

Park Pages

the magazine of Uddingston: Park United Free Church of Scotland



Letter from the Manse

Winter 2015

Dear Friends,

What are you looking forward to this Christmas? Being with Family, visiting friends, opening your gifts on Christmas Day, turkey and all the trimmings or simply the programmes on television!

For the majority of people in Scotland today, that is exactly what Christmas means to them. For many within your own families and circle of friends, that is what Christmas means for them. Yet, for those without families, for those far from home, for those who have little cash to spare and much debt on their minds, the season that is meant to be jolly can be a nightmare! The more the advertisements "sell" a very commercial Christmas, the more that others feel removed and isolated from the event. I am sure that there will be many in Uddingston who will be glad when it is "all over"!

Of course, the real reason for this special season is so different from what the secular world has to offer. The Gospel of Luke tells us that Mary sang a song of joy to God, her Saviour, as she glorified the Lord and rejoiced in what the Mighty One had done for her. Elizabeth, the mother of John the Baptist, was filled with joy when her cousin Mary came to visit her with the news of what had happened. As you read the story in Luke 1:26 ff, time and again you read of people being filled with joy at the promise and actual coming of Jesus Christ into the world. The shepherds returned to their fields

"...glorifying and praising God for all the things they had heard and seen, which were just as they had been told." - Luke 2:20

In truth, to celebrate Christmas without Christ is to miss out on the whole point of the festive season. Like a bell, with the clapper taken out of it, Christmas becomes a soul-less imitation of the real thing. That is why it is so important that like the shepherds, and Elizabeth and Mary herself, we make time to read, reflect and meet with the Saviour who is Christ the Lord. It is only when we dig down and take in the wonder of God taking frail flesh and entering our world, that we can truly know the salvation that God has **"....raised up for us in the house of his servant David.....the tender mercy of God by which the rising sun will come to us from heaven."** Luke 1:69/78

Can I encourage you to look forward to discovering more of these things over this Christmas? Then, and only then, will you discover that wonder of what it is all about—a wonder that transcends whatever family, friends, gifts and food we may, or may not, have!

Wishing you a blessed Christmas and a Happy New Year.

Yours in the love of Christ,

Wm B Russell

"...glorifying and praising God for all the things they had heard and seen, which were just as they had been told."

Luke 2 v 20



Family and Children's Worker

Karen took up her post in September and shares with us here what she's been up to so far as well as her vision for the future!



How are you settling into your post here at Park Church?

I can't believe that almost three months have passed now since I began my post at Park Church—it's been a very fast few months. Already I feel so settled into the post, and feel I'm finding my feet as relationships are built up, not just with children and young people but with the wider congregation and within the local schools. And on the plus side—I'm no longer getting lost on the streets surrounding Muiredge Primary (I have a very poor sense of direction). As a family we also feel so settled into the church family. We have been so encouraged by the warm welcome we have received and the care we've been shown over the past few months.

Tell us a little about your background and how God brought you here.

I grew up going to Church and Sunday School at Chryston Parish Church, but it wasn't until I was 14 and went to an SU camp that I decided to become a Christian and my relationship with God became real to me. From then on I was heavily involved in youth work which led to me studying Community Education at Strathclyde University. From there I became the Youth Development Worker at Burnside Blairbeth Church. During that time our children were born which had a huge impact on my understanding of Church.

For the last four years a huge passion of mine has been to see Churches become a place where children are encouraged to worship and actively know Jesus from a very young age, and so teaching our children that you are never too young to have a relationship with God. Also, in the last 18 months since Lewis was born I have found myself in countless situations where other mums have come to me for pastoral support. This was a real eye opener to me of the anxiety and pressure most parents of young children experience. As I considered both of these things, I began to realise my time as a youth worker was coming to an end and that God was calling me to work primarily with younger children and families. And so after a lot of prayer, I'm here.

We are greatly enjoying your children's addresses on a Sunday but we know you do so much more. Can you share with us what a typical week looks like for you?

On a Sunday, along with the Children's Addresses, I've taken on leading the Sunday School, so that has involved leading a class every so often, meeting with the team and preparing the rota. I'm also working with others to organise the crèche and get a rota in place for that.

Monday night is Connect where I get to hone my skill at the game 'Dobble', as well as studying the Bible with a great group of young people. Currently we are working through a series on Apologetics giving the group a real opportunity to explore life's difficult questions, but also to equip themselves with answers for when questions arise from friends.

Thursday is a day of preparation for me, where I can organise myself for each of the groups I lead. I also have the SU club at Muiredge Primary over lunchtime where we meet with 20 children in P6 and 7 for games and a time of looking at the Bible together.

On Fridays I have just recently begun running an SU group in Uddingston Grammar at lunchtime. It is a small group, but the young people coming are genuinely interested and want to be there. I also have time on Fridays for further preparation or for others meetings as they arise.

Every second Saturday I go to the Open to God Prayer time as it's a great opportunity to meet with others to pray for our local schools, our community and the wider world. This quiet time of prayer has become a huge support and encouragement for me in an often busy week.

What have been the highlights so far?

One of the big highlights for me so far was going to the SU Lanarkshire weekend away in November with three of the young people from Connect. It was such a good opportunity to get to know them better as we spent the weekend in the very cold and frosty Lendrick Muir playing lots of games and having fun together.



Another highlight for me was in the first week of the SU club at Muiredge Primary School. I was given a small group of young people to work with and come up with a list of rules. Instead, one of the boys in my group said "I'm really starting to believe in God, I never used to, but He has really been showing himself to me recently". He then went on to ask me how I came to know God was real; so there I was, week one of the group and I was able to share my story!

One for fun! What superpower would you like to have and why?!

In our house if you say 'superpower' you automatically think of Elsa from 'Frozen' who can make snow. As a big kid at heart, I actually think this would be a really fun superpower to have - think of the hours of fun building snowmen, making snow angels and having snowball fights! And on a practical note Elsa has the power to instantly thaw her snow too, which would mean all of the fun of snow without the horrible days of slush that follow!



Would you like to share with us the vision God has given you for this post for the next three years?

My role here at Park Church is made easier by the years of work that have already gone on within the church and the local community. It is because of the hard work and the relationships that have been built up over the years that we are now seeing so many opportunities arising within the schools and through activities such as MEGA.



It is still very early days and so I'm prayerfully considering the direction of my role; however, to give a brief vision, I would say that I hope to support the families within the Church, with a big focus on nurturing the children, as well as reaching out and supporting the children, young people and families within our local community.

We thank Karen for all she has done so far and look forward to our continued partnership in the future as we seek to bring the Good News to the younger generation.

News from the Greys in Malaysia

In the Spring of 2015 two of our Fellowship, Richard and Janet Grey, went off to Malaysia in the Far East to begin a new adventure. Recently Janet sent a report back which makes very interesting reading.

Tell us a little about what you are doing in Malaysia.

We came to Malaysia in April because Richard had been asked to work for Heriot-Watt University at their new campus in Putrajaya, Malaysia. We felt that God had given us this opportunity to widen our horizons and so here we are. Richard has the usual ups and downs of working in a new project but overall is enjoying his work. He has been welcomed by his colleagues and it is interesting for him to work with talented people of different racial backgrounds.



How have you coped with the change of culture?

I found this the most challenging in some ways but we have pretty much got a handle on it now. Life is a strange mixture of Malay, Chinese and Indian cultures as well as the Globalisation influence. You can pass a wee stall on the side of the road selling a drink in a plastic bag with a straw and then the next minute you are in a fancy shopping mall. One helpful fact is that a lot of people can speak English or at least enough to help us communicate the basics. The heat and the humidity can still be a challenge at times but we do mainly live in air conditioning so we can't complain.

Have you managed to find a church? Tell us a little about it.

When we started to look for a church we were quite surprised, given the predominance of the Muslim religion, at how many fellowships there are located in and around the city. We don't know of any directly in the area where we live but we found the City Discipleship Presbyterian Church in an area called Puchong, which is only twenty minutes away by car if the traffic is not too busy. We feel very fortunate to be able to worship here along with around a hundred other adults and children. It is a fairly new church plant from a sister church further north in the city. The leaders are dedicated to growing believers in their faith and in reaching out to the local community. Pastor Wong and Richard both had their 60th birthday this year so they are age buddies. There are several young families and we do feel like the older generation, but it is definitely a family of worshippers together.



One of the church's aims is to **'Love the City and Families'** and one of the ways of doing that is through the Children's Library.

It is beautifully set up in a room of the church and very efficiently and professionally run. It operates on a Saturday morning for four hours and is busy with children coming in from the surrounding community. I am now on the rota for story-telling. Once a month they also host a children's Playgroup. A lot of work goes into changing the church meeting room into a happy and safe place for parents and toddlers to come. About one hundred of these folks have signed up to come to the church on the 6th December for a Christmas Celebration. There will be the usual activities including Christmas crafts and cookie decorating and then a presentation of the Christmas Story through puppetry and music. We are both in the choir. A first for Richard! Quite challenging for him as

he has to sing bass!

The Catholic Church is also busy here and very dedicated in what they do. I think it is because to be a Christian here you have to really mean business. Richard sits in the sweltering heat on a Saturday evening and then comes with me to CDPC on a Sunday morning where the air conditioning is really strong!

How have you integrated into local society? Do you do any voluntary work?

“YCK is a 24 hour crisis and drop-in centre, providing meals, activities, therapy, case management and educational programmes for at risk children of Chow Kit.”



This is the mission statement of a centre that I have become involved with. A lot of the children are refugees from Myanmar—Rohingya that you may have heard about on the news. Not only being refugees who have arrived here without parents, some of these kids have also been rescued from trafficking situations. I work with Barbara, an American who also worships at CDPC, and I go every Wednesday and Thursday, a journey taking about an hour and a half. We work with the children who are newly arrived and who don't yet have a place in the educational programme of the centre. Places in what is called the “Homeschool” are limited and they don't have enough staff anyway to help the new children so we try to give them an individual programme which will hopefully prepare them for moving on to the formal classroom. We don't have a common language amongst us so you can imagine the fun that can be! We mainly teach in English but as I have to teach one wee chap to read in Bahasa Malay, I'm learning a lot of Malay words. It can be heartbreaking at times but it is a privilege to be able to make at least a little difference in their lives.

Early in December Barbara is running a week long English Club with the help of volunteers from CDPC and then on the Saturday we have a Christmas programme. Her hope is that as well as blessing the children, the staff will see that it is the church who are giving of themselves and that we do this because we love and serve Christ.

How will you spend Christmas?

You can see from the above that we will be involved in several Christmas activities through the church and we will be singing again on the 20th December.

We are expecting our friend Norman from Bargeddie to be with us on Christmas Day and maybe another friend, Larry, who works with Richard. We are making the most of the cheap flights available to us here and are heading off to Melbourne for a week on Boxing Day. We will greet 2016 eleven hours ahead of you!



Chow Kit is a poorer area which lies in the shadow of the Petronas Towers

Tell us what God has been teaching you through this experience.

Interacting with expats who don't believe at all and living in a multi-faith society has given me a lot to think about. The dedication of the Christians here challenges me to evaluate where I am in relation to truly following in Christ's steps. Overall I continue to be amazed at God's patience with us and the grace He shows to us. I am trying to work out how to show that grace to others.

May you know His peace and Blessings at Christmas and in the coming year.



Afternoon tea in the Mall

The intrepid adventurer in a mossy forest in the Cameron Highlands



Uddingston Pride

We at Park Church are proud to work alongside Uddingston Pride, a local charity whose strap line is **Making Uddingston a Better Place**. It was formed in 2000 by some residents who were worried at the deterioration in standards in the village and since then it has gone from strength to strength. We partner with it in hosting the annual Art Exhibition, participating in the clean up day and also in hosting a schools' choir concert and tea room for the Christmas Open Day. Uddingston Pride is responsible for the village being adorned with so many beautiful flowers in the summer months. Below is a report from their secretary. Like any organisation they are always looking for new volunteers and would be glad to hear from you if you fancy giving a hand!



Britain in Bloom Result

At the Britain in Bloom Award ceremony in Sunderland in October, Uddingston received a **Silver Gilt Award**. Not quite good enough to win our category, but a very good result anyway; we were very pleased to have reached that standard. After the ceremony, we met with the judges who gave us some very useful ideas on how we can improve the appearance of the Village. So next year, we are determined to have Uddingston look better than ever, and, who knows, we might achieve Gold standard once again.

However, at the ceremony, we were delighted to receive a special award: **The RHS Britain in Bloom Young People's Award**, for our work with pre-school and primary school children. Only two communities were given this award, both from Scotland, and we were thrilled when our name was called out as one of the winners. Altogether, a memorable evening.



Christmas Open Day

We hope you will join us on Sunday, 6th December, at our annual Christmas Open Day, (12.30-4pm) and enjoy all the fun, music and dance that goes on during the afternoon. The local school children will be singing in Park Church at 2pm so come along and listen and get into the festive mood! Park Church Hall will be open for Tea and Coffee all afternoon.

You might even meet Santa, who has promised to come to Uddingston and chat to the children. It's an important fund-raising day for Uddingston Pride, so your continued support is greatly appreciated.

Crofthead Park

At last, some good news about the Crofthead Park Refurbishment project. After seemingly endless discussions with The Big Lottery, we have at last reached the stage where a contractor has been appointed to carry out the work. We expect them to start on site early in January, and, all being well, complete the work by Easter. Uddingston will then have a bright, modern play park which we hope will give pleasure to all of us, from the very young to the not-so-young.



All photos courtesy of David Lorimer

Dates for the Diary

Sunday 6 December

Communion Sunday

Visit from Norman Liddell from the Scottish Bible Society

The Village Christmas Afternoon from 1-4pm
Joint Primary Schools Concert at 2pm in the church
Hall open for tea/coffee



Sunday 13 December

Morning Service at 10.30am

"This is how it came about!"—Matthew 1 v 18-24

Advent Supper at 6.30pm in the church



Advent
SUPPER

Sunday 20 December

Morning Service at 10.30am

The Angry Hotel Keeper—Nativity Play with the children from the Sunday School

Carol Service in the Bield Housing at 6.30pm



Christmas Eve

Crib Service for young and old alike—6.30-7pm

Carols in the Community

We will gather in the Church Hall at 7pm before going round various venues to bring the message of Christmas in song!

Traditional Watchnight Service at 11.30pm in the church



Christmas Day

Celebrate the King! At 10.30am

Christmas Sunday

The Christmas that never was!

A play performed by Jerry and Elizabeth Averil

Wednesday 30 December

The Christmas Candle

Family Film night with Supper at 7pm



First Sunday of the Year
3 January 2016

Readings, Reflections and Informal Communion

At 10.30am



Please note there will be no Evening Fellowship on the 27 December 2015 or 3 January 2016!

Reflection on Christmas...

Who can add to Christmas? The perfect motive is that God so loved the world. The perfect gift is that He gave His only Son. The only requirement is to believe in Him. The reward of faith is that you shall have everlasting life.

Corrie Ten Boom

*Glory to God
in the highest,
& on earth
PEACE,
good will
toward men.*
LUKE 2:14



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