church, unlike all others, faces west over the Kidron valley to Temple Mount. The dome is in the shape of a tear drop and really is a most beautiful place of worship.

We walked down to the Garden of Gethsemane and the Church of all Nations which has 2 stags on its roof. The garden has 8 Olive trees and the rock where Jesus prayed is here, another very beautiful and spiritual place.

We walked on to Mount Zion, and we visited one of the rooms where the Last Supper could have taken place. We saw the House of Caiaphas, and the dungeon into which Jesus was lowered on the last night of his life. Jerusalem is obviously different from then, but we saw the original steps that have been excavated that would have led from Mount of Olives, to the holy city and on to Mount Zion. We also saw the modern church of Peter in Gallicantu.

Our penultimate day - firstly a visit to Herodium – an impressive fort, built by King Herod to be the site of his tomb, and after a very steep mountain climb up a track and some 200 steps, we visited the remains of one of his temples.

The views across the Holy Land were fantastic. There is a sad story to this as the Hebrew University Professor Ehud Netzer spent his life looking for the tomb, but shortly after he found it in 2007, he tragically fell from the temple and died.

We then visited Bethlehem, the House of Bread and the Church of the Nativity, which is built above the cave in which Jesus was born. This church is the oldest functioning church in the world.

We also went to the Shepherds' Fields and the Church there, where, it is believed, the shepherds who heard the angels sheltered. We sat in the caves, and sang - a wonderful moment of praise.

We were lucky that the Garden Tomb was just around the corner from the hotel and we spent a pleasant time in contemplation and prayer and visited one of two possible sites of where Jesus was buried.

Our final full day was spent visiting Temple Mount, the most holy of places to Muslims. There are now 14 mosques on this site and the dress code for us even being allowed on the site (we are not allowed in the mosques) was very strict. The mosque with the gold dome is very grand and the history of the site is fascinating - during the time

of the Crusades, one of the buildings was a Christian church.



The First and Second stations of the Cross would have been on this side of the wall in a building that once was the administration office of Pontius Pilate, and is where Jesus was condemned. However, as it is now under Muslim control, and is a school for Islam, the stations have moved to the other side of the wall and it was from here that we began our walk of the Via Dolorosa. Stations 1 to 8 are in the old city, with 9- 14 inside the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. Some believe that Jesus was buried in the tomb in the Holy Sepulchre, whilst others believe that the tomb was in the garden - both were outside the city walls and by a main road.



We visited the 4 quarters of the Old City, Jewish, Muslim, Christian and Armenian. We had the most special communion on our last evening on the roof top of our hotel which is situated near the Damascus gate with views of the city walls.

Our final two hours, before the bus took us to the airport were spent walking into the

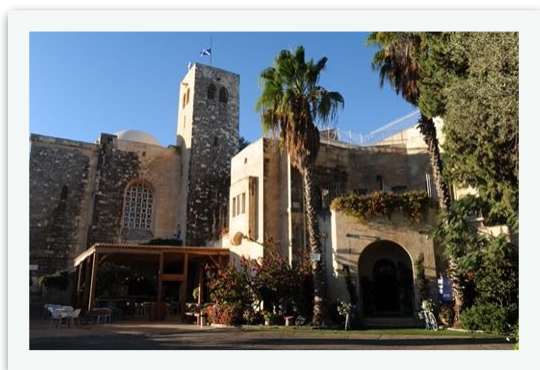
old city again and visiting St Anne's church and the Pools of Bethesda. St Anne's church is next door to where the Virgin Mary was born and is of the most beautiful white stone, right beside the famous pools. (St Anne is by tradition the mother of the Virgin Mary.)

We all expressed our gratitude that we were

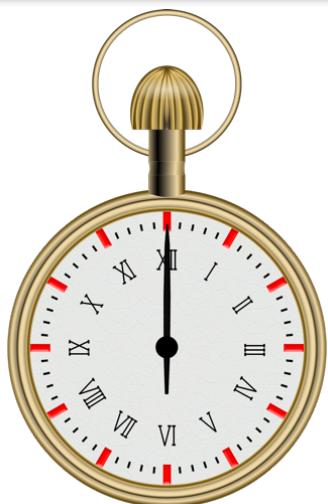
privileged to be able to participate in this pilgrimage and we will remember the Christian fellowship felt by all for years to come. We pray that God grants us opportunity and the words to bear witness.

Karen Marshall

Photos : Stuart Burns



St Andrew's Church of Scotland, Jerusalem



Please send articles for the *Marksman* to the editor at :

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