



Balshagray Victoria Park
Church of Scotland

The Herald

February 2021

From our locum, Rev Derek Peat

I'm sure that on the 20th January all of you will have, to some extent, watched the Inauguration Ceremony from the Capitol in Washington to see Joe Biden take the oath required to become the 46th President of the United States. Having looked into this a little I found that there is a little phrase added on to what is said that isn't stated in the oath itself, that phrase being 'So help me God'.

So how has this got there? It seems that no-one knows, and there is a body of opinion that thinks that it began with George Washington, although that cannot be proved. What is known is that every President since FD Roosevelt has made the statement.

The Inaugural Oath is what's known as a Corporate Oath, and the person taking it is in physical contact with an object, and George Washington began the practice of having his left hand on a Bible. President Biden used a family bible that was five inches thick. Not something that I could have in my pocket when on pastoral visits! It's also been noted that Washington began a tradition of kissing the Bible after the oath, and many did so until it was replaced by Dwight Eisenhower who said a prayer instead.

It's interesting that in the land of the free, where there is a clear separation between church and state, reverence for scripture and reverence for God seem so prevalent. There also seems, at each Inauguration, to be a number of prayers said by clergy of different denominations, with Billy Graham being called upon by six different Presidents. That's quite a following!

So what does this mean for us? We could ask if many of those who have occupied the position have really considered their faith once

they were in the Oval Office, but it does invite us to think about how much we call upon the Lord not just for the big challenges in life but in the small things that happen each day. We know that the Lord desires us to live each day in relationship with him, not just in reading scripture but in our prayer lives. If we do that then we know that whatever befalls us we have the strength of the Holy Spirit to guide our thinking and protect us. At the moment we are spending each Sunday working our way through the Songs of Ascents – psalms sung by the Hebrew Pilgrims when they travelled in Jerusalem three times each year - and these can help us focus our thinking too. Psalm 120 sees the psalmist state 'I call on the Lord in my distress, and he answers me' In Psalm 121 we read 'I lift my eyes to the hills – where does my help come from? My help comes from the Lord, the maker of heaven and earth.' I would encourage you to take a look at these psalms from 120-134 as there is a lot there that can help us on our journey through life, and in these difficult and strange times we surely need this strength to keep us going. No matter what method you are using to follow our worship just now I hope these psalms are of help to you whatever situation you are in.

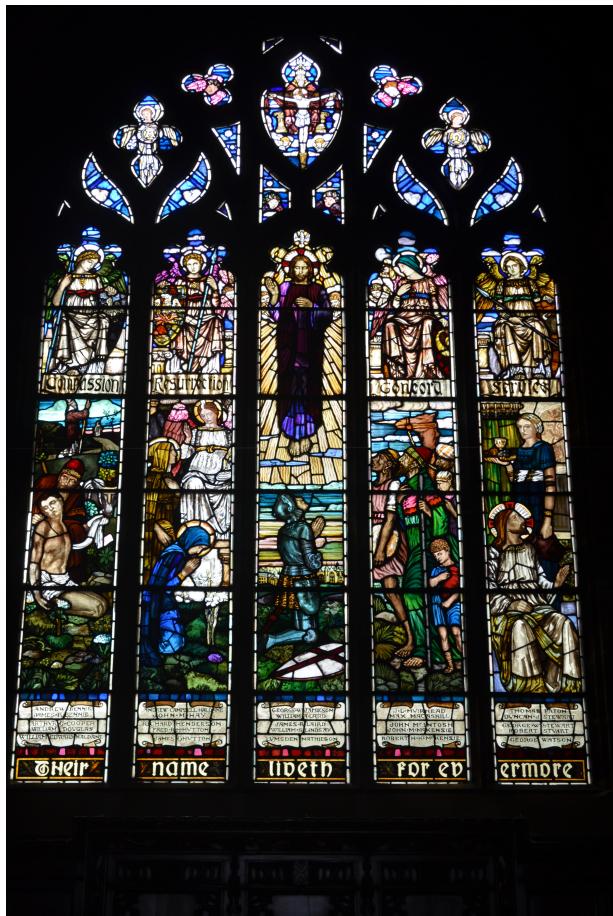
Turning back to American politics for a moment, I think that it is vital that we pray for this new President, and indeed for leaders across our world, that each one is blessed with wisdom and a heart that desires peace amongst nations. Again, in our daily lives we can remember them in our devotional times knowing that we have a God who hears our prayers. So whilst you may be stuck at home for much of the time just now, this gives us the opportunity to get our Bibles out, to learn what God is saying to us, and to nurture our relationship with him in our prayer time. Prayer can make a difference, and world leaders need our prayers, just as we can benefit from praying for each other too.

I will finish with a verse from another psalm, number four: 'Know that the Lord has set apart the godly for himself; the Lord will hear when I call to him.' Whether the believer is a President of America or someone seemingly lacking influence in our world, be sure of one thing - that the Lord hears our prayers, and they make a difference!

With every blessing to you,

Derek

The War Memorial Window



On Sunday 6th February 1921 the first stained glass window in what was then Balshagray Parish Church was unveiled and dedicated by the Rev Alex McLean the minister of Paisley Abbey who was also one of His Majesty's Chaplains in Scotland. The Rev Alex Stevenson minister of Balshagray assisted. It is the war memorial window sited in the chancel and honouring and naming

the twenty-five members of the congregation who fell in the First World War. There are five themes to this window: Compassion (the Good Samaritan), Resurrection (the women at Christ's tomb), Sacrifice (the risen Christ), Concord (the gathering of nations) and Service (Martha serving Christ).

Some research for the World War One Centenary has discovered information on some of these men, a railway clerk, an apprentice draper, an accountant, an engineer, a tea merchant, a foreman. They lived locally like George Jamieson in Crow Road, James Love in Marlborough Avenue, Lumsden Mathieson in Woodcroft Avenue. There are several brothers named Andrew and William Haldane, Fred and John Hutton and James and Andrew Bennie. Jimmy Laird was the 101st BB Lieutenant and John Traill a former BB boy. Those researched ranged from 20 to 48 years old. In truth we have some information on less than half the names. The remainder are remembered only in individual family history. In 1921 most if not all would be known by the congregation a son, a brother, a husband, a neighbour, a friend or a school or BB pal.

What is also unknown is the name of the artist who designed the War Memorial Window. The Rev. Jeff Hopewell has just published a book about stained glass artist Douglas Hamilton who designed the Sloan Memorial Window in the south transept. Douglas Hamilton worked for the Stephen Adam studio and Rev. Hopewell wondered if the War Memorial Window was also the work of this studio. A photograph was forwarded to him and he advised that this was almost certainly the work of Alexander Walker (1868-1929), a stained glass artist who produced work for several studios including the Stephen Adam Studio and in particular designed a number of War Memorial windows in Dumfries and Galloway, Rothesay, Roseneath, Glasgow and Bishopbriggs. Other examples of his work can also be found in St Magnus Cathedral in Orkney and Hexham Abbey.

Pamela Joss

The Persecuted Church

As we move forward into yet another New Year, the sad reality is that for many hundreds of thousands of Christians throughout the world, the outlook for 2021 remains bleak and uncertain. Christians continue to be the most persecuted religious group in the world, and the difficulties which they face are unfortunately being exacerbated by the effects of the Coronavirus pandemic. Despite laws supporting and protecting the right to 'freedom of religion and belief', sadly, in many countries, Christians continue to be deprived of true religious freedom.

Christians are still being subjected to rising religious intolerance, imprisonment, torture, plus many different forms of harassment, including the lack of basic human rights. Throughout 2020, Christians were still being persecuted by many governments such as North Korea, Somalia, The Maldives, Eritrea, Kazakhstan, China, and Iran, to name but a few. In addition, radical or extreme Muslim and Jihadi organisations such as al-Shabab, al-Qaeda, Boko Haram and Islamic State (West Africa) were all very active, and many attacks were indiscriminate, killing not only Christian men, women and children, but also Muslims and those of no particular faith. Radical Hindu extremists in India, seem to enjoy a degree of impunity as they seek to 'cleanse' their country of Christians and Muslims. In 2020 there was a substantial increase in the number of reported attacks on individuals and properties. In some countries, but mainly in Africa, young Christian women continue to be abducted and taken as 'sex slaves' or hostages to be sold to the highest bidder or even forced into marriage.

Sadly, this 'New Year' will doubtless bring fresh challenges, threats, acts of violence and destruction, which will seriously impact on the lives of our Christian brothers and sisters.

Nigeria – on Christmas Eve in two States located in the North Eastern part of this country, at least 24 people were killed and over 20 abducted; a church was set ablaze and a pastor kidnapped by jihadi militants as a "Christmas present" to the Christian community. Shops and homes were also destroyed.

Cameroon – at least 13 people lost their lives in a suicide bomb attack on a Christian village in the far north of this African country. Sadly, five of the victims were young children and a further six children were "gravely injured". It is believed the attack was perpetrated by militants belonging to Boko Haram.

Kenya – in mid-January, al-Shabaab jihadists armed with assault rifles, held up a commuter bus looking for Christians. The attack took place near the border with Somalia, and all the passengers were interrogated. No Christians were on board, but the militants robbed the passengers of money and valuables. The driver was warned not to carry Christians on his bus. The attackers escaped by crossing the border back into Somalia.

India – in its annual report published on 14th January, the Evangelical Fellowship of India (EFI) recorded 327 instances of discrimination and targeted violence against Christians, including five murders and the destruction of at least six churches, and a further 26 incidents of social boycotting. Many of the attacks on Christians and their properties were carried out in villages located in mainly rural areas of several States. Uttar Pradesh is the region where Christians are targeted most and where the 'anti-conversion' law is being rigidly enforced.

Central Asia – in the post-Soviet era, the various states which make up the Central Asian Republics, oppress Christians in a variety of different ways. Evangelism is officially prohibited by law and it is illegal to spread your faith. Churches require to be registered with the authorities, but this can be difficult if they do not meet the requirements, such as number of members. It is also quite normal for full personal details of members to be submitted to the authorities. Churches who have registered, quite often have difficulty in getting permission to extend their buildings. The use of private homes for worship is prohibited.

"Blessed is he who has regard for the weak; the Lord will deliver him in times of trouble." Psalm 41 v 1 (NIV)

'CONTINUE TO PRAY FOR THE SUFFERING CHURCH'

Robert Belmore

Prayer Points

It's never too late for God

'I have seen what they do, but I will heal them anyway!' Isaiah 57:18

Are you asking, 'Is it too late for God to do something with me?' It's never too late for God! In Scripture we read about broken people God raised up in marvellous ways. He used Moses, a murderer, to deliver the Hebrew slaves. He used Jacob, a liar and a trickster, to fulfil His promise to Abraham. He even included Rahab, a harlot, in the messianic family line. And if God redeemed them, He can redeem you too. Brokenness should never keep you bound. Rather, it should release you into a life of freedom. A truly broken person understands the reality of John 15:5, where Jesus said, 'Apart from me you can do nothing' (NLT). A broken person who has learned to depend on God is a force to be reckoned with. When you're looking at a past strewn with failures, it's difficult to see a bright future, just as it's difficult to drive when you're looking in the rear-view mirror. You need to glance in your rear-view mirror occasionally, but if you keep focusing on it you'll end up hurting yourself and others. That's why the windscreen is so much bigger than the rear-view mirror – it shows you where you're heading instead of where you've been! When you turn to God He will forgive you, restore you, and use you for His purposes. He said, 'I have seen what they do, but I will heal them anyway! I will lead them. I will comfort those who mourn, bringing words of praise to their lips' (Isaiah 57:18-19 NLT). The word for today is – it's never too late for God!

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*Christine Hay
Prayer Secretary*

BVP Dining with Friends - Afternoon Tea & Chat

Join us for a catch-up and chat on Zoom with a cup of tea and cake, if not dieting after the festive season, at **3pm, Saturday 13th February**. If you are able to join us, please get in touch with David Hay to get the link.

BVP Midweek Meeting

We are planning to restart our midweek meeting on **Wednesday 3rd February**, and thereafter the 1st and 3rd Wednesday of every month. We'll meet at 7.30pm on Zoom and the meeting will last for max 40 minutes. It will begin with some catching up, then a short bible reading/thought, then a time of prayer for each other, the church and beyond. Everyone is welcome to 'come along'! If you're interested please contact Ranald McTaggart.

Sunday Prayer by Email

While the churches are not yet back to being allowed to have normal numbers attending, each Saturday I am sending round a prayer (using Bcc) to people who have requested it. On Sunday evening at 9pm we all say the prayer aloud together in our own homes, thus connecting with God and each other. At present there are 38 households using it.

If you are not already doing this but would like to join in, please could you send me your email address and then I'll add you to the list? Thanks very much.

Fiona Hay

Balshagray Victoria Park Church 2021 Budget

Income	Budget	Actual 2020
FWO	10000	10585
Ordinary Collection	2000	2327
Gift Aid Direct	30000	29830
Manse Rental	14500	12154
Tax Recovered	8400	15239
Other Offerings/Donations	3000	3320
Hall Rental	2000	2732
Income from General Trustees	<u>2000</u>	<u>1682</u>
TOTAL	71900	77869

Expenditure

Ministry & Mission	36799	45491
Prersbytery Dues	2911	3154
Locum/Pulpit Supply	7560	7782
Cleaning	2000	880
Fabric/Repairs	5000	3480
Heat/Light	7500	6426
Insurance	6000	5961
Stationary	750	710
Miscellaneous	<u>1500</u>	<u>1268</u>
TOTAL	70020	75152

*Campbell Joss
Treasurer*

Notes on Budget

1. The combination of lockdown, vacancy and lack of activity is producing a slightly surprising but welcome prediction of a surplus of around £2000 for 2020. The projected income for 2021 does not include any reference to either a Christmas Fayre or a Gift Appeal, either of which may be possible later in the year. The overall outlook is improved by the income from the manse and the special reduction in the Ministry and Mission contribution announced by the Church of Scotland for the coming year. The figures produced here make a number of assumptions which are listed below and are also subject to the comments printed here.
2. Although income from the congregation is down from 2019 this is unsurprising considering the amount of time during which the church has been closed. A similar figure has been included for 2021. The amount of 2020 income results in a much lower sum due to be received from tax on Gift Aid
3. Hall rental was badly hit last year and the budget figure is based on some return to hall lets in the second half of the year.
4. The manse rental is presently an important source of income. In addition, a saving of over £3000pa is made on not having to pay council tax. The assumption is that the manse tenancy will continue for the rest of the year.
5. During 2020 BVP was liable for the locum costs for the whole period despite the lockdown preventing normal work. It is assumed that a locum will be in place throughout 2021.
6. Due to the current lockdown it is unclear at present when our cleaner can return to work or the extent of the work required. A reasonable estimate has therefore been made.
7. Fabric costs were low during 2020 and the figure in the budget may only cover routine repairs. Discussion on major repairs is likely soon but it should be noted that there will be some funds available from our reserves and added to a gift appeal could provide a substantial contribution towards any necessary costs.

Campbell Joss, Treasurer

Derek Robertson

Firstly I thank Ranald and the Kirk Session for extending to me the privilege of paying tribute to Derek's service as Session Clerk in BVP. Where to begin?

Christian holiness is being different in the way that Jesus is different. Over all the years we served together in BVP Derek, with Shirley at his side, radiated such holiness. It has been a great joy and privilege to serve Christ in the company of one of His most faithful servants; Derek Robertson.

One anecdote encapsulates Derek's wonderful gifts. A number of years ago, after morning worship two comments were made to me about the service. These comments came within minutes of each other and were offered with great love and affection. However, the comments were completely contradictory and left me not simply perplexed but questioning my calling as a minister! I was greatly troubled and lay awake at night trying to work things out. The following Sunday, before the service, Derek asked me how I was. At that point we could have talked about the weather, the church boiler, anything; but I decided to be honest and tell Derek about the issues that were eating me up. I had to be ready for him to be brutally honest with me, to wound in order to heal. Derek simply laughed, he immediately saw to the heart of the issue, made me laugh and then we talked about how to resolve the issue. Over the following years the fruit from that conversation was amazing.

This anecdote takes us into the core of true friendship and brotherly love. A true friend is someone you can share your anxieties with. Someone you know will tell you the truth, even though the truth may be painful. Someone who brings assurance, helps you to see the way forward and leads you into greater fruitfulness. During his time as Session Clerk how many conversations of this kind did Derek have with troubled folk? Too many to count.

Over the years we took the administration of the Kirk Session for granted because Derek fulfilled that side of the Session Clerk's work so ably and willingly; along with caring for his elder's district, leading worship and conducting funeral services.

Derek's wisdom and guidance extended beyond BVP. During his years as Session Clerk he served in Church's House in Bridgeton and then was part of a New Charge Commission which he ended up chairing for a number of years. I lost count of the problems we had to solve in congregations where I was interim-Moderator. One student who was with us confessed that the best part of his training came when I went on holiday and left him in charge! However I could only do that because I knew that Derek would provide all the support and encouragement required. The students, who spent time with us, all expressed their admiration for Derek and were deeply indebted to him for his unfailing kindness and support.

Being the kind of friend Derek has been to us all is not just about a guy with an amiable personality. Derek's friendship is the fruit of the Holy Spirit. It is fruit that has been cultivated by worship, reflection upon God's word, and prayerfulness. Cultivating these fruits engenders the approachability, patience, wisdom and kindness that gives Christian character its distinctiveness. Derek bears the fruit of the Spirit in abundance because he walks closely with Christ Jesus and Christ Jesus walks closely with him.

Campbell McKinnon

Book Review

'In the Shadow of the Shahs'

I recently read this book which I found a very interesting and fascinating story about a woman called Farifteh Robb who was brought up by her parents as a Muslim in Switzerland before returning to Iran during the final years of the Shah's reign. She gradually converted to Christianity and ultimately settled in Scotland. The book narrates her story of dealing with the obstacles of living as a Christian in a Muslim country and how she adapted to life in the UK. I would certainly recommend this well written autobiography of a remarkable life.

Campbell Joss

In the Shadow of the Shahs: Finding Unexpected Grace by Dr Farifteh V. Robb; Lion Books (2020) ISBN 9780745980881; softback; 256pp; £8.99

Compassion

Due to the restrictions there were considerable challenges in raising the funds we required, so I would like to start by thanking everyone for your kind donations. These, along with Church funds, helped to raise the £1008 needed to support Dinar, Jose and Martha throughout this year.

I am very happy to tell you that this month I received letters from two of the children. Firstly, in Indonesia, fourteen year old Dinar, whose letter is dated December 2020, has written to say that in her spare time she enjoys helping her parents to plant vegetables. She also likes to take part in sports and especially enjoys playing badminton. At the time of writing, Dinar was waiting on her school report and asks us to pray for her in her studies. Dinar also thanks us for the Christmas gift money she received.

The other letter, again dated December 2020, was from six year old Martha in Uganda. She is happy and healthy and thanks us for our prayers for her and her family. Martha's typical day starts at 6am when she washes her face then her dishes. Her favourite day of the week is Monday because that's the day she attends the project where she goes to school. In the evening, Martha fetches water from the borehole and again washes her dishes.

As soon as I receive any news on ten year old Jose in El Salvador I will of course let you know. Currently all projects there are closed but staff are continuing to visit families to provide support.

Once again, thank you very much for your support and interest in the children and their families. Please continue to pray for them all, that they may feel God's protection and love surrounding them.

Joan Canavan

Mrs Rena Leigh

Rena worshipped in BVP Church all her married life, sang in the soprano section of the choir and was a loyal member of the Guild, serving on the Committee for many years.

She was married to Harry for over 63 years, attaining a Diamond Wedding card from the Queen. They enjoyed many interests together, until Harry's sight and general health deteriorated, and Rena looked after him until he had to go into care and died in 2017. Rena and Harry were very proud of their daughters Susan and Shelagh and their grandchildren, now all adults.

Rena was a nurse by profession, and worked in infectious diseases units, obstetrics and as a health visitor, taking a keen interest in her patients and going the extra mile to help them.

Her interests included golf and yoga - she was the first yoga teacher in Glasgow - and she enjoyed going to St Andrews each year for advanced yoga training. She and Harry also loved driving to Helensburgh weekly to walk along the prom and have a meal there together.

Latterly Rena's health became poor and she was dependent on carers. In March 2019 she moved to a Care Home in Derby, nearer to her daughters, and died there on January 15th.

We give thanks for her long and fulfilled life, her many friendships and service to others, and ask God to give her family His peace and comfort in their loss.

Christine Hay (Church elder since 2008)

Thanks to all who provided material for this February issue.

Please send items for the March issue by

Sunday 21st February

to

edbvherald@gmail.com