

**THE LINK MAGAZINE
BATHGATE HIGH PARISH CHURCH
MARCH 2021**



Our Mission Statement

**We seek to share the love of Jesus by ,
Worship , Faith and Fellowship with all ages .**

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Welcome to the March edition of your Link Magazine , this is our second online version of our congregations news and we are also going to put out a hard copy for those who don't have the Internet .

I have to say that this lockdown situation is not sitting well with me , I am seriously missing so many lifelong friends that it is becoming so painful and I am looking forward to the day when once more we can all meet again in an unrestricted and most importantly SAFE manner .

How good would it be to be able to have as many in our sanctuary as we can get in , talk to one another at close quarters , sing our songs lustily and joyously and simply be a close group of fellow travellers once more . Sounds so good to me !

Over this past year we have lost quite a few friends but I would like to say a few words about one man who passed on the 2nd of this month . A man that I was privileged to know and to worship with and to call a friend , wee Jack Steele , Jack was eternally upbeat , his cup was always half full , never half empty , always had a smile a cheery crack and a sweetie . We all will miss Jack !

Other things that I personally miss are the other activities like the Wednesday Break , the monthly coffee mornings , not that I was always there , the twice a year thrift shops which were such good fun , well patronised , great community events and were good fundraisers and most of all the Friday Club where I made so many new young friends while in the company of so many of my church friends , these young people were so rewarding to work and learn with .

Your humble servant John Binnie

Large Print Editions of The Link will continue to be available via the Church Office.....Tel. 650517 or email ... info@bathgatehigh.com

All items for the April 2021 Link to be in the Church Office or with myself before Friday 9th April 2021

When I survey ...

No, not that kind of 'survey'. The session and the board have been revisiting what makes us tick as a congregation, and trying to pin down what things are most important to us.

31 out of 36 Office Bearers completed an on-line survey, saying how strongly they agreed or disagreed with certain statements. These statements were based around four areas –

- Mission – our priorities for spreading the Word of God in our community
- Worship – which aspects make worship most meaningful for us
- Facilities – how we make use of our buildings and our on-line presence to serve Mission
- Ministry – what things do we see as the most important attributes of our minister and ministry team.

While the survey is far too long to include here, this summary of the responses was presented to the Office Bearers at their February meeting.

Mission

- *There was a strong sense of responsibility to both members and the community.*
- *There was support for existing organisations and a feeling that the fellowship they offer is important as well as their contribution to mission.*
- *It was felt to be important to have organisations and programmes to support a range of different groups. There was a strong sense of inclusivity.*
- *Worship and pastoral care were both seen as important in mission and that this was a shared responsibility.*

Worship

- *Respondents saw then need for balance traditional and modern praise and the instruments leading it.*
- *Worship was seen as benefiting from a variety of approaches, media and personnel.*
- *There was a need for different types of services.*
- *The purposes of worship in challenging, teaching, the spiritual experience and putting faith into action were strongly supported.*

Facilities

- *There was support for an on line and social media presence.*
- *There was support for both a traditional sanctuary and a more flexible layout.*
- *Flexibility was also seen as important for hall accommodation.*
- *There was support for the sanctuary being used more widely, including for ecumenical use.*

Ministry

- *Respondents supported a ministry which was progressive and part of a team ministry.*
- *The ministry model supported included scriptural teaching, empathy and commitment to the community*

As with any set of responses, the answers themselves can throw up further questions and highlight areas where a more investigation is needed. To this end, the Office Bearers are now considering a series of discussion questions, based on the responses, which will be used over the course of the next few meetings.

Re-opening and Easter services

The First Minister intimated in her statement to the Scottish Parliament at the beginning of March that places of worship would be allowed to re-open from the 26th of March. This date was before many other restrictions were to be relaxed as there was a drive to allow a number of religious festivals to be celebrated, including Easter.

In a sense, this was an unexpected move, as the relaxation had been expected to include a maximum capacity of 20, but when announced, it was, in fact, 50. According to our protocols, we had been expecting to be live streaming a service, but now we were able to open for public worship.

This did, however, introduce a number of time constraints, as the re-opening had to be formally requested by the Kirk Session, and a great deal of paperwork needed to be completed before we would be given approval by Presbytery. The re-opening was passed at Session on 18th March, and at that point there were still some details to work through with the paper work. The decision was therefore taken to re-open on Easter Sunday (4th April), rather than on Palm Sunday (28th March). All the necessary paperwork has now been submitted.

When we re-open for worship, we will still be under guidelines which include distancing, use of hand sanitiser, recording of details for Track and Trace and the wearing of Facemasks. We are still in a situation where singing is not allowed and that is just one of the things we need to work around.

We all look forward to being able to meet in fellowship and enjoy communal worship again, and thanks is due to all who have prepared the way for this to be able to happen.

Up until then, we continue to offer our services on-line; on the church website and via a link on the church Facebook page.

Palm Sunday – will include some input from our Sunday School staff

Holy week – there will be daily reading and music clips on the Worship Resources page of the church website. It is hoped that this will also include a Good Friday meditation which has been produced collaboratively with Boghall Church.

Easter Sunday – this will mark our return to public, communal worship. This service will be streamed live on the church Facebook page for those who still feel uncomfortable returning to church. There is a concern that due to a maintenance issue thrown up during lockdown, we may need to use the Hall for worship until some checks are carried out. The website and Facebook will carry the most up to date information .

Parish readjustment in Bathgate

This remains an area of great uncertainty. Presbytery withdrew our right to call a minister in September last year. With two churches in the centre of Bathgate now vacant and pressures including falling rolls, diminishing income and a shortage of ministers, Presbytery were promoting joint working between St John's and the High Church, but with three different voices involved in the discussions, it was unclear what the way forward should be.

The developing picture suggests that the long term resolution is likely to be a formal union, joining the two charges. There are, however, some differences in priorities between the two sessions, and it remains unclear what the exact route map and the timetable working towards this goal might be.

As a first step, there will be discussions between representative groups of each congregation to try to establish a shared vision, making the way ahead clearer.

There is still a long road towards any decision. Any decision would involve a formal process and the whole congregation would be consulted, before a voting process takes place. The last year has been very difficult in terms of organising discussions and exchanges of views, as Zoom is not the friendliest medium for large numbers of people trying to listen to others and express their opinions. It is hoped that over the summer restrictions may be eased enough to allow discussions to take place more freely and to make wider consultation with the congregation easier.

The Session remains committed to keeping the congregation as informed as possible.

FINANCE

Covid-19 continues to be a challenge for the congregational finances. Income is down around £7k compared to this time last year. This is understandable as the Church has been closed since the start of the year. It is a good sign that many members of the congregation are still able to bring their donations to the Church for Ian McLean to bank, and that many members have decided to move over to standing orders. This is very much appreciated as it has meant that so far, we have not had to use reserved funds.

Thank you to everyone who has supported the Church over the last year.

The Finance Team

Property Convenor

As yet no one has come forward to take up this important post . And our Church really needs to have someone or a committee perhaps to take us into the next stage of our journey . No technical skills are necessary as primarily it involves getting the various trades in to attend to the needs of the buildings . It may well be that a committee of 3 or 4 would be the best most logical way forward . SO please think about it your Church really needs this post filled one way or another . **THANK YOU**

Crossreach is The Church of Scotland Social Care Council offering loving care to people of all ages who are in need of a helping hand , supporting them to live life to the full whatever their circumstances . An annual Prayer Diary is produced , containing thanksgiving and prayers for the whole year from their services across Scotland . These weekly prayers are now available on Bathgate High Church website for those who are able to access this .

The prayers will be updated on a weekly basis .

I hope that many will find this helpful . If you know of anyone who would like a hard copy of the Prayer Diary then let me know and I will try to obtain some copies

PRAYER MAKES A DIFFERENCE

YOUR PRAYERS HELP OTHERS

THY KINGDOM COME 2021

Thy Kingdom Come is a global and an ecumenical initiative , introduced in 2016 , in which Christians are called to pray for the nine days between Ascension and Pentecost , (13th to 23rd May 2021) .

We are invited to pray for God's Spirit to move within the Church , equipping us to share God's love with others and to pay attention to how God is speaking to us today .

There are various resources available for individuals , churches and families .

The Moderator of the General Assembly ; Rt. Revd. Dr W Martin Fair , is encouraging churches to become involved and says, " it will unite people from over 170 countries and given what we have all been through , that coming together will never be more important " .

I have ordered a supply of prayer journals for our church , for those who would like to use one . They will be available from mid April .

The journal has an introduction by Stephen Cottrell (Archbishop of York) . Each day includes words of Scripture ; a reflection ; a prayer and space to write your own thoughts and prayers .

Hopefully , this will be a first step for Bathgate High to become part of this worldwide prayer calendar .

Liz Orr

Locum's Message

I prepare this article on the first anniversary of the first lockdown where folks are encouraged to remember the pain , loss and separation we have experienced over the past year , I am sure that there is no family that has had to make sacrifices over the twelve months .

Let us unite in offering thanks to all who have given so much , not counting the cost , to allow us to reach this point .

Thank God for His faithfulness through this dark period with its uncertainty , helplessness and fear knowing that God is in control and that we have been strengthened by what we have been through knowing that He will never leave nor forsake us .

At this time of Easter , His love for the world was shown when His son Jesus died on the cross at Calvary for the sins of the world . Through Jesus' obedience to death and God's grace , all who believe in Jesus as their Saviour are reconciled with God , our Heavenly Father .

It was a dark day in human history , but there was no other way for the sin brought into the world through Adam and our separation from God the Father to be removed . Jesus , the second Adam , took on His shoulders the sins of the world , a once and for all sacrifice .

But we know that His death that Good Friday was not the end but a new beginning when He was raised from the dead that first Easter Sunday morning .

**He has risen !
He is risen indeed !**

O , what a privilege to know that death no longer holds its sting , death has been conquered . We who accept Jesus as our Lord and Saviour know that we will share eternal life in the Kingdom .

Rejoice and know the love of Jesus , a love that knows no ends .

Salvation comes from God and is free through His grace for the people He loves so dearly . The cost of following Jesus day by day is where we meet the opposition .

As followers of Jesus , our lives should reflect His love , folks who walk the world's way should see we are different through the things we say the love we share with others , even the unlovable , being the hands , feet and mouth of Jesus each and every day .

It is comforting to know that God's love for us is unchanging and unending as we have witnessed more than ever over this past year .

I find it comforting when I conduct a funeral and share the words of hope that come through the resurrection of Jesus that first Easter Sunday knowing that death is not the end for a Christian but just the beginning of a new life , an eternal life , with God the Father , Jesus the son and the Holy Spirit .

' To God be the glory !

Great things He hath done ;

So loved He the world that He gave us His Son....'

God bless you all this Easter

David Wilkie (Locum)



A Blessed Easter to one and all from the Flower Committee.

Nowadays it seems almost everything has to be done "on line". How frustrating it is to be put on hold "press options 1-5" then message "go on line" or listen to music while waiting for an "adviser".

Many give up at the first attempt to try later "keep calm and carry on" helps reduce blood pressure! We tire of hearing "www.com" standing for "World Wide Web". Perhaps we could substitute that for "Witness With Wonder"
 – Yes!

Technology is wonderful, ranging from flights to outer space, to the simple microwave meal for one;

Yes! Amazing advances in modern medicine and science have thankfully produced the Vaccines for which we are all so grateful;

Yes! We admire the efforts of medical staff, volunteer delivery drivers, shop assistants not forgetting our own dedicated Church Team all working tirelessly to keep us safe and up to date.

We appreciate all that but what about the simple things in life – look around you "Witness With Wonder" the Joy of God's Creation, marvel at the Joy of Spring Flowers – Snowdrops, Crocus and dazzling Daffodils – the first Spring Lambs frolicking in the fields. Who can fail to be moved by such beauty bringing their message of Hope, why worry about clothes? Look how the wild flowers grow; they do not work or make clothes for themselves.

But I tell you that not even King Solomon with all his wealth had clothes as beautiful as one of these flowers . " Witness With Wonder " all random acts of kindness , often from complete strangers ;

" Witness With Wonder " unstinting care for loved ones .

During these challenging times it is easy to become sad and depressed but we only need to look at the words of Captain Tom who inspired us all with his famous words – " tomorrow will be a better day " .

With God's grace we can accomplish that , even in dark days remember , He has promised never to leave us or forsake us .

The Message of Easter is there for us all to share .

We all have our own special memories of Lockdown but I came across these words which I thought appropriate for our Church Family at this time .
God Bless!



*Friends are such a blessing
They're heavens most rare Flowers
Whose presence give us comfort
When life brings us April showers*



*They share our laughter and our tears
And they go that extra mile
To show how much they care
And bring a happy smile .*



*My friends the birds these winter days
Will always chirp and sing.
Why then should I be sad at heart
When so much joy they bring?
Small harbingers of days to come
When warmth returns once more,
To bring the sunlight streaming through
The open kitchen door.*

Growing up in "The Auld Toun "

I was brought into this world on the 1st of February 1940 , so it wisny me that started the war , it was already well under way .

I was born in Cochrane Street which ran from Mill Road up to Main Street where it also joined Waverley Street and Livery Street.

There were turn offs into Balbardie Avenue on the left and Marmion Road on the right . Between these two side shoots and the top of the street were fairly extensive ruins with the biggest being that of the old Malt Barns our very own adventure playground and the scene of many imaginary wars and campaigns , no Health and Safety for us .

As my dad was a serving member of the Royal Air Force I didn't really get to know him until the war ended and I'll never forget the excitement the day he returned home complete with his ill fitting demon suit and trench coat , oh and his bunnet .

You know we never had fancy facilities to keep us occupied , behind our house was a wee area we called the Back Park , really just a bit of waste ground with a few trees (great Tarzan swings) and an air raid shelter which was deliciously scary as it was pitch black inside even on a bright sunny summers day . See the imaginary monsters that dwelt there in, Hitchcock was tame in comparison.

See when I reminisce I wonder how on earth we ever managed to grow up normally , we never had smart phones , tablets , no TV , no X Boxes no virtual reality gear and absolutely no internet or social media.

How in the name of God did we survive and become for the most part caring adults , beats me .

We weren't even all that lawless, when I think of all wicked things we got up to like ,smoking cinnamon sticks ,playing football , skipping ropes , chasing games ,chalking peever beds on the pavement and chap door run fast . I nearly forgot about stealing crabbies , but see when I think about it all you got was bitter tasting wee apples that usually gave you at the very least a sore stomach .

The area I grew up in was essentially a fairly happy working class area Of miners steel and brass workers and quite a few railway workers .

This was all prior to the T.C.C. , British Leyland era and the dominant retailer in the town was the Co-op and I can even remember my mothers number 639 , goodness that number was drummed into me . I must admit that I had a happy carefree upbringing by two hardworking parents who instilled in me a respect for others to accept people as I found them and to be law abiding but not to be afraid of authority .

I remember plugging the school one day to go up the hills with some pals , I was found out when Jimmy Reid the Truant Officer turned up to ask my mother why I wasn't at school. I can assure you it effectively cured me of missing school and going swimming up the hills .

The one thing that my mother always insisted on was that I regularly attended Sunday School and to be fair I didn't find it a chore , we had some fun days .

The only thing was that prior to the start we were all made to dispose of our chewing gum , this was easy we just stuck it under the pew seat (when I became property Convenor some 16 years ago one of my first tasks was to repair the floorboards at my old Sunday School seat and guess what the Wrigleys was still there although fossilised and unchewable , I didn't try honest I couldn't get it off)

Our minister was Rev John Taylor and I used to think that he was getting at me personally , with his big voice , strong words and the biggest bushiest eyebrows gosh he used to put the fear of death into me . In reality he was one of the kindest people I knew and all he was doing was preparing us for life as a Christian , he was some man . Anyway enough of my ramblings , this was in response to a suggestion from my friend Jim Jack who suggested something a wee bit different . So if anyone has a story to get off their chest , why don't you sit down and trawl through your memories and put pen to paper and share them with your friends .

Please think about this you might just surprise yourself

The Wonderful Cross



I like the view from my dining room window where I sit at my computer . It is quite an open view . I enjoy watching people coming and going , sometimes on their own , sometimes with family or friends often with a dog(s) ,or a buggy .

I look over to the community t garden and beyond the rooftops of houses to open spaces with trees , fields and wind turbines . My favourite , uninterrupted view is that of the cross on top of St. John's Church spire .every time I am looking out the window my eyes are drawn to the cross .

It stands out against the silhouette of the sky ; at times framed by clouds , other times a beautiful vivid blue sky where the cross shines bright in the sunshine .

On occasion , when there has been grey mist and fog , I have been unable to see the cross , but , I know it is there .

This morning as I write , I noticed a row of birds sitting on the horizontal beam and I am reminded that Jesus is the Lord of Creation .

During Lent , a season when we examine our faith , witness , obedience and worship , we focus on Jesus's journey to Jerusalem where He would ultimately fulfil the purpose for which God sent His Son ; to sacrifice His life ; to die on the Cross (the most agonising of deaths , not only the physical agony , but the utter torment of being separated from His Father) , that the sins of this world may be forgiven and we can be restored to a right relationship with our Heavenly Father .

What amazing love , what saving grace ! Of course we have the hope and joy of Easter as we celebrate the resurrection of our Lord and the gift of eternal for all who believe and put their trust in Him . The words of the hymn " When I survey " (Chris Tomlin) invite us to reflect , worship and respond with our whole being .

When I survey the wondrous cross
On which the Prince of Glory died
My richest gain I count but loss
And poor contempt on all my pride
See from His head , His hands , His feet
Sorrow and love low mingled down
Did ever such love and sorrow meet
Or thorns compose so rich a crown

Oh , the wonderful cross , oh the wonderful cross
Bids me come and die and find that I may truly live
Oh , the wonderful cross , oh the wonderful cross
All who gather here by grace draw near and bless your name

Were the whole realm of nature mine
That were an offering far too small
Love so amazing , so divine
Demands my soul , my life , my all .
May the Lord bless you and keep you all in perfect peace .
Liz Orr

Do Not Judge!

Life's a funny thing , we have all heard the saying , don't judge till you know the full story .

We know it is the right thing to do but , be honest sometimes we all jump to conclusions and they are not always right !

For most of my life apart from my time as a lighthouse keeper , I've been involved in the security industry in one way or another and have seen life from most angles good and bad and everything in between . The one thing it taught me is do not judge , till you know the full story , what looks straight forward at first , is not always the case ! In fact sometimes things can get very complicated .

My mum would say , as you get older , time will go much quicker and at that time I did not understand that saying , but now that I am in my sixties , I sure understand it !

Down in Bathgate the other day I met some good friends from the High Church .

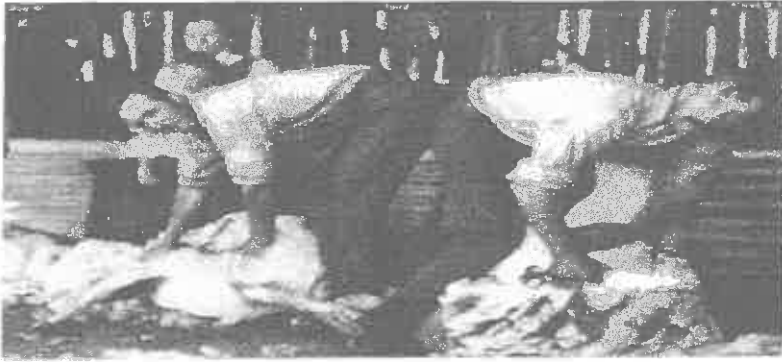
Among the many things we talked about were (days gone bye) the brickworks , the foundries and Leyland , they told me that in those days Bathgate was a place of more or less full employment in comparison to today .

You see so many empty retail spaces , as is the situation up and down our country , it just makes you feel so sad inside to see them !

On the Island of Skye in the 50 s , 60 s and maybe even the 70 s , in the villages one of the biggest days of the year was when the sheep got sheared .

All the men , women and children would gather at the village shearing pens , to firstly shear the sheep then the men would do what was called dipping the sheep , which really meant putting the sheep through a bath of chemicals . The idea of that was to keep the ticks off them through the summer months and beyond .

After all the work was done everyone would have a picnic , with plenty food , tea , coffee and juice for the kids and I suspect that the men in the group would have one or two of something stronger , happy days !



Going back to Skye these days the island has changed so very much , that sense of community has totally gone , in fact it is not the Skye I remember at all !

And now a short story : *Bearing in mind I used to be a Taxi Driver*

A Minister and a Taxi Driver both died and went to heaven .

St Peter was at the Pearly Gates waiting for them .

" Come with me " said St Peter to the Taxi Driver .

The Taxi Driver did as he was told and followed St Peter to a mansion It had everything you could imagine , from a bowling to a swimming pool .

" Oh my word , Thank You " said the Taxi Driver .

Next , St Peter led the Minister to a rough old shed with a bunk bed and a little old TV sat in the corner .

" Wait I think you are a little mixed up " , said the Minister .

" Shouldn't it be me that gets the Mansion ? After all I was a minister and went to church every day and preached the Word of God " .

" yes , it's true " , St Peter said , " but during your sermons , people slept , when the Taxi Driver drove his clients , everyone prayed " I So , till next month , show love to each other and take care of your family , friends and neighbours .

Duncan MacPherson

The night an old friend left us some 25 years ago**1st February 1996**

The old co-op halls went on fire on the 1st of February 1996 .
It had become a disco called Room at the Top and was in the process
of being renovated when fire broke out in the evening .
At on stage there were six appliances and 42 firefighters at the blaze .
Fortunately there were no casualties apart from the building and the
flames leapt almost 100 feet into the air , a marvellous building with
many function rooms lost forever .



There must have been countless functions held in these venerable
premises and I believe that it really was the best used community asset
in the town if not the whole county