

Marksman

May 2020



St Marks Church of Scotland (Oldhall), Paisley

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Dear People of St Mark's,

Hello again, from the Manse in Lockdown.

Hello, how are you? I am missing seeing you all. But the Bible tells us:

**“Be joyful always, pray continually, give thanks in all
circumstances, for this is**

God's will* for you in Christ Jesus.” 1Thessalonians 5:16-18

So, what am I joyful about and for what do I give thanks?

I am delighted that so many of you are watching our Sunday services and a Word for Wednesday on the church website and Facebook page. It is good that we can use these means to maintain some form of contact and to continue to join together as part of the family of God to worship, pray and study God's word together. I am enjoying preparing the services and I look forward each week to exploring the relevance of the passages to this strange time we are in. Thank you for sharing these with me. (In a bid to reach as many people as possible, the services are also going out in the form of a CD or DVD to several of our congregation who do not have computer technology. If there is anyone whom you think might benefit from this please ask them if they are interested, and let us know.)

I must admit that I am also enjoying 'visiting' other church services (by way of recordings), some of which are available through <https://www.churchofscotland.org.uk/worship/services-online> .

I am delighted that BBC Scotland has commenced a programme of religious broadcasting on Sunday mornings, although I wish they wouldn't change the timing. I swooped in from a 'visit' to a church in the Hebrides this week to find myself watching only the last 5 minutes of Reflections from the Quay.

I am also a much more regular visitor to the Church of Scotland website than I used to be. I'm enjoying finding what other people are up to around the country – usually a much more positive slant than that portrayed in the news media. One of the good news stories this week was that my friend Betsi has finally been inducted into her new church in Malta – we trained together, and were ordained on the same night, but there have been delays in her being inducted and when it occurred it was carried out via Zoom. I thank God that she is finally settled in her manse out there, although I suspect it will be a long time before I can go out and visit (I did offer to do pulpit supply for her very soon after finding out that she was going to Malta!)

One thing we are agreed on is that no-one ever prepared us for ministry in this sort of fashion. Not in one of our training conferences, nor in classes on practical theology. I suspect if there had been a session on 'Using IT in your Church' many of us would have thought – "Yeah, right, like that's ever going to happen in my church!" However, only three months on from my Ordination and Induction, life has changed beyond our wildest imaginings. Restaurants, cafes and churches closed, shops enforcing 2m distancing, people wearing masks in the street, and crossing the road if they see someone coming in the opposite direction, and most of us sitting at home rather than going to work or our usual activities. However, I remain grateful that using technology, and depending greatly on Peter's expertise, I can still do what I was called here to do, which is preach the word of God, with a message for today.

I am thankful that I had two months to start to get to know you before lockdown started and I look forward to doing that all over again when we can meet freely.

In the meantime, a quick chat in the park, or as you walk past the Manse when I am gardening (I'm enjoying the garden too), will have to do for now. And I'm thankful that we have Barshaw Park on our doorstep, and for the bluebells that are giving colour now the daffodils are past.

I am thankful that the prayer group continues to meet, now using Zoom, and I thank Irene for the monthly prayer update which you will find further on in the Marksman. It is good to remember that God calls us to pray in all circumstances, and that he listens to our prayers.

Finally I must thank you all for the many messages of condolence, by email, card or phone, following the death of my Mum, Marjorie, at the beginning of the month. She greatly enjoyed the six weeks she spent living with me in the manse, and she was made to feel very welcome on the occasions she could come to St Mark's.

I look forward to seeing you all back in the Church building as soon as it is possible - it is a little strange preaching to an empty building - but in the meantime, I shall continue to appear on your computer screens on a regular basis. And I am thankful I can do that.

We are in this together, let us support one another, knowing that whatever chaos there is in the world our God is with us. Let us be Church, the body of Christ in the world, until we can be in Church – in the building again. (Col 1:18, Eph 5:30)

“So then, just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live in him, strengthened in the faith as you were taught, and overflowing with thankfulness.” Colossians 2:6

Please email me with any comments, thoughts, suggestions, or pick up the phone if you just want to chat.

Your friend and minister,

Sonia

*I'm not saying that the coronavirus outbreak is God's will for us – just that it is his will for us to be joyful, give thanks and pray in all circumstances. However, God may be using this time to teach us patience, to make us rest, to make us value what, and who, is important to us.

See my article on Lament for a greater understanding of how I see God's position in this outbreak.

Lament

Despite what I said in my letter about giving thanks in all circumstances, I know that for some people, and for many of us, at some times, it is very hard to give thanks. This does not mean we cannot approach God, but that we do so in a different way. Lament is a deeply ingrained biblical tradition, seen not just in the book of Lamentations, but also in many of the Psalms.

Lament is what happens when people ask, "Why?" and don't get an answer.

Lament is relevant in many different situations in many different times. David cried out in lament when he was being chased by the armies of Saul, Job, cries out to God, after he had lost his children, his goods, and his health, Jesus cried out using the words of Psalm 22 when he was on the cross. "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"

With respect to the coronavirus outbreak, Lament is where we get to when we move beyond our self-centred worry about our situation, and look more broadly at the suffering of the world. It's bad enough facing the pandemic in Ralston, or London, or New York City. But what about a crowded refugee camp in Calais? Or in Gaza? Or in a crowded township in South Africa?

At these times, when we don't know what to pray to God, or where to seek comfort, the Psalms, the Bible's own hymnbook, come into their own.

"Be gracious to me, Lord, for I am languishing; O Lord, heal me, for my bones are shaking with terror." Psalm 6

"Why do you stand far off, O Lord? Why do you hide yourself in time of trouble?" Psalm 10

"How long, O Lord? Will you forget me for ever?" Psalm 13

Now often, after a period of lament, these Psalms reach light and brightness by the end, with an awareness of God's presence and hope for the future. They don't find an explanation of the problem but provide reassurance to us that we will get through it.

Psalm 23, has been a repeated source comfort to me over recent weeks – "Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I fear no evil, for you are with me."

But sometimes they go the other way.

Psalm 89 starts off by celebrating God's goodness and promises, and then suddenly the mood changes and it's all gone horribly wrong.

And Psalm 88 starts in misery, and ends in darkness:

"You have caused friend and neighbour to shun me; my companions are in darkness." - A word for our self-isolating times?

Throughout our Biblical traditions, the point of lament is not just to provide an outlet for our sorrow, our loneliness, our sheer inability to understand why this is all happening. The point is that we have a caring God who is present with us, and who also laments. Often we think of God as knowing everything, in control of everything, and whilst he is, God is also grieved by what is happening in his world.

In Genesis we read that God was grieved to his heart, over the violent wickedness of humankind, whom he had created. He was devastated when the people of Israel, turned away from him. And when God came back, in person, to his people in Jesus, he wept at the tomb of his friend, Lazarus.

St. Paul speaks of the Holy Spirit “groaning” within us, as we ourselves groan within the pain of the whole creation.

So I hope this helps you understand that, even though we can't explain **why** God let's this happen, he is in this with us. And it is part of the Christian calling sometimes not to be able to explain, but to lament instead. As the Spirit laments within us, so we become, even in our self-isolation, small dwellings where the presence and healing love of God can abide. As we spend time in his presence, sharing our emotions with him, he is alongside, he cares for us and his goodness and mercy shall follow us all the days of our lives.

And out of that there can emerge new possibilities, new acts of kindness, new hope.

Now there's a thought to hang onto.

Sonia

URGENT HELP REQUIRED – CHURCH GARDENS



Are you under 70 with no underlying health conditions? We are looking for a few people to volunteer to keep the church gardens tidy and to cut the grass over the next few months. If you can help even, if just occasionally, please contact Julie in the office on 0141 882 2755 or office@stmarksoldhall.org.uk.

Peter's News

Things certainly aren't running as normal at the moment. However, things in the church are still going on.

I have improved my video editing abilities over the past few weeks as we have been recording the Wednesday, the Sunday and Holy Week services. The quality of what we have been able to put together has developed week on week. For these services once they are recorded I take the sound and remove all background noise before putting the sound back onto the video. This week we have tried to have the scripture reading on screen as well as the person reading it. If people can't get the service online then we are delivering DVD or CDs with the recordings of the services. If you are interested in getting a copy of the service on DVD or CD delivered to you then please contact myself or Julie.

TRASH is still going on through Zoom, so we meet up every Sunday night to try and have as normal a Trash night as we can have. The first few weeks we have just had the older group of young people but we will try and get everyone involved over the next few weeks. We have been looking at the early church and what they did after Christ's ascension. Over the next few weeks we will be looking to work our way through one of Paul's letters.

I was hoping that Friends and Heroes might change slightly to follow on from the Easter holiday club. Without the holiday club we are going to keep producing material for Friends and Heroes that families can do at home with their children. The video clips that we would normally watch will be put onto the church website with any resources that families might need to do Friends and Heroes from their homes. This material will be made available on the Sundays that Friends and Heroes would have been on.

The past few weeks we have started to run a family quiz on Zoom for the whole church family to participate in. We had a quiz night on Saturday 25th April and we had 11 teams take part and a total of 32 people involved. The object of these events is a bit of fun rather than a fiercely competitive quiz, and it is nice to "see" people in our church community. The next quiz night will take place online on the 9th May at 7pm. If you are interested in joining us for these please do contact me for details.

Church is having to learn to adapt to our current situation and we will continue to do what we can to be church until such a time that we can meet again in our church building.

God bless and keep safe,

Peter

Reflections

During this time of lockdown all of us have had to reassess how we do things and think about things.

Many of our social activities have been curtailed and we are having to find ways of filling our time.

For those working from home it is about developing new ways of doing things, but being isolated from work colleagues and missing the daily banter that goes with that.

For those who are vulnerable due to health issues, restrictions mean staying put! That can be very hard, and even more so for family members who are having to do the same.

The good weather makes us want to pack up the car and go ‘doon the watter” or head off to the hills. We reminisce over holidays in the past, uncertain of when we will have our next break.

It is easy to become despondent and feel bored, or frustrated, and that is our human reaction to this situation. And what is more, God knows how we feel, understands and loves us just the same. We can't always be upbeat - that's just not true to life – but we can take all of that to our Father in Heaven.

I have been involved in having the privilege of putting together a weekly prayer guide for the Prayer and Bible Study Group – which by the way can be sent by email to anyone who wants it – and it has been very encouraging to see how our church corporate prayer life is growing.

There are several folk joining in on Zoom on a Wednesday evening from 7:00 – 7:30 to prayer together, along with others praying at the same time from their own homes.

What has been especially encouraging is the way people have contacted me asking for prayer. That's what it's all about, and is, in itself, an answer to the many prayers put up by the group over many months. So God answers prayer!

If this is something you feel led to join, contact me on irene.pollock03@gmail.com and I can send you the weekly link.

God is moving during this time and He is calling us all to reflect on our individual journey of faith with Him. He has promised us that He will never leave us or forsake us, and He is a faithful God.

If this time allows us to refocus our gaze from the busyness of the world around us towards our loving Father, then that's great.

He calls us to pray for our world, for our community, our church and ourselves.

The THY KINGDOM COME EVENT runs from 21 May to 31 May and this is a global event which calls on us to pray during these 11 days for

- A deepening of our our relationships with Christ
- Pray for 5 friends or family to come to faith in Jesus
- Pray for the empowerment of the Spirit that we would be effective in our witness

You can be a part of this. Check out www.thykingdomcome.global

From a personal point of view I know I have been blessed by this enforced time – even though I am missing my lunches and coffee times with friends, and most of all the hugs and cuddles with my family – but I have been greatly encouraged by people's prayers, thoughtfulness and contact, and in sharing in prayer with others.

We can and should pray alone, but there is something very powerful in praying together, knowing if we do so in God's will, He is right there with us!

Thanks. Irene

WORSHIP MATTERS

I wonder if you have ever thought how the minister chooses which Bible passages to use on each particular Sunday?

Some will choose to follow through a particular book in the Bible, or follow a series, for example, on Parables of Jesus, or the patriarchs in the Old Testament. Many of us, myself included, follow the Lectionary.

This is an ordered system of selected Bible readings appointed for use in worship on specific occasions in the church year. The year begins in Advent. It is arranged in a three year cycle: Year A, our current year, is the year of Matthew; Year B, the year of Mark, and Year C, the year of Luke. The Gospel of John is read each year especially around Christmas, Lent, Easter, and also in the year of Mark, whose gospel is shorter than the others. The sequence of gospel readings is meant to lead us to a deeper knowledge of Christ and a stronger faith in him.

Along with the gospel, there is rich provision of Old Testament material, chosen to illuminate the gospel and to include important narratives of faith. Then Acts and the Epistles highlight not only apostolic authority, but also importantly, Christian experience of, and reflection on, the grace of God in Christ.

Much of the material is offered in semi-continuous form, (which means we work through a book in order, but not always reading every paragraph) which allows a larger variety of passages of the Bible to be read. Doing this helps to increase our bible knowledge, and leads followers of Jesus through his birth, baptism, ministry, death and resurrection during the Church year.

I hope you enjoy the journey as we work through the Lectionary together.

Sonia

24th Paisley Company Boys' Brigade

We are already a few weeks into lockdown and all adjusting to the “new normal”. The Company are not allowed to meet physically but the work of the BB has continued. The BB introduced #BBatHOME at a very early stage and week by week new activities are being added for each age group. It is not restricted to BB Members or even to young folk so if you are looking for ideas the latest Activity Packs can be found at <https://boys-brigade.org.uk/bbathome/activity-packs>. The staff are also meeting virtually this week to consider what additional activities we could plan in order to maintain contact and engagement with the boys.

One of the #BBatHOME activities was one which I am sure we could all try. The idea was to plan out a Prayer Week as follows:-

Monday – My World

Tuesday – My Country

Wednesday – My Community

Thursday _ My friends and family

Friday - Myself

Saturday – What I am thankful for

Sunday – A big prayer, bring all of the above together.

We currently have 7 boys working on their Queen's Badge. 6 of them are pictured above receiving their President's Certificates previously. It says something about the calibre of these young men that one of their first thoughts when lockdown started was to contact me to ask if any volunteers were needed to run errands or help out at the Church or local community.



At the time of last Marksman we were looking forward to a number of exciting activities, not least our Display and a special Lego Night. Both are now postponed along with so many other activities. Boys and staff alike were particularly looking forward to the Lego Night. We will hopefully re-arrange that at some point but I was reminded of a previous night at the Juniors when we set the boys our own Lego challenge (pictured). They were to build a Lego Church. They set off with great gusto building walls, pews and ensuring there were a few crosses and even a Bible in one case. After about 30 minutes of building they were shown “one I made earlier”. It was basically just 3 Lego Minifigures. No walls or pews. No building at all. The simple object lesson being – The Church is people not a building. In the same way the BB is the Boys not where or even if we meet. It is good to be reminded of that in these uncertain times.



Christian Aid Week 10th – 16th May 2020



Love never fails.

Coronavirus affects us all.

But love unites us.

As this virus spreads across the world, love rises up in response. You've already shown incredible kindness to your neighbours. Now is the time to reach out to your neighbours both near and far.

Your love protects. From storms, from drought, and now from coronavirus. Your love protects our global neighbours battling the spread of illness. Your love protects. With soap, clean water and medical supplies.

By supporting Christian Aid Week, you can reach out and protect more of your neighbours today.

Last year Christian Aid week in the UK raised £8million. 57,000 people were involved in fundraising activities or door step collections.

This year Christian Aid week will look very different.

The team at Christian Aid aim to still build a community this Christian Aid Week and have a schedule of virtual events all taking place live from their Facebook page.

Join in with virtual prayer and reflection:

Sunday 10 May, 1.00pm: Live-streamed Christian Aid Week service with Dr Rowan Williams.

Monday 11 - Saturday 16 May, 11am: Live daily reflections from their staff and partners overseas.

Or on **Saturday 2 May at 7.30pm** : Join *Quiztian Aid*, the exciting family friendly quiz for Christian Aid Week! Hosted by Rev. *Kate Bottley* and celebrity guests, live on Facebook

Please remember you can still support Christian Aid from home by phone or via the website.

Full details on Christian Aid website or facebook page

<https://www.christianaid.org.uk/appeals/key-appeals/christian-aid-week>

Thy Kingdom Come 21st to 31st May 2020



Thy Kingdom Come is a global prayer movement that invites Christians around the world to pray from Ascension to Pentecost for more people to come to know Jesus. Since its start in May 2016, God has grown Thy Kingdom Come from a dream of possibility into a movement. In 2019 Christians from 172 countries took part in praying 'Come Holy Spirit', so that friends and family, neighbours and colleagues might come to faith in Jesus Christ. This praying together has been across our diversity and differences as every person, household and church are encouraged to pray in their own way.

During the 11 days of Thy Kingdom Come, it is hoped that everyone who takes part will:

- *Deepen their own relationship with Jesus Christ*
- *Pray for 5 friends or family to come to faith in Jesus*
- *Pray for the empowerment of the Spirit that we would be effective in our witness.*

Care for those you are praying for, pray for those you are caring for.

During these difficult and trying times, we believe that now more than ever, presents an incredible opportunity for the Church worldwide, to unite in prayer so that our family, friends and neighbours will come to know the love and peace of Jesus Christ for themselves. One of our Key themes for Thy Kingdom Come is prayer and care. As we are praying for those we love to come to know the hope and love of Christ we consider how we can show God's love towards them, by caring for them.

Many Christians may already be caring for people during this time but not yet praying for them. Would you commit to praying for them during this time?

The weekly prayer meeting will be joining in with this initiative – the prayer update includes some pointers. For more information, and for a prayer journal with daily reflections and readings go to www.thykingdomcome.global or speak to Sonia or Irene.

Renfrewshire Foodbank

During this time the Foodbank is continuing to operate, and issuing more parcels than ever.

Last week I was able to take some donations to them at their main base in Westway Park in Renfrew. If anyone would like to make a donation of food to them, please let me know and I will collect it from you, and deliver it to them when I have enough to make it worthwhile making a trip over.

Key food items that they require at present are diluting juice, tinned potatoes, tinned tomatoes, tinned meat and fish, jam and soap.

“By this kind of work we must remember the weak, remembering the words the Lord Jesus himself said: ‘It is more blessed to give than to receive.’ ”Acts 20:35

Thank you for continuing to think of others at this time.

Sonia

Ralston Newsagents

The newsagent on Penilee Road have advised that they are open as normal during the current Coronavirus crisis and that if you are in the at risk group they will drop off essential items to your door. You can call them on 0141 880 9789 to place an order. They can take card payments over the phone and leave a bag or box at your door. If you have a family member or neighbour that requires their help please pass this information on.

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From the Finance Team

Dear Friends,

It is now several weeks since we have been unable to worship together because of the COVID-19 pandemic. During this time, I am sure we have all missed seeing the regular faces and communal worship every Sunday morning.

Unfortunately, it is not only the friendships and faces which will be missing during the foreseeable future. It is likely that the income of St Marks will drop significantly during the foreseeable future. This is due to the fact that people will not be able to donate regularly during the forthcoming weeks. Approximately half of our regular donors who are eligible for gift aid contributions pay by standing order. The rest give via the use of donation envelopes, the open plate and cheque. Obviously, we are keen not to lose these donations as the future of St Marks will depend on our ability to pay our bills into the future. In addition, our income from the hall rentals and other fundraising activities such as the very successful baking sales and last year's plant sale are likely to be significantly impacted by this pandemic. Unfortunately, this latest challenge comes after a year where we spent heavily on our Manse to allow for the appointment of Sonia as our Minister. Everyone contributed magnificently during this effort.

We have been proactive in trying to reduce our expenses and are hoping to access the Governments furlough scheme, although we have told our employees that we shall guarantee them their full salary even although this will mean some cost to St Marks financially. It is the right thing to do! We have also been looking at other sources of funding e.g. Grants etc during this time.

To that end I wish to suggest ways you can contribute to St Marks during this time.

1 Standing orders: Whilst many of our members already give regularly by standing order, there may an opportunity to change your usual method of giving by completing a standing order form. If you wish to do this please contact Gordon Forrest, Sandy Fergusson or Julie in the office. (Numbers at the end of this letter).

2 Internet banking: Members who have access to this form of banking can complete the appropriate forms online to allow this method of payment. Details of the church bank account can be obtained from Gordon, Sandy or Julie.

3 Freewill Offering Envelopes: If you already give by this method, can I ask you to fill your envelopes in each week and we shall collect the completed envelopes when social distancing rules are relaxed in future weeks/months.

4 One off Gifts: Last year we asked for one off gifts for the work of the Church worker which was very successful. Despite Peter not being able to meet with our young ones in person each week. However, he continues to have weekly TRASH and other meetings with our young ones via zoom and other online activities. You may also have viewed the Easter week services online which he was heavily involved with. (If not, they were excellent and can still be viewed on the Church website www.stmarksoldhall.org.uk).

It may be that we shall not be spending as much during our enforced homestays so perhaps we could think of giving some of our “savings” from this period to St Marks.

If you wish to make any one-off donations to his work please do so by any of the above methods or posting a cheque to the Church. Please advise Julie if you wish your donation to be used towards Peter.

5 Online Shopping Please remember if you are doing online shopping during our enforced homestays to use the easyfundraising (www.easyfundraising.org.uk) or smile. amazon (www.smile.amazon.co.uk) as portals to all your on-line shopping. This has raised almost £2000 for St Marks over the past three years we have been using these sites.

I would also ask that every member reviews their regular giving on a regular basis.

You have all supported St Marks with great heart over the past years and I would hope that we can continue to weather this major challenge to our finances at this current.

The Finance Team

Give to St Mark's whilst you shop online

Many of us are shopping more online during the current Coronavirus outbreak.

Did you know that if you shop on smile.amazon.co.uk rather than the normal Amazon website, Amazon will donate a portion of what you spend to your chosen charity. You can choose to nominate St Mark's Church of Scotland, Oldhall, Paisley as your chosen charity.

Simply go to smile.amazon.co.uk on your computer or mobile device. And select St Mark's Church of Scotland, Oldhall, Paisley, as your charitable organisation, we will then receive donations from eligible purchases when you are shopping. Amazon will remember your selection, and then every eligible purchase you make at smile.amazon.co.uk will result in a donation to the church. All you then need do is to remember after that to shop at [Smile.amazon.co.uk](https://smile.amazon.co.uk) instead of [Amazon.co.uk](https://amazon.co.uk).

Millions of products on AmazonSmile are eligible for donations to charities by Amazon. You will see eligible products marked "Eligible for smile.amazon.co.uk donation" on their product detail pages. AmazonSmile will occasionally contact you about donation amounts disbursed to your chosen charity or about the programme.

1st East Rainbow Unit - Wednesday

This has been an unusual and challenging time for the Rainbows and leaders but we have found unusual ways to keep the unit going and the girls are working their way through the rainbow interest badge book .
So far we have awarded 11 interest badges

Daisy - Animal
Beth, Phoebe & Jessica - Nature
Freya, Ruyi & Lauren - Family Tree
Phoebe & Sophie - Drawing
Ruyi & Jessie- Helper

We have awarded 17 skill builders to

Innovate

Sophie, Daisy , Joanna, Jessie & Phoebe

Reflect

Beth, Daisy, Freya , Harper - Rose, Jessica, Jessie, Joanna, Lauren,
Lilah, Phoebe, Ruyi & Sophie W

Award badges 4

Express Myself Award badges to

Phoebe & Sophie

Take action award badges to

Ruyi and Lauren

On Wednesday 6th May we are having our first zoom meeting where I will also be having a promise ceremony for
Beth, Jessie, Lilah, Freya and Quinn.

Photos can be seen on Twitter @1stEastRainbowz

Purple , Red, Blue and Orange

39thA Paisley Brownies – May 2020



Wednesday nights are usually busy for the Brownies but it is strange times we find ourselves in. As with other groups, we have been unable to meet since early in March.



The Brownies have been sent some fun challenges that they can “opt” into taking part in if they want. Many of the Brownies have been showing their support of others by making and displaying colourful rainbows and positive messages. Daisy went a step further and made cards and wrote notes that she delivered to some elderly neighbours to brighten up their day.



Some of the Brownies have been working on Interest Badges and Darcy and Holly have completed the Baking Badge. Another 3 Brownies have done parts of the Baking badge and one girl has completed part of the Performing Badge.



Renfrewshire Girlguiding put together a video of “thank you” messages to the NHS and Ellie, Helena, Millie and Charlotte shared their contribution with us.

The latest fun activity that has been sent to the Brownies is a Disney Quiz. The first round is complete and the winner was Darcy – well done to her!!!

We had lots of plans including a swimming outing, a final meeting in front of parents and a Pack Holiday in May. Unfortunately, it looks like these events will not take place. We hope that all the girls can get back together when we can and celebrate all the work that the Brownies have achieved.

Christine Hair [Brown Owl]

Christmas 2020

I know that you are thinking “jings this winter is not even over yet”, however we are called upon to spread the Good News and there surely can be no better news than proclaiming the birth of our Saviour. Having been inspired by other parishes who have spread the Christmas message in their communities in a novel way, our Ladies Bible study group decided to do likewise.

We are going to distribute ANGELS, (yes little knitted messengers of GOD), around our parish in the run up to next Christmas. These angels will be a gift to whoever finds them. They will carry a Christmas message and an invitation to join us in a special Christmas family service. If nothing else, many homes will have a symbol of Christmas on their tree, a little gift from our church, a little reminder of the true meaning of the season. We can but try to spread God's love, it is what all of us are called to do.

As you know we have a large parish, so we are appealing to any knitters who would like to help with this initiative, the pattern is easy; contact the office for it to be emailed to you.

Our aim is to knit and distribute as many as possible. If you cannot knit maybe you can donate some white wool, sew on the ribbon and message, or be one of the volunteers who hang them randomly around the parish – this is something everyone can be part of.

Thank you in advance for assisting us share the Christmas story, your help is greatly appreciated. We go forward in faith, trusting God to guide us in all our endeavours.

Karen Marshall



During this challenging period, Life and Work is committed to helping keep our Christian community connected and so we have made the May 2020 issue available on our website. This can be accessed by clicking [here](https://www.lifeandwork.org/resources/free-download-may-2020) or visiting <https://www.lifeandwork.org/resources/free-download-may-2020>.

Highlights from this issue includes:

- FEEDING THE HUNGRY: Reflection on foodbanks and impact of Covid-19
- 'GOD HAS NOT FINISHED WITH SCOTLAND': The Moderator-Designate, the Rev Dr Martin Fair
- ASSEMBLY CANCELLATION: Church's business meeting cancelled for first time in over 300 years
- WAR'S END: The role of churches in peacebuilding across Europe on the 75th anniversary of VE Day

Prayer diary May 2020

Friday 1 May

At the start of a new month, and continued lockdown, take time to think of the many ways God has been with you throughout April. Give thanks for His many blessings towards us, despite the circumstances we are in.

Pray too, for ways to help our church financially during this pandemic.

Saturday 2 May

Pray for those working from home during the week, that they can switch off and find ways to relax.

For NHS workers, and other services who need to work during the weekend, continue to bring them to God in prayer.

Sunday 3 May

We pray today for Sonia as she leads our service. Be with her in her preparation and bless the message she brings today.

Monday 4 May

Many of us wonder what we can do to help if we are stuck indoors. Why not try praying for your friends, or your neighbours on each side of you. Ask God to be with them, care for and protect them.

Tuesday 5 May

Take time to look at news from other countries and bring their needs to God. Many are struggling in poverty and hunger, as well as coping with the virus. Africa faces huge issues with high levels of poverty, weak health systems and crowded urban areas. Pray that God would halt the spread of the virus here.

Wednesday 6 May

Zoom prayer group meets again at 7:00. It has been very encouraging to have more people join us online, as well as those who are still praying with us at home but can't get on Zoom. If you wish to join in, contact me on irene.pollock03@gmail.com

Thursday 7 May

We pray for families in our congregation who have been bereaved in the last month. We remember the families of Anna Wylie, Margaret Wilson, Marjorie Blakesley, Anna McKell and Allan Carswell. We ask God to comfort them in their loss.

Friday 8 May.

At the end of another week, pray for families especially, coping with home schooling, and possibly working from home at the same time. Give them strength, stamina and patience, Lord.

Saturday 9 May

Take time to stop 🖐️ and look around at the wonders God has given us to enjoy the beauty of creation. Many of us have been enjoying gardens. Give thanks if you have one you have been able to get out in. Then think of those who don't have that blessing. Look for ways to be thankful ☐

Sunday 10 May

This week we remember Sonia, and other ministers around the country who are making full use of technology to bring the good news. Thank God that we can still meet together, even if not in our building.

Monday 11 May

Again, let us turn our minds to those in other parts of the world, and pray for those in South Sudan – a country with 11 million people and 4 ventilators. Pray for the vulnerable refugee camps where there is little to no health care available.

Tuesday 12 May

Today we think of those members of our congregation who have been housebound for a long time, prior to this pandemic. For them things are even more difficult, as they can't have visitors. Be with them at this time, and remind them they are not alone for You are with them.

Wednesday 13 May

Our youngsters have been off school for weeks now, and we ask that you will help them adjust to new patterns of living, relieve boredom and help them find ways to be creative and fulfilled.

Prayer group continues on Zoom, and at home.

Thursday 14 May

We pray for our young children and teenagers, for the leaders of Evolution and Trash, and for Peter and others involved in youth work . During this time help them as they look for ways to keep in touch. We pray that You will refresh the leaders in this lockdown period, and draw them closer to You.

Friday 15 May

International Day of Families. Pray for families throughout the world, as many will be suffering the loss of loved ones due to Covooid 19. For families in refugee camps, for families living in poverty, for families who are troubled. Pray too, for Christian families, as they seek to bring their children up to follow the Lord. Help us to be families who show love in our homes, and set an example of how we should live for You.

Saturday 16 May

International day of light. In a world of darkness, may we be used by You to bring Your light to the folk we come into contact with.

We thank You that You are the Light of the World.

Sunday 17 May

As Sonia leads us this morning, pray that we will have open ears and hearts to what God is saying to us, and that we are able to put in to action what You challenge us to do.

Monday 18 May

Think of the street you live in and pray for those who live there too. Some will be known to you, others maybe not. Ask God to bless them and open their eyes to His Word.

Pray that people will continue to follow guidance on social distancing, especially as we enter yet another week of lockdown.

Tuesday 19 May

Pray for those who are training for the ministry. Many will be uncertain about what comes next with University exams/assessments and conferences cancelled, summer placements due to start, and others coming to the end of their Probation period. They will be unable to visit parishes or towns where they may feel a calling. May they know God is still in control.

Wednesday 20 May

A while ago, Karen Marshall suggested we stop and say the Lord's Prayer at 7:30, wherever we were. Now there are folk all over the world that she has contact with through her work, as well as many of us in St Marks, stopping and saying it out loud in our homes. You can be a part of that too! And tomorrow sees the start of Thy Kingdom Come – what better time to start!

Prayer Group meets tonight on Zoom, and at home.

Thursday 21 May

Ascension Day.

This is the start of **THY KINGDOM COME** Prayer event which runs from today till 31 May.

People throughout the world have signed up to pray together, that God's Spirit would come and fill our hearts. You can find out information about this on www.thykingdomcome.global website.

Thy Kingdom Come is a global prayer movement that invites Christians around the world to pray from Ascension to Pentecost for more people to come to know Jesus.

Since its start in May 2016, just three and a half years ago, God has grown Thy Kingdom Come from a dream of possibility into a movement. In 2019 Christians from 172 countries took part in praying 'Come Holy Spirit', so that friends and family, neighbours and colleagues might come to faith in Jesus Christ.

During the 11 days of Thy Kingdom Come, it is hoped that everyone who takes part will:

Deepen their own relationship with Jesus Christ

Pray for 5 friends or family to come to faith in Jesus

Pray for the empowerment of the Spirit that we would be effective in our witness

We pray for missionaries throughout the U.K. and the wider world who are working with people from different cultures to our own. On this World Day for Cultural Diversity for Dialogue and Development help them get alongside people from different backgrounds and give them knowledge, skills and understanding as they share Your message.

Friday 22 May

Again we bring our Session Clerk, Worship Team, Elders and others who work for St Marks. Help them draw close to You, and bless them as they serve here.

Remember Thy Kingdom Come event, where we are asked to pray especially for other people that God's Spirit would speak to them and they would turn to Him.

Saturday 23May

Give thanks for the many blessings we have been given. Take time to stop and think about all the good things you have in your life.

Hopefully many of you will be joining in the Thy Kingdom Come event, and are continuing to prayer for friends to come to know Jesus.

Sunday 24 May

We give thanks that we still have freedom to worship in this country, despite the lockdown, and we thank you for creativity which allows us ways of doing this. We would pray for worshippers in other countries today who have to meet in secret. Give them courage to stand for You. Help us support them in prayer.

Thank you for Sonia's ministry and her faithfulness to you. Bless her in all she seeks to do for You, and lead and guide her here in St Marks.

Monday 25 May

We pray Lord, for our Governments that they make wise decisions for us all, keeping people safe but allowing some life back into the country. Guide them as they work out the plans for easing restrictions.

Tuesday 26 May

We pray for all those in care homes, residential homes, hospices and for the homeless. Especially for those who have no where to stay during this pandemic

Wednesday 27 May

Prayer group meets again. Assuming we are still in lockdown at this time, it will be on Zoom. Details can be had from Irene nearer the time.

Why not join us, either on line or at home?

Thursday 28 May

International Day of Peacekeepers. We pray for all those in War situations who work to keep peace. Give them an awareness of Your presence and fill them with courage, wisdom and skills to do their job well.

Friday 29 May

Try being silent – not easy for us sometimes. Pray silently for five minutes and then make a note of anything you feel God is saying to you, through thoughts and feelings that come to you.

Think about the wonder of this coming Sunday, Pentecost.

Saturday 30 May

We pray for farmers as harvest time approaches, for difficulty in getting enough staff to pick the crops now foreign seasonal workers can't come here.

Sunday 31 May

Pentecost! Thank you Lord for sending Your Holy Spirit to be with us, and to live in us. By sharing and showing us Your love through the Spirit, help us, in turn, show and share that love with others.

Waken us up to Your calling, and help us live lives worthy of You.

Thank you for the Thy Kingdom Come event which finishes today. We ask that people who have been praying throughout this time, continue to prayer for others

Office Hours

Tue, Wed & Fri 11:15am – 2:45pm