



Balshagray Victoria Park
Church of Scotland

The Herald

November 2020

A Message from our Locum, Rev. Derek Peat

Some of you might know the story of 'The Little Matchgirl' by Hans Christian Andersen. It is about a young child who was living in poverty and undernourished. Day by day she earned money by selling matches only to go home to a cruel father who would punish her if her day had not been successful enough. One night, before Christmas, she was standing in the cold, and as she shivered she looked through the windows of homes to the lives inside - decorations, gifts, happiness and the aroma of Christmas meals being prepared.

There were no customers and all she had was a box of matches. After some thought she struck a match and looked at the light and heat. She imagined it was one of the windows she had looked into and that she was being welcomed in. So she struck a second match and imagined a Christmas dinner with a place for her amongst the wonderful smells of the cooking. The little matchgirl continues until the box is finished.

As the girl strikes the final match she sees a shooting star racing across the dark night sky, and standing there is her grandmother welcoming the girl into her loving arms and carrying her home to heaven. The next morning the girl is found frozen - with an empty box of matches in her hand and a smile of contentment across her face.

Every year as we head towards Christmas I think about this story - one of sadness, yet it still shows that there can be healing in even the most difficult situations. This year has brought great challenges to all of us and the news has been given that we are to prepare for 'a digital Christmas'. You can sense the disappointment as we hear this news and wonder how many events might be cancelled from our calendars.

As we move into the winter months perhaps there is a two-fold challenge to us. Firstly, we can use this forthcoming quieter Advent and Christmas to give more focus on the good news of the birth of Jesus and engage meaningfully with how God kept his promise foretold in Scripture. It allows us to work through our bibles and see for ourselves how prophets spoke of the Saviour to come and then rejoice in this news for ourselves.

Secondly, as the world comes to terms with this scaled-back yuletide it may be a good opportunity for Christians to get the gospel message of hope out to our world. It might be, and let us hope it can be, the space that allows a world in need of a saviour to see that Jesus is the light in the darkness.

The little matchgirl that Hans Christian Andersen wrote about has a happy ending, but it not in this world, it is in heaven with her grandmother. Likewise, we do not really find true happiness in the world around us but in finding that God keeps his promises. It is because we know that the Messiah did come to Bethlehem that we can trust God to keep his promises. Promises to be with us always, to the end of time and promises that all who love the Lord will be gathered with him in heaven. It's the story that outlasts all others, and we pray that more people will know it for themselves this year.

With every blessing to you and yours,

Derek

Finance Update

Our main sources of income are presently the money received from direct giving to the bank and the rental from the manse. Due to decreased expenditure in some areas during the pandemic period it is likely that BVP will complete this financial year with only a modest deficit. During 2020 this church has been liable for the full ministry and mission payment to the central funds of the Church of Scotland notwithstanding the vacancy position. However an announcement has been made recently to confirm that all church contributions will be reduced by 18% next year. This will be a saving of around £10000 for BVP and will certainly help to offset the predicted reduction in congregational giving and hall rental.

Campbell Joss, Church Treasurer

From our Interim Moderator, Rev Jonathan Keefe

I wonder how you are holding up? In one sense lockdown seems like a long time ago but in another sense it hasn't really stopped. Many of us are still effectively housebound for much of the week. We are getting groceries delivered more often than walking round a supermarket. All of us in one way or another are bereft of social and community gatherings that were habitual. Missing family and friends terribly. And all of us are sanitising and wearing face coverings daily. No, things are certainly not back to normal – or at least not the normal we knew at the start of the year. And fear is still rife. The daily news of illnesses and positive cases continues to feed our fears. And the (still) unusual sight of masked faces and social distancing doesn't help.

Today I read the second half of Isaiah 65 and Isaiah's description of heaven. The effect of the gospel in terms of our final salvation is the antithesis to much of the Covid related matters going on around us. I noticed the following:

1. (v13) In heaven everything will be provided. In heaven we will be furnished with every material provision we could ever need. The food and drink is bible speak for our physical needs. They will all be met.
2. (v14) In heaven gladness of heart will abound. Simply having our physical needs met is not enough. Heaven is also a place of social, psychological and psychiatric completeness, such that gladness and rejoicing will abound. At times we struggle to find things to take joy in. In heaven there will literally be nothing to take the joy away. (Notice too there will be singing because of the heart gladness. Nothing will stop the singing in heaven!)
3. (v17-18) No memories – even ones of this life - will take away the joy and gladness. No memory of loss or grief or loneliness or pain or isolation or illness or confusion or frustration or failure or exclusion or separation or breakdown, will take away the joy of heaven. I have no idea how God works this, but he assures us he does.
4. In heaven social isolation is an impossibility. Not only would it never be necessary, it would be impossible. Throughout this chapter Gods people are doing everything together – Labouring (v23) building houses and living in them (v21) enjoying the fruit of their labour (v23). And God is there all the time, so that

enjoying the fruit of their labour (v23). And God is there all the time, so that before his people even speak God hears, and before they ask he answers v24).

5. In heaven there is nothing to hurt and nothing to destroy (v25). Even something that hurts and destroys here (like a wolf or a lion) won't hurt or destroy there.

Martyn Lloyd Jones once spoke about how his whole outlook on life should be governed by his consciousness of where he is headed. I think it would be a great thing if during these covid days we were governed by the consciousness of where we are headed. Because of Jesus and his cross work our final and permanent destination is one of joy and gladness. May that knowledge be a source of joy and gladness today, which others can't help but notice, whether they notice it in person or on a screen.

Christian Aid

The Christian Aid Western District Committee met recently (by zoom of course!) to gather thoughts on the current situation. The Christmas Fayre and Carol Service have both been cancelled and there are doubts as to whether the Spring Fayre can go ahead in March. What can be done? The committee agreed to promote the Christmas Appeal throughout the 5 churches which participate in this area. The theme is "LOVE BUILDS HOPE THIS CHRISTMAS" and focuses on the drought in Ethiopia, where many people face another devastating crisis caused by climate change. Your gifts can help with work to provide reliable water sources.

You can find out more and support this cause either by visiting caid.org.uk/Christmas or by donating to the Western District Christian Aid Account, in respect of which I act as treasurer, the details being S/C 80-07-52 A/C Number 00903733

Campbell Joss

Christmas Fayre

At a recent Kirk session meeting Elders discussed the issue of having a Christmas Fayre this year. It was felt at this time that the risk was too great and therefore unfortunately the Christmas Fayre will not take place this year.

Compassion

Usually at this time of year, I would be writing about the success of the Harvest Lunch at which we raise funds to support the children throughout the following year, but of course unfortunately this year we were unable to hold this. I would like to share some positive news though.

This week I received a letter, written in August, by six year old Martha in Uganda's support worker to let us know that Martha and her family are well. They pray for God's hand of protection upon us to keep us safe during this time of coronavirus and Martha asks that we pray for her also. When she is older, Martha would like to go to university to become an engineer.

Please remember Martha, Jose, Dinar and their families in your prayers during this difficult and challenging time for all.

Thank you once again for your continued support. It is greatly appreciated.

Joan Canavan

Erskine at Remembrance

It is traditional for a retiring collection to be taken at our annual remembrance service and there will be a limited opportunity to continue with this on Sunday 8th November. However with limited numbers presently able to attend Sunday services, a wider appeal is being made to support our friends at Erskine this year. They are reminding people that support has never been more vital in what are extremely difficult and challenging times for them. The impact of the Covid-19 virus is preventing the normal cash collections. There are various ways you can make a donation.

- Online at justgiving.com/campaign/Erskine
- By cheque or by Visa/Mastercard/Maestro/CAF Charity card .Call 0141 814 4555 or visit www.erskine.org.uk
- You can leave a donation at BVP on Remembrance Sunday preferably by cheque but please avoid cash if possible

Prayer Points

Don't give in to despair

'When troubles of any kind come your way, consider it an opportunity for great joy.'
James 1:2 NLT

When difficulties come to us in life and in our relationships, as they inevitably will, it's easy to succumb to the 'dominoes of despair'. First, we become disappointed with an event or relationship. Then as the trial lingers, we topple into discouragement and surrender our expectations that things will change. Finally, as we feel the impossibility of moving the object against which we lean, we succumb to the last domino of despair. We feel powerless and hopeless, and don't know how to see our way clear. Instead of running our life's race, it feels like we're swimming below the surface in an ocean of jelly. Often when we can't understand life's circumstances, we limit our expectations of who God is and what He can do. We think there's only one good outcome – the one we want! Instead, we need to trust our heavenly Father because He may have bigger and better things in mind. We must try to see Him at work in whatever trials come our way. Remember, God's expectations are bigger than our own, and only our heavenly Father and His purposes, no matter how painful they seem at the moment, truly satisfy our souls. James writes: 'Dear brothers and sisters, when troubles of any kind come your way, consider it an opportunity for great joy. For you know that when your faith is tested, your endurance has a chance to grow. So let it grow, for when your endurance is fully developed, you will be perfect and complete, needing nothing' (vv. 2-4 NLT). Keep that truth uppermost in your mind today, and you won't give in to despair.

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Christine Hay, Prayer Secretary

Church Roll

Change of Address

Rita and Alan McKendry (District 16)

Andy Coghill, Rollkeeper

Stuart Bruce **(24th January 1944 - 4th September 2020)**

Stuart Bruce was a very active member and elder at Stamperland. He had many roles within the church including being Superintendent of the Sunday School, leader of the Drama Club, Beadle, gardener, watchman, handyman/fixer and many, many more. In recent years Stuart had acted as Parish Assistant at a number of churches in Glasgow Presbytery including Govanhill Church, St Columba's Church Kirkintilloch, Hillington Park Church and, most recently, Balshagray Victoria Park Church. His sudden death was a shock to all who knew him.

Reverend Alastair Cherry delivered this warm and heart-felt tribute at the service held in Williamwood Parish Church on 18th September 2020 to celebrate Stuart's life.

It is sad that current circumstances have curtailed what we had hoped to be a fully attended service of thanksgiving for the life of Stuart Bruce. Instead, we are reduced in number of the close family and relatives.

Stuart left a very detailed resume of his life which was helpful. I could talk of his early life, at home with Melville and Sadie and with his sister Hilda; of his school life at Langside Primary and Shawlands Secondary. I could tell you of his training to become an architect and his time with Glasgow Corporation and later the City Council; of the importance of Langside Old Parish Church where he met Ann; of his marriage and settling in Stamperland; of his move with Ann to Craighill Drive and the arrival of David. I could draw attention to his early married life in Stamperland Church where both he and Ann were very involved in the congregation's life; how Stuart became an elder there in 1974.

But my involvement came ten years later when I arrived as the new minister in July 1987. I got to know Stuart very early on because that was Stuart's way, trying to be helpful, nothing was too much trouble, always ready to help. Stuart led the junior Sunday School and a happy place it was where children just loved to be with Mr Bruce and he went around on Sunday usually with some child following behind him.

He also discovered I had been known to take part in amateur dramatics, at school, as well in my previous congregation and so I was

roped into the church Dramatic Club. There we did plays and eventually, much to Stuart's disapproval, but egged on by Jean Anderson, launched into pantomimes. Stuart realized that the move was a good one and that practice continued. Stuart had great patience, especially when many of us didn't learn our lines but never a cross word came from his lips; you just knew you had let him down.

In 1994 Stuart became my church officer. His predecessor used to come into the vestry before the service and prattle on about nothing in particular, which for a minister, preparing for worship is most distracting. Stuart always came in to see me in the vestry, then left before worship started to give me time to myself and I really appreciated that. He fought off all who would try to come to the vestry door to see me before church, and I was thankful for that too.

Stuart joined the Presbytery's Elder Training Course on Worship led by Sheila Steven and along with others could then participate in the leading of the Sunday service. Latterly it meant I could go on holiday and leave the worship leaders in charge of Sunday mornings and Stuart took the lead in this in Stamperland. This was to lead Stuart into a new life as a local minister as the Church of Scotland now calls them, filling in for a minister who is ill, or on holiday or where a church is vacant. In the past 10 years Stuart has looked after congregations from Govanhill to Ayr. Many folk have benefitted from his ministry with Ann in that time.

But I cannot neglect Stuart's life as a son, brother, husband, father and grandfather. He was essentially a family man where his family were a priority. Of the time he shared with Ann over 50 years of marriage; of his relationship with David where it was as much a brotherly love as one of father and son; of his devotion to his grandchildren, Eilidh, Scott, Ewan and Cara; of the happy times doing family things - meals, holidays in different places including their trip together to Disneyland, Paris. Of grandchildren doing sleepovers ...lots of experiences to remember him with love.

These are only some memories and I know each of you will have your own. My prayer is that these memories will sustain you in the coming days, weeks and longer.

It is hard to sum up a life, lived for others as much as for himself. His death came so suddenly, so unexpectedly, that we were all taken by surprise. Only three weeks into his new home, Stuart left it for the last

time. I know that family are grateful for the love and support they have received; from the staff at Hairmyers Hospital as well as for the love and prayers offered and the many sympathy cards that have been sent. All of us are at a loss today; the suddenness of Stuart's passing; someone so fit who never looked his age. What are we to say?

Perhaps these words might help:

You can shed tears that he is gone
Or you can smile because he has lived
You can close your eyes and pray that he will come back
Or you can open your eyes and see all that he has left
Your heart can be empty because you can't see him
Or you can be full of the love that you shared.
You can turn your back on tomorrow and live yesterday
Or you can be happy for tomorrow because of yesterday
You can remember him and only that he is gone
Or you can cherish the memory and let it live on.
You can cry and close your mind, be empty and turn your back
Or you can do what he would want
Smile, open your eyes, love and go on.

We will all surely miss Stuart. But that loss will be felt greatest by Ann, David and Valerie, Eilidh, Scott, Ewan and Cara. To them and to the other members of the family, we express our deepest sympathy.

Alastair Cherry

Path of Renewal

BVP has participated in this project for the last 3 years, initially under the leadership of Campbell MacKinnon. Since he retired, the work has been carried on by a group of five and the last part of the conference sections took place in September via zoom. Clearly the course has been curtailed this year and it has not been possible for the group to progress some of the ideas which had been forming at the beginning of 2020. Many of the people who have taken part have experienced changes in the way they see the church going forward and it can only be hoped that there will be an opportunity in the near future to discuss and promote some of these ideas in our own church.

Campbell Joss

The Persecuted Church

In many countries, it takes little encouragement to incite anti-Christian feelings and the backlash usually has extremely serious consequences. As I have said many times before, Christians tend to suffer much more than those of other faiths. It is fair to say that 'persecution and discrimination' in all its many forms, is no respecter of religions or individuals. Christians, Jews, Hindus, Muslims, and those of other faith groups classified as 'Religious Minorities' plus those who claim to be of 'no faith', have all suffered and continue to suffer at the hands of persecutors or hard-line regimes.

On top of all this, are a whole range of problems relating to the current Coronavirus crisis, which has created many other difficulties for Christians. Common factors throughout the world relate to a lack of trust, lack of respect, lack of religious freedom and the failure of governments and regimes to respect human rights. The concept of peaceful co-existence is alien to those who strive to force those who are not 'like minded' into submission by whatever means is at their disposal, including torture, imprisonment, intimidation and even death. It is not only radical Islamist groups such as Boko Haram, ISIS or al-Shabaab who perpetrate acts of harassment, violence, persecution, and discrimination against Christians, because sadly, many governments are just as guilty.

Indonesia – following a request by the governor of West Sumatra, the Minangkabau Bible app was removed from the digital distribution service because it caused 'discomfort' to the majority of people living in that province, of whom the majority (95%) are Muslim. This lack of respect for Christians contradicts the state promoted philosophy of *Pancasila* which promotes religious tolerance and national unity. Indonesia, home to the world's largest Muslim population, has in recent years, seen a sharp rise in hard-line Islamic ideology.

Democratic Republic of Congo(DRC) – at least 58 people were killed and 17 kidnapped in early September, when Muslim militants attacked two villages in the Ituri province located in the mainly Christian north of this African country. The attacks were carried out by the ADF, an Islamist militant group. Since 2017, more than 700 people have been killed in Ituri area.

India – there has been a substantial increase in violence towards Christians since the start of the Covid-19 pandemic. Most attacks were carried out by Hindu extremists. According to the Evangelical Fellowship of India, a recent attack on three Christian villages, which resulted in the destruction of 16 homes, left all the victims in a state of fear and shock. Sadly, the present government is not sympathetic towards Christians and wants India to become a wholly Hindu nation.

Ethiopia – an international inquiry has been called for, into the slaying in many towns of at least 500 Christians, including women, children, and whole families. The attacks were carried out by Muslim extremists in the Oromia State during the past three months. Thousands have been traumatised from witnessing the atrocities, and fled the area seeking safety.

Lebanon – on 4th August, an immense explosion destroyed a large part of Beirut's port area and adjacent neighbourhoods, killing at least 160 people and injuring about 5000 others. Four out of the five neighbourhoods worst affected are predominately Christian, and homes, businesses and places of worship were badly damaged or destroyed by the blast wave. Unfortunately, Lebanon has suffered from internal political strife and severe economic problems which has had a serious effect on the lives of Christians, who make up the poorer element of this society.

Sri Lanka – a much loved hill-top church building on the outskirts of the coastal city of Trincomalee, was attacked and destroyed by a mob of extremists. The building situated on the 'Mount of the Cross' was visited by many believers as part of a pilgrimage. Attacks on Christians churches is on the increase.

All the information in this article was obtained from a variety of sources including *Barnabas Fund and Release International*.

"As for God, His way is perfect; the word of the Lord is flawless. He is a shield for all who take refuge in Him" (Psalm 18 v 30 NIV)

CONTINUE TO PRAY FOR THE SUFFERING CHURCH

Robert Belmore

Meet our locum

Your arrival as our locum was all quite sudden. At the time of the last Herald, our Pastoral Assistant had died suddenly and, almost before we could take in our loss, we learned that you would be willing to serve as our locum, at least until Christmas. We are so grateful for the way the Lord has provided for us.

Can you tell us what prompted you to be willing to be our part-time locum?

A year ago I took on the job of Local Church Review Coordinator for the Presbytery of Glasgow. Our family had been thinking about returning to Glasgow and it looked an interesting post and one in which I could help a lot of congregations as we think about how churches can adapt to circumstances around them. Once we moved house back to Glasgow I felt that I then had time to help a local congregation too. We love the west end and when I was told that BVP needed some support I was pleased to be able to help out.

How do you see your role as locum?

Right now its quite difficult to pick up the role of locum. My work has always been based around working with people and getting to know them, and that is very much restricted just now. It may well take longer to get to know folk at BVP but I am very much able to visit if people would like a chat or more support.

At the same time we are having to look at what we can and cannot do in terms of worship, one issue of course is being prevented from singing. Praising the Lord through congregational music is so important in our tradition. I think this will all develop in these months as we get used to being back at church and perhaps in a more general sense for the wider church it will allow us all to think afresh at what is important and how we gather to worship God.

The Covid pandemic leaves many of us unable to risk attending church services. Have you any ideas about how your work as locum will be adapted to these changed circumstances, or will it be learning to adapt as you go along?

I am still getting a feel for what the Kirk Session would like to do to progress this, but we are looking to make Sunday worship more

accessible, both for those using computers at home and those that don't.

Can you tell us something about your calling to the ministry? What did you do in your 'previous life' ?

When I left school I didn't know what I wanted to do, and studied Accountancy and Finance as I thought it would give a good broad grounding for industry. I worked originally as an accountant but was never that settled in the role. From my early twenties I began to think about whether ministry might be something that I was called to do. After returning to Trinity College in Glasgow to study theology I spent some time as a hospice and then hospital chaplain, so by the time I came to being a parish minister I had a lot of pastoral experience behind me, as well as the administrative background I had from accountancy.

You were a minister in Troon St Meddan's for several years. What activities did you particularly enjoy and were 'at home with' there?

Looking back a year on, we worked very hard at St Meddan's to move the church forward. We began a short midweek service, particularly for folk who could not manage an hour on a Sunday, and this proved very popular. We then took advice on how to make it more dementia-friendly.

We also created a pastoral care group for folk whom we identified as needing a wee bit more support than the district elder might be able to give. This was much appreciated by those who valued these visits.

The thing I had most satisfaction from though was the creation of a new church service at the other end of the parish in a local community centre. We met at 9.30 each Sunday and started with coffee and muffins. It was a big help for folk who wanted to go and do something else with their day, and would previously have not attended church at all. We had baptisms and communion there too. By the time I left we had about fifty people coming each week, on top of the usual number at the 'main' service in the church building.

Can you tell us a few things that will help us get to know a bit about you as a person; What about your family ?; a quirky (or not so quirky) hobby ?; a favourite food, music, film, sport?

In my spare time I run to keep fit, and have recently developed an interest in cycling, though I won't be in the Tour de France any time soon! My daughter loves hockey and my son plays tennis so our weekends are taken up with supporting them in their sports. This year I have looked more at what I would like to be doing in the future and did my first 'Munro', climbing Ben Vorlich (Loch Lomond). There are so many hills within an hour or so of Glasgow. So some 'Munro-bagging' is on my 'to-do' list for the year ahead!

My other interest is shipping off the West Coast of Scotland. In my student heyday I worked as a purser for Caledonian MacBrayne and am now looking to see more of our beautiful islands by combining this with cycling.

Finally, are there any particular items you would like us to pray for you and your family, both for immediate needs and in the longer term?

It's been a difficult few months for us too – we remained in our rented home in Ayr until lockdown finished and we were able to move to our new house. Then we've had a whole new set of surroundings to learn to fit into which is hard right now, especially for children, so prayers for us as a family are much appreciated!

Word for Today

The Nov./Dec./Jan. issue of the "Word for Today" and "Word 4 You Today" (for young people) is now available and can be obtained free by contacting Christine Hay by email or at church.

The Guild

Thanks to those who responded to the appeal for knitting wool – a large bag of hats for sailors has been passed on, and it was greatly appreciated! Another consignment will be taken again soon.

Obviously in these changed days the Guild is unable to meet in the halls, but we keep in touch by phone and enjoy our chats!

*Christine Hay
Guild Secretary*

Gartnavel Royal Hospital – Christmas Appeal

In past years we have publicised the Christmas Gift Appeal of the Gartnavel Royal Auxilliary which supports the work of Gartnavel Royal Psychiatric Hospital by funding recreational and social activities and providing extra comforts for in-patients. It also aims to maintain links with community groups, raise awareness of problems associated with mental illness and reduce stigmas.

Unfortunately, due to the Covid-19 restrictions, Gartnavel Royal Hospital will not be able to accept the usual Christmas gifts which are kindly donated every year by members of local churches.

As an alternative, if you wish to support Gartnavel Royal Hospital this Christmas, then please consider making a monetary donation to the hospital's charity fund. Donations of money should be sent to:-

Mrs Christine Dallas, Treasurer,
The Charity for Gartnavel Royal Hospital
c/o Jordanhill Parish Church
28 Woodend Drive, GLASGOW G13 1QT

The charity will then provide these funds to Ward staff to enable them to purchase individual Christmas gifts for the patients.

Thanks to all who provided material for this November issue. We hope to have another issue in December. Please send items for this December/January issue by

Sunday 22nd November

to

edbvpherald@gmail.com

Worship Services at BVP - November

Subject to changes due to any further restrictions imposed by the Scottish government. Please see the September (Lockdown 3) edition of the Herald for the Covid Security measures in place.

Sunday 1st November

11.00 am Morning Service

Preacher Rev. Derek Peat

Sunday 8th November

Please note earlier start time

10.45 am Service of Remembrance

Preacher Rev. Derek Peat

Sunday 15th November

11.00 am Morning Service

Preacher Rev. Derek Peat

Sunday 22nd November

11.00 am Morning Service

Preacher Rev. Derek Peat

Sunday 29th November

11.00 am Morning Service

Preacher Rev. Derek Peat