



Balshagray Victoria Park  
Church of Scotland

# The Herald

**Lockdown 2020**

Welcome to this special Lockdown virtual edition of the BVP Herald.

Thanks to all who provided material for this issue, with special thanks to Campbell Joss for suggesting it and soliciting support and articles, and to Derek Robertson for distributing it, including printing and posting to those not on e-mail.

## **From our Interim Moderator**

Friends at BVP I hope you are all keeping well over these long and difficult days of virus concerns, self-isolation and social distancing. God made us as social creatures and it is a real struggle for many of us I know. I wanted to share with you some thoughts about our current situation that came from a comment I read in a news report this week: 'All we are doing right now is existing'. It came from the lips of a keen gardener, in relation to garden centres being shut and his being unable to do things in the garden he wanted to do while self-isolating in his house. He was clearly frustrated by it. The same day I read this verse from Ecclesiastes 7:2 'Sorrow is better than laughter, for by sadness of face the heart is made glad'. These words are from the Wisdom section of our bibles, but my initial thought was what a depressing message! Especially these days, when laughter (like gardening supplies and many other means of pleasure) can be in short supply. Think about it – on what planet is sorrow or sadness better than laughter? But sorrow can be better than laughter, as the verse implies, when the sorrow brings about greater gladness.

Think for a moment of a scenario where these are wise words: Imagine a bunch of kids playing in a garden with a fence around it, but immediately behind the fence is a 40 foot drop. (I know someone with

a garden like this – they need a very strong fence and the drop is into a rocky burn!). The kids are laughing and playing and having a ball. Then one little boy trips next to the fence and falls on it, and it breaks because the post is rotten. The fence collapses and the screws scratch him, quite badly. He is hurt and sad and the laughter and fun has all stopped! Sorrow has taken over where laughter was. BUT, no-one fell down the drop. No-one was seriously injured. The parent sees the fence is weak and bans the kids from the garden until it is rebuilt and secure (very secure!). Afterwards kids can play without risk, therefore with greater gladness. In this scenario, the sorrow of the child is much better than the laughter of the children, cos a greater good came out of it. More joy and more laughter – a better joy – came out of the sorrow.

Sorrow is better than laughter when the sorrow leads us to a better, more lasting, more real, more secure gladness. And God in his wisdom does that sometimes – brings us sorrow instead of laughter. Sometimes sorrow is better – but God's goal is a more durable, lasting, even eternal gladness found through Jesus Christ, often in the midst of sorrow. I hope that we can all use this time of difficulty to draw nearer to the source of the greatest, enduring, and highest joy and pleasure. God bless

*Jonathan*

## **"Where is God?"**

Dear Friends

I am sure many of you have asked this question in recent days. Well, over these days of the COVID-19 pandemic, I instead had a number of moments when I sat back and said, "Wow, God is really up to something" – whether that was a chance encounter with a very anxious friend, speaking and trying to calm them, unfortunately at the required two metres apart, or else hearing the responses from people sharing in the prayers sent out each Sunday. God has forced us to use our imagination. We haven't done everything we hoped to do over Eastertime, but we are still able to do a lot – just differently.

Yes, God is at work, doing a new thing in our midst. It's not what we expected, it's not what we would have chosen for ourselves, but it's

wondrous to behold. It has been so inspiring to see how all our members have come together to care for one another. It's really quite amazing that we've had to find a whole new way of operating in a very short time. Many online worship services have become available, either streaming or on YouTube, proving the church is not the building, it is the people of God!. I enjoy attending 7 or 8 services each week, but I really miss being in BVP..

Our national church is often accused of taking forever to make decisions but in this case the outreach activity was up and running within a short while after the suspension of all services. This is church at its best, working together with a can-do attitude. That's what we need in these anxious, uncertain days. This is what our normal church time has been preparing us for, our worship, our prayers, our celebrations of life and love, our patient building of community. Our acts of generosity and kindness are all about being the body of Christ, and now as the externals are forcibly stripped away from us we are discovering that we are still the body of Christ.

The coronavirus pandemic is a dangerous and disruptive force in the world today, but the Lord is not in a panic and has not been taken by surprise. He has a way for you and your church not only to survive this crisis but to minister encouragement and truth in a deeply troubled period of our history. God works in mysterious ways. By coming together through this cancellation of services, we may bring our church and parish family even closer together.

The words which the inspiring veteran Captain Tom Moore said at the end of his 100 laps of his garden were, "At the end of the day we shall all be okay. The sun will shine on you again and the clouds will go away." Due to Ann and I not being able to move house, most of our goods are still in boxes awaiting our removal, but I have a Cross which I can look at. This gives me confidence that this pestilence will be crushed, the risen Son is always with us and God will call us into a hopeful and promising future.

Love & Blessings to you all (also from Ann).

*Stuart*

## **From Our Session Clerk**

Hi Everyone

I hope that you are all safe and well and coping with social isolation. It seems like an age since we last met together and shared our news and stories. When we entered lockdown, I suppose many of us thought that it would be for a few weeks at most. But, now that it is increasing in length, any novelty has since passed. We are all missing our family, friends, and brothers and sisters in Christ. It is very easy to become discouraged but on reading through the letter to the Hebrews I discovered again these amazing verses - 'Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful. And let us consider how we may spur one another on towards love and good deeds, not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another and all the more as you see the Day approaching. (Hebrews 10:23-35) Amazing words! Friends, we may not be able to physically meet with each other just now, but we can encourage each other through phone calls, email and the joining together in the prayers that Stuart Bruce prepares for us to say at 9pm on Sunday evenings.

I pray that you would all be kept safe and well and that you would experience the peace and love of Christ in your lives at this time, and for all time.

*Derek*

## **The Guild**

Many thanks to those who purchased tickets for, or gave monetary donations for the Guild Coffee Morning (which obviously couldn't happen due to the coronavirus), and didn't wish for a refund!

We are missing our meetings, but keeping in touch by phone and email.

Because of the uncertainty of a date for re-starting, no new syllabus is being compiled meantime.

We remember our Guild motto: "Whose we are and Whom we serve", and know that God is in control.

*Christine Hay  
Guild Secretary*

## Finance

The impact of coronavirus is having a significant effect on all churches including our own. The sudden lockdown meant that some of the information I need to produce comparative figures is not available to me and the other aspect is that it is no longer possible to compare like with like. At this stage to the end of April, direct payments to the bank are £8370 compared to £10815 in the same period last year. A reduced figure was budgeted for this year due to some departures and this section of giving is so far unaffected by the closure. In fact several people have changed to direct giving already following the request sent out recently. Our loss of income is occurring as a result of the closure of the halls, which is around £600pm and the cancellation of Sunday services which was averaging around £1600 pm from the open plate and FWO. I would ask people who have not already done so to consider changing to direct giving (church account is s/c 80-07-55 a/c number 00575186). There is further information on this topic on the Church of Scotland website. One positive development for BVP was the letting of the manse being completed just before the lockdown. This will produce a net income of around £1300 pm.

Please also be aware that the Board have taken all reasonable steps to reduce expenditure where possible during these difficult times.

*Campbell Joss  
Treasurer*

## Christian Aid Week

This was due to take place from 10th to 16th May but of course all the planned events have been cancelled. BVP usually collect donations by way of some house to house collections and at the church. However the week is still going ahead online and you can make a donation there. Please take a visit to the website at [caid.org.uk](http://caid.org.uk) for more information. You will see that Christian Aid is involved with the effects of coronavirus around various parts of the world.

*Campbell Joss*

## Prayer Points

### Understanding your desires

*'Oh, taste and see that the LORD is good.'*

*Psalms 34:8 NKJV*

When the Bible tells you what you ought to do, you can take it in two different ways: the ought of obligation or the ought of opportunity. The first kind refers to your duty. You ought to pay your taxes, you ought to keep your dog on a lead, you ought to take your driver's test. The second kind gives you life. You ought to take a break, you ought to see the world, you ought to taste this cake. The 'oughts' of Jesus' message are mainly the oughts of opportunity. And as you become more aware of this, you may start feeling guilty because your desire for God doesn't run deep enough. The problem is, you can't make yourself desire God more by simply telling yourself you should. But He is so gracious and patient in wanting you to want Him, that He is willing to work with this kind of honesty. That's why His Word says, 'Oh, taste and see that the Lord is good.' The word 'taste' is an invitation from a confident chef. You don't have to commit to eating the whole enchilada; just try a taste and if you don't like it you can skip the rest. The chef is convinced if he can just get you to take that first bite, you're going to want the whole thing. The truth is that the more you read God's Word and pray, the more rewarding it becomes and the more you are drawn to it. Yes, it begins as a discipline. But when you stick with it, it becomes a delight.

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*Christine Hay  
Prayer Secretary*

## Church Roll

*Change of Address*

Mrs Gloria Acheampong (District 10)

*Andy Coghill  
Rollkeeper*

## Compassion

Firstly, I hope this finds you in good health. I have received a letter from Jose in El Salvador that I would like to share with you.

At the time of writing, all was well with Jose and he had enjoyed spending time with his family at Christmas. He enjoyed hearing about the snow we sometimes have in this country and hopes that one day he will see snow too. Jose wanted to tell us about his memory of his favourite birthday, when his mum took him to the park and bought him a small cake and a piñata to enjoy with all the family. The project he attends also celebrated his birthday with chicken and rice and some cake which he enjoyed sharing this with his friends. Jose says though, that his favourite thing about his birthday is 'the harmony and love' that his family give him. Jose asks that we pray for his family, for health, protection, prosperity, provision and wisdom, He prays that God continues to bless us all.

Please remember Dinar, Jose and Martha and their families in your prayers throughout these challenging times.

Once again, thank you for all your support which is greatly appreciated.

*Joan Canavan*

## Path of Renewal

As with all other activities the general course of our 3 year journey has been halted. However, the PoR group met via zoom recently and part of the discussion related to keeping in touch. Efforts are being made to gather names and details of people who wish to be contacted by phone or email. It is hoped that some WhatsApp groups may be formed or some zoom meetings arranged. The experience from other churches tends to be that these work better in smaller groups. Sadly, it will not be possible to have the planned Away Day at Gartmore, especially as there had been a positive response from the congregation. Hopefully, it can be rearranged at some future date.

*Campbell Joss*

## The Persecuted Church

Coronavirus, Lockdown, Pandemic, Self-Isolation and Social Distancing were not words that were in common use before the arrival of the virus Covid-19. The virus, which had its origins in China, spread rapidly from country to country and from continent to continent at an alarming rate. It is no respecter of age, social status or even religious persuasion and Christians, Muslims, Buddhists and Hindus, including those of no faith, have all succumbed to this virus.

Across the world, many Christians have lost all their income because of the lockdown, which has had a significant impact on their ability to buy food and other essential items. In some countries, when 'official aid' is being distributed, Christians are often at the end of the queue, simply because they are discriminated against. This is particularly the case for many Christians living in Pakistan and India and in several other Asian countries where it was already a 'hand to mouth' existence and the ongoing economic effects are for them quite devastating.

It is not only the effects of the Coronavirus that is impacting on the lives of Christians. In East Africa, several countries including Ethiopia, Kenya and Somalia have all been affected by a plague of locusts and it is predicted that Uganda and South Sudan will be affected by June. Many Christians in these countries work in agriculture, and according to the UN World Food Programme, many countries in Africa are facing food shortages of "Biblical proportions". This is in addition to the worst ongoing humanitarian crisis for decades linked to the wars in Syria, Yemen and Libya and the effects of climate change and drought in many African countries.

The militant Islamist terrorist groups Al Shabab and Boko Haram believe they are immune from the effects of Coronavirus. They continue to attack villages during 'lockdown' and many Christians living in Nigeria, Chad, Somalia, Mozambique and Kenya have been killed and churches and property destroyed.

*Robert Belmore*

## **Congratulations**

### **to Youngest**

to Hannah Ishbel Watkins and her parents Avril and Andrew on her safe arrival on Sunday 22nd March, weighing in at 8lbs



Proud dad says 'she's fair grown already!' We're looking forward to some suitably distanced cooing when we meet again.

### **and Oldest**

to Gordon Milne who celebrated his 95th birthday on Tuesday 28th April.



We wish him well and are sorry that we can't congratulate him in person yet.