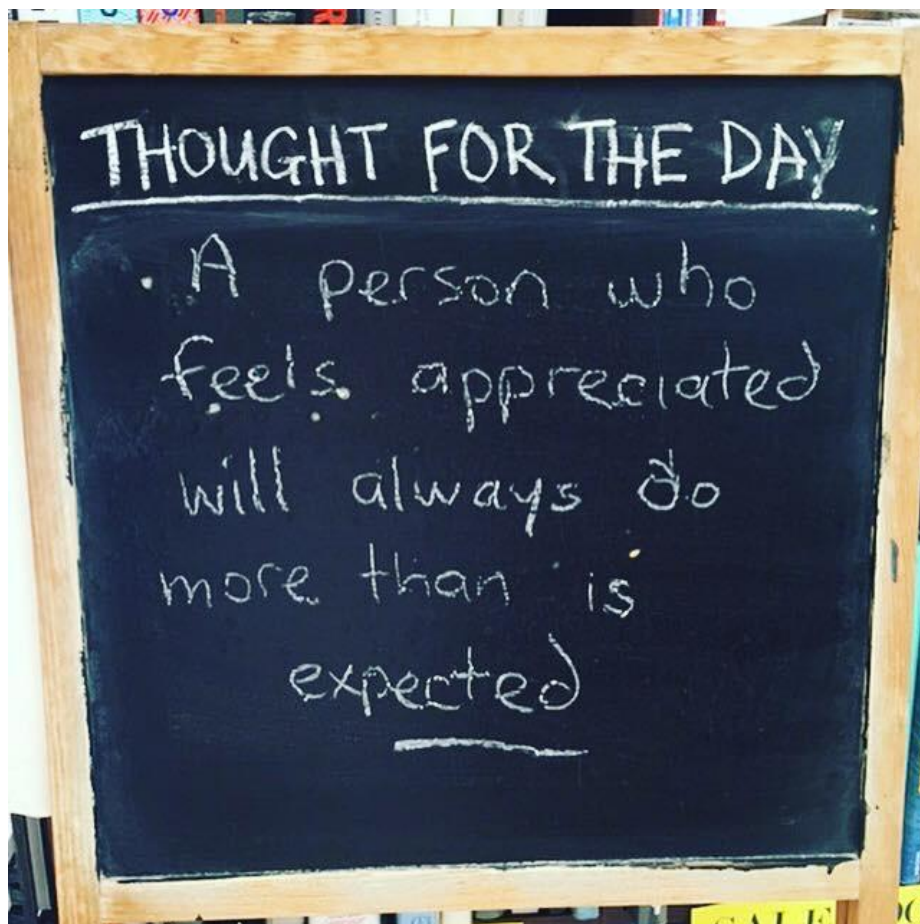


*Govan and Linthouse
Parish Church
Magazine*



June

2016

Sidelines

May, so far, has been glorious. The weather has been glorious - day after day of sunshine. It has also been a stressful month for many. This is the time of year when funding bids for renovation, or for new projects, are assessed. One of our bids for funds, to the Lottery Places of Worship Scheme for money to eradicate the dry rot at Govan Cross, has had the decision deferred until September. The funders wish to send their own architect to look at the damage to the structure of the building.

Other agencies have come under pressure too, from small charities to major restoration projects. Everywhere we are hearing the same story. The modern funding set up is not a never ending coffer of gold into which we can dip our hands. Funders wish to be certain that the community owning the building has the capacity, and the staying power, to benefit from their investment. It is wise, and responsible, for these decisions to take longer than expected and be examined quite carefully. If we were disbursing the funds, instead of bidding for them, we would expect these questions to be asked.

Funding has been an equally difficult issue for the Puppet festival this year, although we have made the decision to go ahead and hope that money comes in from the various trusts from which we are still waiting for a response. The school children have worked so hard, and committed so much to the project, that we couldn't, I think, let them down at this stage. This is our fourth year (and that is part of the difficulty. Some trusts don't allow you to go back year on year for funds). Nonetheless, we have managed, so far, to ensure that our children have this unique and very rich experience. The Puppet Weekend takes place from June 10th - 12th, and include, among other things, some old favourites, 'The Man who Planted Trees', which has been 12 years at the Edinburgh Festival Fringe, and a new play from the same Puppet company 'Leaf by Niggle' which has received rave reviews in all the Scottish Press. The school children are working on 'The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe' and 'The Adventures of Sinbad the Sailor', two very contrasting plays.

I have been reminded of that wonderful story in the Old Testament. Ezra, a high court official in the service of King Artaxerxes of Persia, had been told he had permission to go home to Jerusalem and take his exiled people with him. He was also told that he may take silver, wheat, wine, oil and salt, pay for all the labourers and craftsmen whose task it was to rebuild Jerusalem.

The king said to Ezra,

'And whatever else is required for the house of your God, which you are responsible for providing, you may provide from the King's treasury'.

(Ezra 7. 20).

Now it is our turn – we are looking, in faith, for the provision of the King's Treasury.

'Blessed be the Lord, the God of our ancestors, who put such a thing as this in to the heart of the king' -----Moyna

On Sunday 15th May, Pentecost Sunday, there was a service of Holy Communion Service held in Govan Old led by the Friends of Govan Old. The Hon President Rev Tom Davidson Kelly presided.

The choir of Paisley Abbey were present and the music was beautiful.

It is hoped to make this an annual event after Govan Old is handed over to the Govan Heritage Trust.

Our lunchtime group at Pirie Park has a new name! The children wanted to call it 'Scripture Fun' so that is what it is now known as. At that group, and at Messy Mondays, we are exploring 1 and 2 Timothy till the end of the session. Paul is encouraging Timothy to lead the church telling him that even though he is young God has given him a position of leadership that nobody is to deny. He will need courage and conviction and he will need to make people listen to him by his actions as well as his words. He is to inspire the church as he is inspired himself by the prompting of the Holy Spirit.

I have been following the Invictus Games, a competition inaugurated by His Royal Highness Prince Harry, and it has been truly humbling to see ex service personnel compete. Not only did they show courage and conviction by going to places like Afghanistan and Iraq but they have shown enormous courage in facing up to the horrific injuries they suffered as a result. Many of them could never have imagined that they would be in a position to compete at such a high level; indeed many could not have imagined they would ever be able to continue to live what we would consider to be a 'normal' life. Yet they have shown a tremendous will to not only live but to inspire others. Much of this is prompted by a young man who shows by his words and actions that he is passionate about helping people to see beyond disability and celebrate life. Prince Harry is to be congratulated for his dedication to this cause and for the inspired way he has brought all this to fruition.

All of this makes me wonder if we, as a church, could learn something about the sheer hope that exists in humanity. I attend meetings, go to events, and hear people complain about the most menial things at times. Often they are simply spitting the dummy because things aren't going their way or because they think the structures of our great institution are under threat. Sometimes it is because they feel threatened themselves that what they have known might change and they might lose something. There are a staggering number of meetings one can attend in church circles where God is hardly mentioned and the leading of the Holy Spirit is not seen as part of the equation. That is not to say all meetings or events are like that of course, far from it, but I reflect on these things as I meet people and have

conversations in the community and wonder how people see the church. Are we the modern day Timothy? Do we lead with conviction? How Invictus are we?

How best can we as a church meet the challenges our communities face? The church is to think big, hope for much, inspire others, meet needs head on. We are about people, and people matter very much. If the will to not only survive but thrive can be seen so clearly in the men and women of Invictus then we should have hope not simply in humanity but in the maker of humankind. A hope that where we see grief and struggle God will be there, a hope that where we see giants God puts an axe in our hands so that we can chop down beanstalks. I believe in the hope we have in the church. It's a hope that goes beyond anything men and women could ever imagine, inspired by the Spirit of God who sent his son into the world to die for us, who raised him from death, and who is with us now through the Holy Spirit of Pentecost. I believe in people, I believe in the church when it is the inspired body of Christ making a real difference in the world around us. I pray that one day everyone believes this too.

Paul

Hi Folks,

I was doing a house communion for one of our members recently and it struck me that this is something to talk to you about in this newsletter. I wanted to open out house communions to you all, traditionally they were limited to the housebound and those who were ill, nowadays there is a much broader understanding that embraces any member young and old alike. Would you or a member of your family or friends like a house communion? Just give me a ring on the usual number – I would be delighted to help.

The pastoral workload continues a pace, as does the demands of parish funerals and I ask that you continue to pray for these folk that through the ministry of our church, the gospel of comfort and strength, healing, peace and joy may be theirs.

Finally one or two of you have asked me when I'm leaving for my new job in Buchanan Galleries! I have to say the Galleries is only a few hours a week – done in tandem with Govan and Linthouse, so the bad news is I'm not leaving!!

Well take care and look after yourselves and look out for one another.

God's blessing on you and your loved ones especially those who are struggling whom we remember in our prayers constantly.

Take care & God Bless

Andrew

Being Session Clerk has certainly shown me the variety of issues that come to the church and the demands that are put on our church committees like the fabric and finance. Those involved take their work with dedication and it's not always easy, I thank you all for keeping these very important areas of our church running well. I also want to thank the elders who are willing to assist in keeping their districts informed, delivering magazines, communion cards and envelopes for the various charities we support. The biggest thing I think all members of our congregations can do is to inform Gillian in the office if anyone knows of illnesses or changes in circumstances such as moving into care or in hospital so that we can attempt to be aware of the different things that changes a person's life.

I want to thank you all for your continual support of Charities. The two I have been involved with are the Lodging House Mission and Water Aid. The LHM Easter Egg appeal asking for £1 donation, the cost of an Easter egg, raised £85 which meant that we helped support many meals for the homeless over the Easter period. The Water Aid charity was the jars we had out over lent and I sent them a cheque for £200 and have received a thank you from them, so thank you to everyone who contributed to both these charities as well as all the other ones we support.

One more thank you is to everyone who participated in the Census that was held in the church on 8th May, everyone completed a form and your cooperation is greatly appreciated. This is something we need to do every year and it's very important we get all the information.

As we prepare for our Communion Service on 5th June I do hope you will be able to join us at 11am for the fellowship that this service offers.

With love and prayers

Elspeth Millen

Session Clerk

Communion Service – Second Collection

The second collection this communion service on 5th June will be for Christian Aid. If you won't be able to attend the service but still want to make a donation then please speak to your Elder as there will be envelopes available in the church. We thank you in advance for your generosity.

God's Gang

As I write this we have been enjoying 'our summer'. Hope it lasts for a wee while yet.

Since the last magazine we have been looking at some more miracles of Jesus and also, how God will always keep us safe in his hands. As the children become more confident in their reading they are keen to read from the bible. Hopefully, they'll soon be queuing up to read from the church bible on a Sunday.

Paul is planning on having a more in depth discussion, with the children, about communion. We feel this is important for their understanding of the communion service and its importance in the Church of Scotland.

Our upcoming events are our prize giving which will be on Sunday 12th June and as we had such a good time, and lovely weather, at Wellsfield Activity Park we shall be returning again this year for our annual outing the week before prize giving on 5th June.

Hopefully the sun will shine on us.

Wishing you all a lovely summer.

Karen Stevely

A Summer Blessing

May you walk with God this summer in whatever you do and wherever you go.

May you talk to God this summer and every day and in every situation.

May you talk with God every day.



The Guild

As we near the end of our session it's good to reflect on the time since we resumed in March. Our theatre trip to Eastwood Theatre was a great success, for an amateur group they certainly excelled themselves. What a great night we had too with Paul and Laura Kate, although LK has been with us for some time now we really didn't know a great deal about her so it was very interesting to hear some of her journey. We had a good turnout of the Guild in the Monday night of Holy Week and this really is a tradition now which we have been able to maintain throughout the years.

One of our regular evenings is the showing of our DVD of the Annual Gathering in Dundee which allows our members to share in the experience some of us have at the Gathering. Our bring and buy sale raised over £200 for our funds and we again enjoyed John Irvine and Karaoke hymns. I think we all enjoy the relaxations this kind of evening brings.

Moyna gave us an insight into a week in the life of a minister, I think she manages so much that it's difficult to know how she does it. A visit from a lady from the Glasgow Humane Society was quite a revelation. Last week we had a speaker from Eclipse Holidays, this is a fairly new company and it was interesting and informative account of how to assist the public when looking for the best kind of coach holiday. Next Monday (16th May for me) sees the return of Theatre South who will be here to entertain us. Our last meeting will be someone from Forth and Clyde Canal and our AGM and cream tea. Our outing this year is to Oban with a stop in Inverarey. I'm sure we will as ever have a great day.

In September a few of us will be travelling to Dundee for the Annual Gathering of the Guild when we will explore the 'Go in Joy'.

Again I would like to thank office bearers for all their hard work and everyone else for faithfully coming each week and making the Guild such an enjoyable group.

With Every Blessing

Elspeth

Not so long ago, I was boarding a plane for a much-anticipated flight to Glasgow. My bags had been packed (or rather stuffed) with items I was certain I'd need for this newest adventure. While I wasn't sure what my time in Scotland would hold, I was excited for all the possibilities.

Little did I know what a wonderful welcome I would receive. From my very first Sunday, I have been fortunate to be warmly embraced by the congregation. Over cups of tea, you taught me the history of Govan. After busy nights at Messy Monday, you sent me home with leftovers and laughter, despite the enormous mess my craft idea had created in the hall. Through Girls' Brigade and Boys' Brigade, I've gotten to know so many of the parish's youngest members, while also (marginally)

improving my dancing and marching skills. God's Gang has kept me on my toes on Sunday mornings, as I've learned alongside the kids. In a year that has found me far from the familiar of home, you've helped me create a new normal. From the rides back to the flat to the thoughtful invitations to different events, you have constantly sought out ways to include me.

As I prepare to leave Scotland, I'm conscious of the many things I will carry home. Aside from pictures and memories from so many wonderful moments, I'll carry new and precious friendships. Truly, these friendships are better than anything a photo could capture. I am immensely grateful for the time I've spent with each of you. Thank you for your kindness and love. Should you ever find yourself in South Carolina, please look me up!

Laura Kate

Messy Mondays

Our evenings are going from strength to strength and we among many will sorely miss Laura Kate. She has been a breath of fresh air and the children and parents have loved having her with us. The crafts have been fabulous and the fact that we introduced saying grace by a song Laura Kate taught the kids to the tune of the Adams Family has been great. Some of the parents have been getting more involved helping out with crafts and in the kitchen which is wonderful because we need people to be more involved to keep things going. Thank you to everyone who helps out on the evening and in preparation for the evening. Most churches have a version of Messy Mondays but they call it Messy church. They at the most do it monthly sometimes even quarterly, not us! We run every Monday night schools are on, not sure if that makes us daft or just plain crazy but we love it and it's a real family night welcome to all who want to pop along and join in the fun. We meet in Linthouse hall at 5.30-7pm.

Gillian



The Church of Scotland

Stewardship and Finance Department

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April 2016

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

I write to thank you most sincerely for supporting the worship, mission and service of the Church through the money you give in your offerings. It is important that you should know what happens to this money and this letter (along with the enclosed Ministries and Mission leaflet) intends to explain how your congregation's Ministries and Mission Contribution will be used to enable the work of the Church in 2016.

Glasgow: Govan & Linthouse

Total Contribution to Ministries and Mission for 2016

£58,770



Ministries (85.3%)

£50,131 of your total contribution will go towards the costs of providing over 1,000 ministers and other parish workers in communities throughout Scotland and in the Presbytery of England. This contribution also assists with the costs of recruitment and training.

The 2016 cost of a parish minister at the top of the stipend scale is **£41,507** (stipend plus employer's national insurance and pension contributions). If your contribution to Ministries is above this figure, then your church is meeting the full cost of your ministry and supporting other congregations. If it is less than £41,507, your congregation (or linked charge) is being supported by other congregations.



Mission (14.7%)

£8,639 of your total contribution will be used to support the Church's work in: resourcing congregations for Christian education and outreach; providing social care services in Christ's name to further the caring work of the Church to people in need; accompanying partners around the world on our shared Christian journey; contributing the Church's opinion in public debate and on issues affecting Scotland and the World; providing central day-to-day service work in administrative, financial and legal matters; and in planning the General Assembly and ensuring the Moderator represents the Church.

As you will see, the contributions your church makes ensure a very diverse ministry is maintained and that the Gospel of Jesus Christ is shared in many ways and in many places. Many churches have made additional Ministries and Mission contributions throughout the past year and these have also been gratefully received.

Should your church wish any support or resources from the Stewardship and Finance Department, please do not hesitate to contact me. The National Stewardship Programme has been running for several years and our consultants' team is willing to guide your church through a stewardship programme, or simply to provide you with some ideas and advice. Please remember that the consultants will work with your church free of charge – **there is no cost for their time.**

I do look forward to assisting you in any way I can.

Yours in Christ,

Archie McDowall

Archie McDowall
Deputy Treasurer – Congregational Finance
Email: AMCDOWALL@churchofscotland.org.uk

Congregation Number: **160945**



34th Glasgow Girls' Brigade

In March we attended the Greater Glasgow Girls' Brigade Gathering at Eastwood Parish Church. The girls enjoyed various crafts, games, a service and barbeque.

At the end of April many of the girls and leaders enjoyed a weekend at the Compass Christian Centre at Glenshee. Although there had been quite a lot of snow fall the day before we arrived, we enjoyed relatively good weather during our stay. We didn't do any water sports this year as the instructors said that the water would be too cold due to the snow melt however the girls enjoyed crate climbing, ropes course, orienteering, archery and the climbing wall.

We have been very busy since the last magazine rehearsing for our Annual Display which took place on Friday 13th May in the Pearce Institute. As usual we were encouraged by the support of both parents and our friends from the Church. The girls all tried their best on the night and the parents and friends all seemed to enjoy themselves.

Our final party night of the session took place on Wednesday 18th May when the company went to Gambado soft play area at Soar Braehead.

We would like to thank Laura Kate for helping in the company during the past session. Laura Kate has been a great asset to the company and she will be greatly missed. We would like to wish Laura Kate the very best for the future and a safe journey home.

The leaders are all looking forward to a good summer break and we will return on Wednesday 7th September at 6.30pm in the church hall at Govan Cross.

Sandra MacDonald

119th Glasgow Boys Brigade Company of Govan and Linthouse

Dear parents, friends and members of the congregation of the church.

I thought I might take the opportunity to write and apologise for the poor turnout of the boys at the parent's night on Friday 18th April. We had planned that date some months ago, but failed to check the Easter Holidays and the fact that the schools would be off till the 3rd May. As a result of this many of the boys were away on holiday or staying with grandparents which meant that they were missing from the event, entirely our fault in planning so it looks if the Parents Night will have to be in late February.

I thought I'd share some information for you with regards to the company:

Our company is now 103 years old and started with youngsters attending the Sunday School, we, as most companies do have three sections, they are:

The Anchor Boys, our red devils. We have had a great lively bunch of youngsters this year, if you had been at the parent's night would agreed that they stole the show. They are bouncy boys who are full of life and are in the age group of P1 to P3.

The Junior Section Boys are the ones in royal blue jumpers and they are in the age range of P4 to P6.

The Company Section Boys are in dark blue and fall in to the age range of P7 to S4, they are very much individuals and forming their own ideals and ideas of where they want to go and do with their lives.

Boys in the Brigade need leadership and the 119th Company needs leaders, and we are appealing for help particularly with the Company section boys. but also need help with the Anchor Boys and Junior Section. We are involved with boys growing up, each year we do various adventure trips, climb the Whangie or Ben More, trips to Milport and cycle round the island, or maybe you have a talent you can pass on...help with all these things would really be appreciated if you could spare some time and it really is great fun.

John F Kennedy appealed to the young people in the American Universities “ think not what America can do for you, think what you can do for America “ I am appealing to parents and friends can you help young people in the church, we need young adults to be role models.

My e-mail is: mjames1744@aol.com if you would like to get in touch please do.

Jim McGowan

Captain

A note from Jean and Lesley

We just wanted to thank everyone for their prayers, thoughts, cards, calls texts and kindness since mum has been in hospital. We both really appreciate it, and would like to say a special thank you to everyone who tied a knot in mum's prayer quilt. Mum is getting better slowly but surely, and we hope to see you all soon.

Website

We are very aware of how much work is needing to be done on our church website and we have it in hand...we should have a new site up and running in the autumn. Watch this space for information.

Members Deaths

Alex Young - May 2016 – husband of Anne Young

Jean Carmichael – May 2016

Thanks for all your help

To Carol Mills for her help with the flowers every weekend – your help is much appreciated.

To May MacKinnon for her help in setting out the tea things for us every Sunday morning.

To all the teams on the tea rota, the more teams we have the less often everyone needs to do it.

To the Saturday Tearoom girls, thanks for all you do.

To everyone who picks up and drops off members who wouldn't be able to attend.

To the people who smile and welcome people in.

To anyone who helps out regardless of how big or small a thing it is, you are a cog in the wheel without which we would not turn.

THANK YOU!!

Get Well Wishes

A special get well to our very own Jean MacFarlane!! She remembers everyone else and now it's her turn, Jean we all wish you a speedy recovery and hope to see you soon.

Upcoming Events

Flute Phonics Concert

Flute Phonics will be playing for us on Sunday 5th June in Linthouse at 7.30pm. Tickets are available at a cost of £5 which includes entry to the concert and tea and coffee with some fantastic home baking and chat afterwards. The monies raised will be split between the Flute Phonics and the church funds. These shows have always been great in the past and I'm sure you are looking forward to this one.

Communion Services

Sunday 5th June at Linthouse 11am

Sunday 26th June at Govan Old at 9.45am

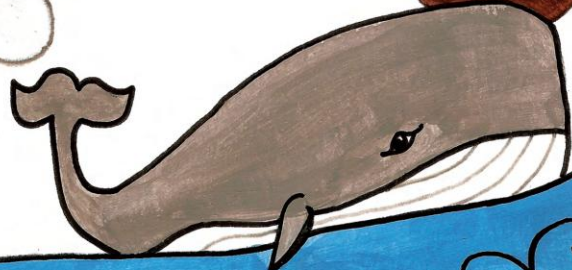
Family Fun Day

This will take place in Govan Old on Saturday 25th June from 12-4pm, this is a free event with bouncy castles, birds of prey, face painting, arts and crafts and ancient arms and armour display. Tea and coffee available.

Govan Puppet Weekend

We need your help!! The Puppet weekend will run for the 4th year this summer and we need your help to steward on the day, help with the kids, be a friendly face to welcome people in and help with the workshops. If you can be of any assistance please get in touch with Gillian on the office number. Your help will be greatly appreciated.

COMING SOON
FREE



GOVAN PUPPET WEEKEND

10TH TO 12TH JUNE 2016

SHOWS

- LEAF BY NIGGLE PUPPET STATE THEATRE
- THE MAN WHO PLANTED TREES PUPPET STATE THEATRE
- THREADING PEARLS GRAN THEATRE
- THE LITTLE FAWN CARAVAN SOKOBAUND
- A LITTLE HELP FROM MY FRIENDS GINGERBREAD PUPPETS
- THE LION, THE WITCH AND THE WARDROBE PIRIE PARK PRIMARY
- THE ADVENTURES OF SINBAD THE SAILOR RIVERSIDE PRIMARY

MASK
MAKING

FACE PAINTING

PUPPET
MAKING



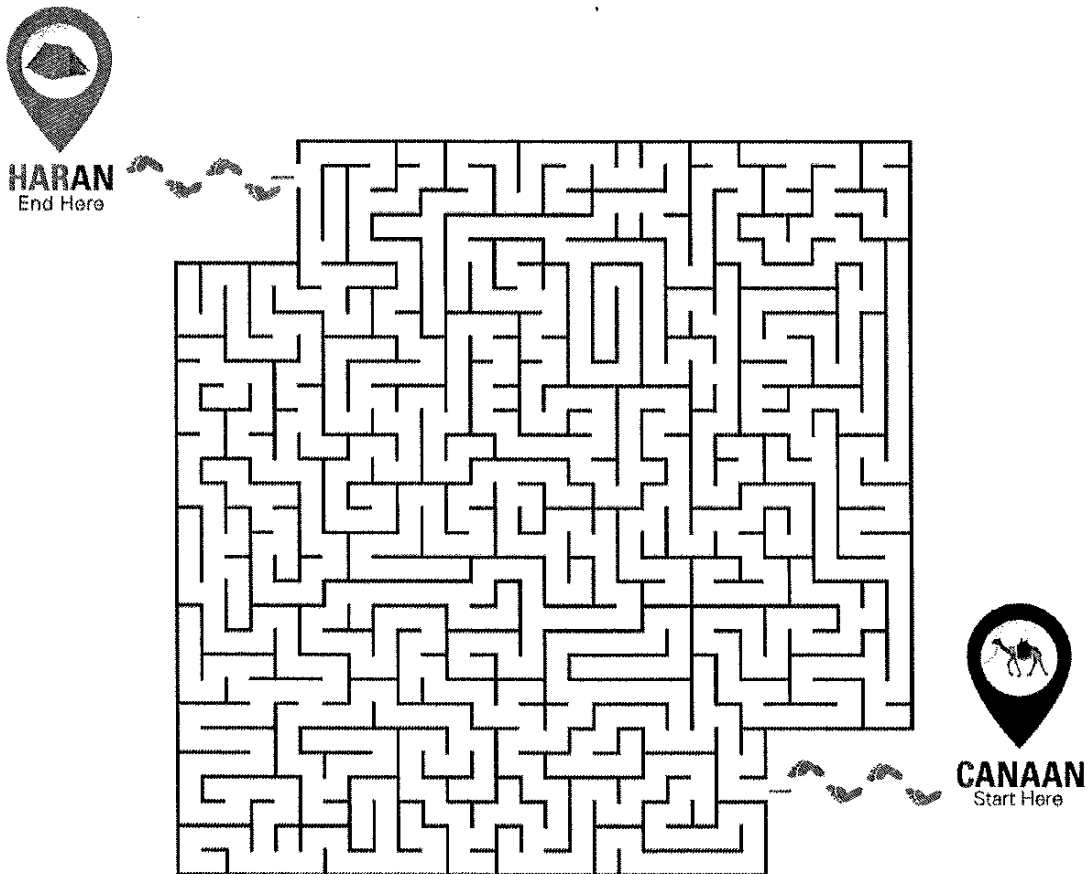
GOVAN CROSS & GOVAN OLD CHURCH
796 GOVAN RD, GLASGOW G51 2YL



FUN CORNER

A-maze-ing Bible Journeys **#2 ABRAHAM**

Oftentimes in the Bible, God caused people to take long journeys. That's because along the way, they became a-maze-ing people! Abraham was told to leave his home of 75 years, Haran, and travel through Egypt to the Land of Canaan. It took almost 15 years! Let's get Abraham from Haran to the Land of Canaan.



Genesis 12:1 The Lord had said to Abram, "Go from your country, your people and your father's household to the land I will show you."

Great Bible Lists

WORD SEARCH #5: BOOKS OF THE OLD TESTAMENT: GENESIS TO SOLOMON

*Find any names of the Old Testament Books between Genesis and Song of
Solomon in the word search puzzle:*

Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy, Joshua, Judges,
Ruth, Samuel, Kings, Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther, Psalms,
Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Solomon

A A K H R X R X W L Y P K A Q N D A E M S Z S S L
A W V S O K A D K T Q Q L L E U E S Q Z G E G Z U
R T A S O N G O F S O L O M O N U B M P R N G Z Q
I Q K Y Z G T I S R B B W N X S T R J R I A X O R
C U O T V Y E H B Q U B B A T D E E O K D Y T K E
X X V I K T Q X I J F K T B J N R V S R U C D W Z
W F X L Z K R H O H E J F U K B O O H J E Y H O O
K U S R T Y T E P D V E B W L K N R U T H H D J B
J E T Q Q S L R F Y U B G P T X O P A D X F T W N
F D N E O O B H P M J S H G R N M Y C B Z D J S H
R V M P C R D B V J C B D V A Z Y X L V W U R A E
L Z O Y E C O Q N H Y S W V V K R Z A K D O F Z V
L B D I G A L E S Y Q M M P X E G Z X G A N E T U
R M P Y I V G E G Q Z P E K K O X T E D G B O C M
O A I D O G Z H S U C I T I V E L S Z M A H Y E P
B P P I V G Q S G I C C S U N O V H T R G X M G S
K T H C U F I H G H A L G J Q S L D N P G N H W Z
V Y G B H S A Z R H N S H P N W O T R Y W Y S G Y
Z A F S E C U O V N F B T A M J N Z J C K H S G L
E S U N Q E N D J G M S Z E I Q J O O W F T H Y F
J W E K U I Y C W E V M R R S M I V S V J H S B G
H G V E C L E U M A S L K J I X E Y Z E O W U B G
W T R L J X R A D L B A G L R B N H E E R F J U M
M C E M B U D Y K Z F S Y W M L I U E S W Y J U K
D S N U M B E R S N N P A D E O A C X N X S Z N O

Connect the Dots!



Solomon's temple was
the first temple built for God

This is the story of two women I encountered, and one meal, followed by a life in church. It is Pentecost – the birthday of the church, or, as it was known when I was young, Whit Sunday. It doesn't matter what we call it, only that we celebrate the moment when the Holy Spirit, the Comforter, came upon the infant church and sealed it for the Lord Christ who had gone to be with the Father at the Ascension.

The name, Pentecost, is Jewish and denotes an older festival, fifty days after the Passover, which happens to coincide with fifty days after Jesus' Easter triumph. I once met a Jewish woman who told me that she had been preparing all day for visitors, then she had driven to the airport (an hour away) to collect them, another hour to bring them back, by which time it was time to go to the synagogue for Pentecost, where they stood all night for the service, after which she travelled to where we were.

There is no virtue in staying up all night. She knew that, as well as we do. But sometimes what people are saying is that, by staying up, you alter your state of consciousness and begin to see things in a different way. The early church fasted, and performed night time vigils. They did so in catacombs and caves, where the light of oil lamps fell, flickering, on figures and frescoes telling the stories of Jesus, making the stories come alive in the moving, smoky light. Church communities used incense, and chanting. It was all to achieve that altered state, a state which allowed the worshippers to sense the presence of the Spirit.

I met another woman once, in the park on a Sunday morning – I may have told you this before. She said she had to hurry because their service was early, to let people 'get it over with' so they could be on time for lunch invitations. It was at least ten years ago, and I am sure she meant no harm, but the shock of that conversation remains with me. The woman would have regarded herself as a Christian and she was a church member.

And yet the time when I was most conscious of the Spirit, the point when I realised that my life belonged to Christ, was not when I was confirmed at Pentecost in a village church in Wiltshire, nor at some all night vigil, and I have been at those too, but in broad daylight, in the plain basement of a church, without decoration, without music, with an indifferent lunch followed by a simple communion, where we struggled to find a space for the plates of bread and common cups among the used paper plates and leftover food. It was messy, organic, busy, noisy, ordinary, and so filled with the presence of God that you could hardly see the people opposite. Like a cloud

coming down from heaven, the life-changing spirit came to rest on us. The life-changing spirit changed my life.

We still imagine that faith, belief, has something to do with us, has to do with having the right words to say and being trained to say them. That's because people joined the church after a particularly moving sermon - usually preached by the minister, who was trained, or so we thought. The truth is that can only produce an interesting discussion or exchange of views. It is the Holy Spirit alone who can make listeners hear the Gospel in ways they can understand, tuning in with their deepest longings as people.

The evidence before us is in our passage today. There is a community at the heart of God, and when, finally, Jesus left his disciples for the Father, they were filled with the presence of the Holy Spirit, the beginning of a completely new experience, still in the world, but also in the kingdom of God, where life is filled with promises and the unexpected.

And at that point, the disciples begin to take over the ministry previously exercised by Jesus himself - they performed signs and wonders, as Jesus did. As though they were only one person, they made the decision to sell their goods and share everything together. They gave to anyone who was in need, ate together, and broke bread together in the same manner as Jesus did on the night he was betrayed, giving thanks to God. And they went together into the Temple to pray together at the formal times of prayer. This disparate group of men, different in terms of their temperament, the trades by which they make a living, very different from each other, were operating as Christ on earth. They had become the body of Christ. And this is what we should be, as the church, this is what we should be. The spirit-filled disciples modelled what the church should be.

Do we any more believe that, as the church, we have the power to free people from the things that bind them? I think not. Freeing them is a ministry that looks for the best, that encourages those who are fragile, that asks of us prayer and the determination that the best is possible.

For the church is a place where we share what we have, and distribute what we have to those in need, where we pray together and walk together, and share that sacred meal that is so significant for us. And where, step by step, together, we learn to be the body of Christ, living in the spirit.

From the moment when the Spirit brooded over the waters of creation, bringing life, to this moment, the Spirit has been shaping, forging, creating, leading, nurturing, forgiving, changing, loving, comforting, resurrecting and guarding the essence of God in the world, and God in us.

Let us pray,

Heavenly father,

We struggle to understand what it was that happened to your disciples, your witnesses, between Jesus' cruel death and the Spirit's fire. We only know that you inspired them, as you have continued to inspire others throughout the ages.

Let your spirit fall on us, now, so that we are inspired too, inspired to make this a place of grace and a place of love, inspired to free and to heal the brokenness, So come, Spirit of the Living God, and let your divine fire rain down. Amen.

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