

Marksman

March 2021



St Marks Church of Scotland (Oldhall), Paisley

334 Glasgow Road, Paisley, PA1 3DL

Office Telephone – 0141 882 2755

Email: office@stmarksoldhall.org.uk

www.stmarksoldhall.org.uk

Scottish Charity SC011210

From the Manse - Mar 21

As I look out onto the manse garden I am beginning to see signs of spring. The snowdrops have been out for a few weeks, the crocuses burst into colour with the recent sunshine, and I have one solitary daffodil in flower. Last weekend I even did a little gardening. Spring is in the air, and it feels good; hope of good things to come in the garden.

The birds are certainly aware of it; the volume of bird song has increased, in my mind at least, in the last few weeks. As I leave the manse at 7am heading for the park, there is now daylight and the birds are singing loudly as I walk along Newtyle Road. They sing of hope, of finding a mate, and building a nest and raising a family.

As we watch the news and the Coronavirus briefings there is hope. Case numbers are falling, there are less people in ICU, and more and more people are being vaccinated each day. The light is, they say, brighter at the end of the tunnel. There is hope that we are winning the battle with Covid 19.

There is hope that we may be able to reopen our churches for Easter Sunday. What a fabulous occasion to be able to throw open the doors and celebrate with friends around us. Jesus death was a low point, his resurrection is always a cause for celebration, but doubly so this year, if we can gather in Church to worship again. Death has been conquered; life will never be the same again. We live on in the resurrection of Christ Jesus. (But don't try and book your seat just yet, we await confirmation nearer the time.)

For it will be some time until life returns fully to normal, and people are tired of the restrictions. We are fed up not seeing loved ones except via a computer or phone screen. We want to be able to go out, to go further, to go out for a meal. And that may not happen for some time yet. We need to be patient, to wait, to be safe.

I recently heard an interview with a dogsledder called Blair Braverman and this is roughly what he said:

“So the similarity between the pandemic and mushing is that you don’t know how far you’re going, and you don’t know how much it will take to get there. Every time I harness up my dogs, and they’re barking and they run out of the yard and onto the trail, they don’t know if they’re going two miles or if they’re going 200 miles. They do not know. They’re just going to run, and they’ll tire themselves out if I don’t slow them down because they aren’t able to see ahead. So, in order to get my team to endure something of an incredible distance, I need to force them to rest before they want to. And that’s actually the hardest thing. People ask us how we teach sled dogs to run. And the answer is, you don’t, you literally put a harness on them, and they run. You don’t have to teach them to run, but you do have to teach them to rest, and that is a challenge. It is a lot easier to prevent fatigue than to recover from it. Just to bring that back to the pandemic, what I would just say is, people are pushing themselves really hard. And you need to make sure that you’re acting as if it could go forever. You need to be resting, taking care of yourself, getting enough sleep, connecting with your friends.”

Wise words. Sleep, friends, rest: it sounds so easy but we can find it so hard, and the past year has only escalated the level of difficulty. We need to take good care of ourselves, as well as care for each other.

We have many words of advice and encouragement in our Bibles:

“Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer.” Romans 12:12

Sound advice for this time.

“Do not fear, for I have redeemed you, I have called you by name, you are mine. When you pass through the waters I will be with you,” Isaiah 43:1-2

And that goes for Covid 19, bereavement, loneliness of whatever we are experiencing at the moment.

“Trust in the Lord with all your heart, lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make your paths straight.” Proverbs 3:5-6

A straight path out of this is what we all hope for, with no setbacks.

My prayer is that you will find or make your opportunity to do whatever meets the need for rest in your life. Be joyful in hope, for hope is something to be grasped with both hands, and lean on the Lord - he has redeemed us, he calls us, he knows us by name and he is with us through all that has been and all that lies ahead.

My hope and prayer is that we will be able to gather again in Church soon, but more than that, I hope and pray that you will all stay safe and well, and depend on the Lord.

Your friend and minister,

Sonia

Worship Matters

All Church services and a 'Word 4 Wednesday' are only available online at the moment due to the Covid-19 restrictions.

We will have online daily reflections during Holy Week beginning 29th March.

It is hoped Churches may reopen on Easter Sunday but we await confirmation nearer the time.

Reflections at the Quay

I have been invited back to co-lead Reflections at the Quay

– look out for me on Sunday 14th March.

Renfrewshire Foodbank

Following the temporary suspension of donations due to the Covid lockdown the Foodbank are now accepting donations again. Feel free to drop anything at the manse or let me know if you'd like me to collect from you. If you would prefer to make a cash donation it can be made here: <https://renfrewshire.foodbank.org.uk/give-help/donate-money/>

At the moment items that are in short supply are tinned potatoes, dried potatoes, bottles of squash, cartons of juice, cat & dog food, cleaning items, shaving gel, washing up liquid, bleach and laundry detergent. They are also desperately short of supermarket carrier bags so if you have any please send them to.

Sonia



**Rt Rev Dr Martin Fair “Time for Reflection” address to
Scottish Parliament on 23rd Feb 2021**

“Three weeks ago yesterday, I listened with particular interest to the First Minister’s daily briefing and to the Covid stats that she announced.

My wife’s dad had died on the Saturday, in a care home, having contracted the virus, and I guess I just wanted to hear the numbers and to think that Mickey was included in them. What I really would have liked would have been if the First Minister had actually mentioned him by name. If she had given the total number of those who had died and then said, ‘and of course that number includes Mickey Wiley.’

Well of course that’s a daft notion. I understand that. And yet how vital it is - not just important, vital - that we never forget that behind every number is a name and that every statistic is a ‘somebody.’ I can’t put into words how devastated my wife was to lose her dad in these circumstances, not having been able to see him. And I guess the same is true in all of the other similar cases.

And if this is true for Covid deaths then also for all of those other times when, as part of our national record keeping, we announce numbers.

‘Just another’ drug death is someone’s precious son or daughter.

Someone who started primary school with all the potential in the world, someone who could have thrived, someone who had a name.

Our hospital waiting lists, lists of those who are waiting for a referral to a cancer specialist or a mental health service. Every line on every list is a life.

Statistics relating to children living in poverty, statistics documenting numbers of families using food banks.

Behind every statistic is someone special.

Everybody matters.

And names matter.

When we meet someone for the first time, we tell each other our names.

We get annoyed with ourselves when we can picture a person but can't remember their name.

In the prophet Isaiah, we read this:

'The Lord says, 'I have called you by your name and you are mine.'

'Do not be afraid for you are precious in my sight.' (Isa 43:1, 4)

We all matter in the sight of God, even the least of these.

Let it be that Scotland is a country in which everyone matters.

In which we remember that behind every number is a name."

Footnote – on the day that Martin delivered this Reflection, when the First Minister Nicola Sturgeon later gave her usual statement to Parliament giving the total number of deaths from Covid she added

"As the Moderator of the General Assembly has just reminded us in his Time For Reflection, behind every one of these statistics is a life and a name. The Moderator's father in law Mickey Wiley and thousands of other names beside. So I want to send my condolences again to all those who have lost a loved one."

Sometimes when we speak truth to power power listens.

39thA Paisley Brownies

The small group of keen Brownies continue to meet virtually through Zoom. These girls have managed to complete the Live Smart Skill Builder and Brown owl managed to deliver the badges to them along with their latest activity pack. We are now working through various Unit Meeting Activities to help the girls work towards completing the Skills for Future Theme.



Along with their activities, two of the Brownies received Anniversary Badges. These celebrate the total time that the girls have been members of Girlguiding so Zoe received her 3 year badge and Holly received her 1 year badge. It is lovely to celebrate the commitment of the girls.

February is usually a very busy time at our Brownie meetings as we celebrate Thinking Day which is the joint birthdays of Lord and Lady Baden Powell, the founders of Scouting and Guiding. This year is of course different but we still celebrated the day. Some colour-in pictures were delivered to the Brownies and they were asked to display them in their windows to show that a Girlguiding member lived in the house. All the young members were asked to spot them when they are out and about.



Usually the young members of Guiding and Scouting would attend a special Church service as part of the celebrations. Sonia kindly agreed to join us for a special re-dedication on Zoom on Thinking Day, 22nd February. The girls played a couple games and Sonia gave a short talk and lead us in the renewal of our Promise.



Charlotte, whose birthday it was, even brought along the Brownie flag!!





Paisley Division are running a Fairtrade Bake off. Some of the girls have taken up the challenge and we wish them luck!! What do you think?



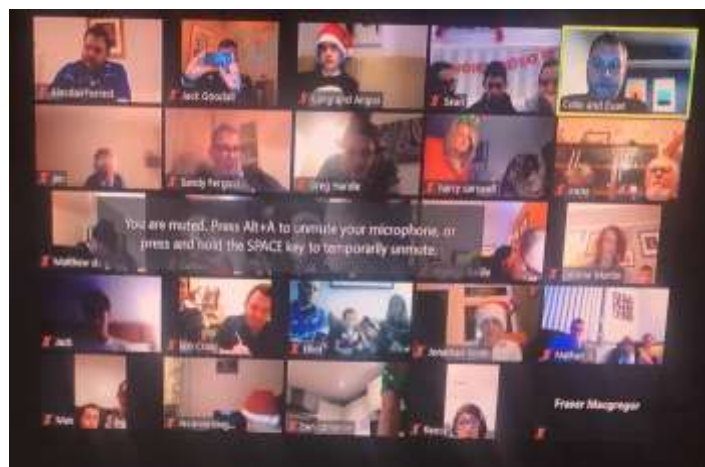
Hopefully when I next report on the Brownies activities we will be a step nearer returning to face to face meetings. Until then, we will keep meeting virtually!!

Christine Hair

Brown Owl

24th Paisley Boys' Brigade

Time moves on so quickly, even during lockdown. It seems no time since we had all three sections of the Company and some parents and siblings join together in an end of year Zoom Quiz. Everyone seemed so engaged they did not notice me taking a quick photo.



The seasons turn and this week's Bible Class features some snowdrops pushing up from the frozen soil. The aim being to consider how faith grows and develops as time goes by. The passing of time was something the Anchors considered as we learned about the phases of the moon. This was demonstrated in the form of Oreo biscuits. (Thanks to Brown Owl – Christine Hair for the suggestion). This was not as easy as it looks and we all enjoyed having to eat any biscuits that were broken in the process. Of course they were all eaten in the end as Callum was only too pleased to demonstrate with his attempt. The activity also led us into considering David's word in Psalm 8.3–4. A reminder of God's care for us regardless of how distant or insignificant we might feel.



'When I look at your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars that you have established; what are human beings that you are mindful of them, mortals that you care for them?'



Recently we also discussed the story of Nehemiah and how he and his fellow builders persevered in rebuilding Jerusalem despite the opposition and challenges they faced. A timely lesson for all of us as we look to stay positive during the pandemic. Any building theme gives us an excuse to get the boys playing with Lego. (Not that the Captain ever needs an excuse to play with Lego.) Each of the Anchor boys was given an individual challenge based on various themes and the results were outstanding. These had to be completed between Zoom sessions and I can only imagine they sacrificed some home schooling time to concentrate on their Lego “homework”.

Lego means “play well” in Danish so if we can do that and continue to grow in faith during a pandemic it feels like the BB is still going in the right direction.

Jack Goodall (Company Captain)

Regards,

Jack

39th Paisley Brownies (Tuesday)

Brownies have continued via Zoom, with most girls joining in with us each week.

You will recollect that we were going to learn British Sign Language (BSL) with the Brownies. Laura Stewart joined us on screen for a few nights to teach us the basics: how to say hello, how are you, what’s your name, how old are you – the list goes on. We learned to sign lots of animals, and sign a song about Australian animals (on Australia Day!) We also used finger spelling to spell out our names, and created our own short sign code name which we can use with our friends. Mums were delighted that the girls could sign “too old” in response to their age!

We learned to sign our Brownie Promise, and we were able to show Sonia when she joined us on screen to celebrate some Thinking Day activities with us.

The Tuesday Rainbows also joined us on screen, when Sonia gave a short talk about Peace, which was the theme for World Thinking Day 2021. The girls made rainbow coloured flowers to represent the different colours for Guides, Brownies and Rainbows, and these were finished off with a World Emblem.



Other activities included a Brownie Promise folded book, WAGGS pin dot to dot, world colouring pages and Cheryl showed a short film about how Guiding had started.

On 22 February, we joined with the Rainbows and Brownies from Tuesday and Wednesday at St Marks, to mark our Thinking Day Celebrations along with Sonia, take part in activities and re-make our Promise again.

The Brownies also continue with their own interest badges at home, with Baking being popular, as well as Out and About in the Dark. This latter badge gave the girls an opportunity to do something with their families – such as visit the Christmas lights in Paisley, have a meal outside around a bonfire, or as simple as go for a walk in the dark with their pet.

Our Skills Builder is about Living Smart, and that's got some interesting challenges around tools, shopping and job skills, which I am sure we will enjoy on Zoom. We're also encouraging the girls to look at the Jobs Interest Badge as that fits in with the theme.

We look forward to warmer weather, when we hope to be able to meet out of doors face to face once again.

Sheena Tonner, Brownie Leader

Bible Study

Our next session for our Bible Studies will begin Saturday 17 April and run once a fortnight until June 26..

If you are interested in taking part please let Irene or Bob know either at irene.pollock03@gmail.com or pollockrjb@icloud.com

Booklets will be purchased and if you can't manage to join in, you may wish to take a book to study at home.

The proposed topic is Listening to God, and books usually cost around £5.

Currently we continue to meet on Zoom, and that may continue for a wee while, depending on how the restrictions are eased.

Thanks, Irene and Bob

World day of Prayer

The next world day of Prayer is on Friday 5th March 2021. The service comes from Vanuatu and the theme is: "Build on a strong foundation"

In 2020 the service came from Zimbabwe; please continue to pray for the people of Zimbabwe. More information can be found at <http://www.wdpscotland.org.uk>



World Mission Update

Migration, Refugees and Climate Change



How does conflict and climate drive displacement? Faith Impact Forum and Christian Aid will host this panel discussion on migration, refugees and climate change. Fiona Kendall, Rev John McCulloch, and Val Brown will each bring their own experiences to this lively and topical discussion.

Speakers

Rev Dr Susan Brown is Convener of the Faith impact Forum of the Church of Scotland.

Fiona Kendall is a legal advisor with Mediterranean Hope, a refugee project created by the Federation of Protestant Churches in Italy (FCEI). She has a special interest in climate refugees.

Rev John McCulloch is minister at St Andrew's Scots Memorial Church in Jerusalem. He is closely involved with the Palestinian community and their displacement issues.

Val Brown brings insight from Christian Aid partners around the world that work with migratory populations and how climate change affects them.

Carol Finlay is the Head of Congregational Engagement for Faith Impact Forum of the Church of Scotland. She will facilitate this session.

To attend this event, please register your interest to faithimpact@churchofscotland.org.uk

A Zoom code will be sent to you a few days before the meeting.

Myanmar

We continue to receive regular news from our partner, the Presbyterian Church in Myanmar, following the 1 February coup. Church members have joined the peaceful protests, and marchers are avoiding confrontation with security forces, although there are reports of police opening fire on demonstrators with rubber bullets and some clashes have followed.

Communities are installing night-watchmen as security forces are raiding homes of activists during the overnight curfew. The internet has been switched off on at least two occasions.

We continue to pray with the Presbyterian Church in Myanmar for the reversal of the coup, the release of elected leaders, and for peace and justice for all in Myanmar.

Prayer diary for March 2021

Monday 1

We begin this month remembering the families who live in **Barshaw Place, Bathgo Avenue and Buchlyvie Road.**

Tuesday 2

We pray for friends and family, for the love they bring us and we ask You to bless them during this time of lockdown. For those who are struggling with broken relationships, Lord, comfort them and bring Your healing,

Wednesday 3

Word for Wednesday this morning online. Pray for Sonia and the word she brings to us this week.

Prayer Group meets again at 7:00 on Zoom. All are welcome to join in. Contact Irene for details of how to link up on irene.pollock03@gmail.com

Thursday 4

Thank you for the shopkeepers, delivery folk, post workers, and all those involved in essential services that help keep things working for us.

Friday 5

World Day of Prayer – focusing on Vanuatu.....entitled Build on a Strong Foundation.

For more information you can go to

Mrs Marjorie Paton, Muldoanich, Stirling Street, Blackford. PH4 1QG Tel: 01764 682234. Email: marjoriepaton.wdp@btinternet.com

Saturday 6

Bible Study on Zoom at 10:15 for 10:30. This concludes our studies on Hope. The next series will begin on Saturday 17 April.

Sunday 7

This morning as we take part in online worship, help us to be aware of the promise that “where two or three are gathered in my Name, I am there among them”. May we experience that promise today.

Monday 8

Our streets to pray for this week are **Crookston Drive, Dalfoil Court, and Darvel Crescent.**

International Women's Day

Tuesday 9

Pray for our children and young people. Some are back to school and others are waiting to hear if they will be allowed back in a week or so. Be with parents who have to juggle home schooling, and getting other children into school.

Wednesdays 10

Sonia leads a Word for Wednesday again today. Help us to really listen to what God has to say to us.

Zoom Prayer Group continues tonight.

Thursday 11

A day to stop and think about those less fortunate than ourselves. As you listen to, or read about, the news around the world, ask God to show you which particular situation He wants you to pray about. We can't take everything on board ourselves, but we can bring these issues and concerns before Him.

Friday 12

Think about the church organisations that are still managing to continue despite this long time of restriction. Give thanks for the leaders who are putting things into place to engage the youngsters, and bless the work they're doing.

Saturday 13

For those who are working during the week, give them rest, relaxation and refreshment during his weekend. Help us to enjoy the leisure time You have given us.

Sunday 14

Pray for Sonia and other ministers as they faithfully deliver your word across our land. Thank you for Reflections from the Quay that has brought Your message into many homes.

Monday 15

Pray for all those who live in **Drummond Drive, Duchray Drive and Dunchurch Road.**

Hopefully by today we begin to see an easing of restrictions – P4-7 pupils returning to school, blended learning for some secondary pupils, phased return for universities and colleges and non-contact sport for 12-17 year olds.

Along with that the hope that we can meet outdoors. 4 people from two households.

Give thanks for a small glimmer of light beginning to show on the horizon.

Tuesday 16

We pray for the elderly, the vulnerable and those who feel so isolated and alone. Again, move us to reach out to those we know who could do with a call, a letter etc. Help us be Your love in action.

Wednesday 17

Session meets on Zoom at 7:30. Pray for Sonia as she leads this, and for all business discussed. May You guide and direct our conversations.

Prayer group at **6:45**, again on Zoom

Thursday 18

We continue to pray for our governments and for the decisions they make, alongside scientific experts, as they seek to work out a way to move forward. We ask that they will seek Your wisdom and guidance.

Friday 19

Take time to pray for other countries where there is famine, flooding, war and corruption. Remember agencies working there to bring relief to those affected.

Saturday 20

The last of our series on Hope at our Bible Studies. It has been an interesting and challenging study, and helped us all to think afresh about the Hope we have in Christ for eternity. We now are challenged to live in the light of that hope!

Sunday 21

World Down syndrome Day and International day for the Elimination of racial Discrimination.

Pray for all who are discriminated against due to the colour of their skin or their appearance or abilities. Help us value each other as You value us.

Monday 22

Keep the people of **Gatartan Road, Gartmore Road and Glasgow Road** in your prayers this week.

World Water Day – give thanks for the fresh source of water we have easy access to, and think of those less fortunate. Pray for the work of Tearfund and their “tippy-taps” that help people get access to clean water, and the difference this makes to their lives.

Tuesday 23

Pray for the Women’s’ Refuge, for the children and mothers affected by domestic abuse. Remember also men who are in this position too. Many lives have been made worse during this pandemic. We bring these folk to God in prayer and ask for protection from violence.

Wednesday 24

Word for Wednesday this morning. We ask that you are with Sonia as she prepares and brings the message today.

Prayer group meets again this evening on Zoom.

Thursday 25

International Day of remembrance of the victims of Slavery and the Transatlantic Slave Trade

Give thanks for the freedoms you enjoy, and pray for those still bound by slavery today – child trafficking, slavery of addictions, and workers being forced to work for nothing or little pay and no means of escape.

Friday 26

We give thanks for the world around us, for the beauties of nature, the promise of Spring, and the signs that we see and hear. Thank you for the continuing pattern of the seasons.

Saturday 27

At the time of writing it is still uncertain as to how long we will be under restrictions. Maybe by today there will more information on the route map out of lockdown. Pray that we will soon be able to meet up again, even in small numbers, and enjoy social interaction once again.

Sunday 28

We remember Sonia as she brings Your message to us today.

Pray for 8 different church leaders in Renfrewshire who will be posting a daily 10 minute devotional through Holy Week. This will be on Churches Together Renfrewshire Facebook page and Website, as well as the P4R What's app.

Monday 29

Let's remember the folk who live in **Golf Drive, , Hawkhead Road and Killearn Drive** this week.

Tuesday 30

We pray for the work of hospice care. We think, too, of those in Care Homes, residential care and those who are vulnerable in our community and society.

Wednesday 31

Who would have thought we would be in this lockdown a year on? Despite the difficulties and the frustrations it has brought, the loneliness and isolation many have experienced, we give thanks that God has been faithful and is with us in every circumstance of life.

Office Hours

Tue, Wed & Fri 11:15am – 2:45pm