

Burnside Blairbeth Church

Judges

Faithless People, Faithful God



Othniel * Ehud * Deborah/Barak * Gideon * Jephthah * Samson

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Contact

No 161

January 2023

Dear Friends,



For the last few years political life has felt chaotic. This year has been stable compared to last – after all none of the major parties have changed their leader and the UK has only had one Prime Minister so far. Nevertheless, with a background of strikes and noisy political debate at home, war in Ukraine, awful repression of women in Afghanistan, a barbarous regime in Iran and many other places, we can't pretend we live in peaceful times.

On Sunday mornings we have been studying the book of Judges and it makes our world appear stable. We read of idolatry, deception, murder, genocide and much else besides. The world it describes seems barbarous and war torn. Life appears to have been treated as having limited value. Yet there are themes which have resonated for me as we've been going through this difficult part of Scripture.

One of the recurring refrains is that “the Israelites did evil in the eyes of the Lord.” Very often the writer doesn't describe what that evil looked like – just the consequences, which usually included defeat in battle. What is described however, is what led to the evil. There was always some sort of compromise where the Israelites copied the cultures which surrounded them, rather than retaining a distinctive witness for God. This book repeatedly challenges God's people to be obedient to Him rather than simply “going with the flow.” That challenge is no less difficult for us in the church of 2023 than it was for the Israelites several millennia ago. When Jesus prayed for His disciples in John 17, He said:

“My prayer is not that you take them out of the world but that you protect them from the evil one. They are not of the world, even as I am not of it.” (John 17; 15-16)

The need for the protection mentioned by Jesus is very real today.

Another feature of Judges is something we find throughout the Old Testament. Events which are described in a few lines of text take place over decades, if not centuries. Throughout Judges there are intermittent periods of stability for the Israelites. These are described as lasting 40 years or 80 years – in other words half a lifetime or a lifetime. From our human perspective that feels like a long time, but for the eternal God the perspective is different. The psalmist expresses it poetically when he says:

“A thousand years in your sight are like a day that has just gone by, or like a watch in the night. “(Psalm 90; 4)

When we are in the middle of a crisis it can feel unending. When we look at the world around us and we despair, we can think that there is little hope. That is when it is good to remind ourselves that the God who is with us, who lived as a human in the person of Jesus, is also the eternal God and He sees a much bigger picture than is ever possible for us.

Leadership is a major theme in Judges. The major way in which God intervened on behalf of His people was to give them a new leader. This book tells the story of what happened under a variety of leaders we have labelled Judges. The character of these leaders varied. Some of them seem very unlikely candidates to be used by God in any way. Yet despite their fallibilities and sometimes downright evil, still God worked His purposes out. This is both a comfort and a challenge. It is comforting because it tells us that God uses all sorts of people – not always the obvious superstars. It is challenging because it is a reminder that

whatever we are involved in, it is always God's work rather than ours and there are many times when He works despite us rather than because of us.

One of the commentators who I've found very helpful in preaching about Judges argues that Judges is a book for our times which he describes as **"an age of individualism when every man or woman does what is right in his or her own eyes, when love has been divorced from commitment, and when people need more than ever to discover, or rediscover, the redeeming love of God in Christ."**

May God help us to meet Jesus, the living Word, as we study this part of the Bible – God's written word.

Your friend and minister,

William

Christmas Gift Bags

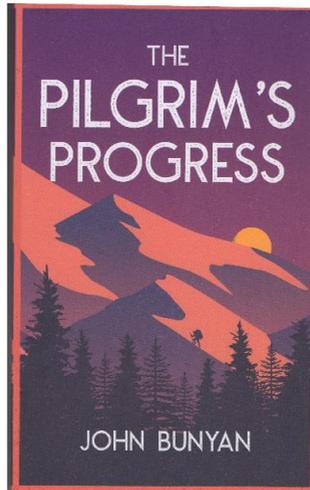
This Christmas we distributed gift bags from the church to nearly 100 households – all of them members of our congregation. Some went to those who are housebound or in care homes, and others went to people who have had a particularly difficult year. The team involved in delivering all the bags did a great job, having good conversations with many and building relationships with people that have not been able to join us in person for worship for a while.

This year the bag included an updated version of John Bunyan’s “Pilgrim’s Progress”. This book was first published 345 years ago and it has never been out of print since. It is considered a classic of English literature and has encouraged Christians in their journey of faith for all these centuries. Most people probably have a copy of this book somewhere in their house, or have read it sometime during their lives. However this is a particularly good version, with the language modernised enough to make it easier to read, while not losing the splendour of Bunyan’s prose. We really hope it will encourage people to read about this journey of the Christian life again, it still all applies to life today.

Some people have already given me some good feedback, telling me how much they have enjoyed reading their copy. One very well-read lady told me this was her favourite version (she had several on her shelves). Another told me that she thought that she could appreciate the struggles in the book so much better now after her own long life of Christian commitment, when it hadn’t made so much sense when she had read it as a girl. She said “My family wanted to read it too, and I encouraged them to buy their own – I want to keep this copy!”

I also found encouragement and strength in this book through some of the darkest times in my life. If you have not read it recently, or never got round to reading it, please give it a shot and tell me how you get on. If you would like to read this version of Pilgrim's Progress and were not on the gift bag list, I still have a few copies left – available for a small donation.

Kate Airlie
Pastoral Worker



Burnside Blairbeth Church Financial Update

December saw the completion of our financial year and the preparation of our Annual Accounts is well under way. Milne Craig will again carry out the Independent Examination of these and in the next Contact I will update you with the final year end position.

We were able to meet all of our financial commitments to our Missionary Partners by the end of December. However, our financial position is more challenging than it has been in recent years and on completion of our independent examination, I will update you further. These financial challenges are not unique to our church but we will need to address these further during the course of this year.

I wish you all a good New Year and thank you for your continued financial support to our congregation.

Andrew Telfer
Treasurer

Reverse Advent Calendar - Thank You



Some weeks ago, the congregation was invited to look at an Advent Calendar from the reverse side, to encourage donations to our local food bank during December.

The response to this was exceptional - car-load after car-load was removed from the church after being sorted into boxes, and deliveries were made directly to the food bank.

Many thanks to everyone who became involved in this project, by donating, sorting, or delivering the items. This was an all inclusive activity, and we are grateful to everyone for their contributions.

Catherine Macdonald



Church Kitchen

One of the good things about church life returning to 'pre-covid normality' is that we are using our church kitchen more regularly. This is just a wee reminder about our procedures and paperwork. The procedures are in line with environmental health requirements and are on posters and in the folders in the kitchen. Paperwork has to be completed as Environmental Health Inspections are done at random. Each organisation using the kitchen should have a designated person with a food hygiene certificate to check that things are in order and to let us know about anything we need to address. If anyone has any questions or queries, please come and have a chat with me.

Thank you to all the hardworking kitchen volunteers.

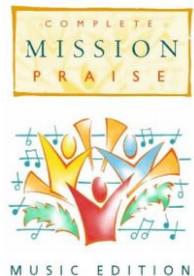
Mairi Wilson

Kitchen Hygiene Coordinator

Message from the Music Group

We would be grateful if those who have borrowed copies of Mission Praise could return them to the Church as early as possible. The music group have a limited number and all are needed.

Thank you



Burnside Blairbeth Guild

“Wee seeds, Big Trees”



Our Christmas Fayre at the end of November was well supported, despite the inclement weather, and we were delighted that well over £1,600 was raised for our various projects. This was followed by our Christmas lunch, with around fifty members enjoying some quality time together with a lovely meal and some carol singing.

All this seems a long way away now as the new Guild session is well underway. Our January meetings have been held in the nearby premises of the Burnside Bowling Club, which has proved an excellent alternative to our church premises whilst the work on the church heating system progresses. We hope to be back in our usual venue in February.

We have heard about the work of various charities at recent meetings including Scotland's Charity Air Ambulance, St Rollox Community Outreach and, from our own Morag McIntosh, about fundraising over the years for a variety of charities. We continue to meet on a Monday afternoons between 2 pm and 4 pm and all are most welcome!

Catherine Nelson

Messy Christmas

The very first Christmas was Messy. A family displaced from their home, shepherds bursting in on a woman who has just given birth, angels singing and animals pooing!



It seems right then to celebrate Christmas Messily right here and now.

Our Messy Christmas was packed full of people of all ages from babies to over 80 year olds – 113 of us.

We did a lot of activities to get us ready for the celebration. Once we were all gathered together to celebrate, we spontaneously told the story of that first Messy Christmas together, bringing our hopes, dreams and prayers to God as we did so.

We sang and at the end had a massive indoor snowball fight. The whole evening finished off with a 3 course Christmas dinner.

People were also able to take away a warm blanket, a flask and a hot water bottle – all part of our desire as a church family to be a “warm” place even when our heating is broken!

Jen Robertson



It was a busy Hall for Messy Church with over 100 people coming along to join in.

Missionary Partners

Report from Andrew Robertson's trip to Northern Iraq

Visiting the Kramers

In November I had the wonderful opportunity to visit two of our missionary partners Jerry and Stacy Kramer who live and work mainly in Erbil, in Kurdistan.

Jerry and Stacy have been serving God in northern Iraq on and off for the last eight years. They have been sharing their faith with the local people, whilst also meeting the practical needs of people in a handful of the refugee camps that are in Kurdistan.

The refugee camps that they work in are for Syrian Kurds and Yazidis (who are technically internally displaced people). Currently there is a lot of need in the camps due to several factors: coldness due to winter, the United Nations and non-governmental organizations reducing their funding; and there is a possibility of a new refugee crisis. This is since both Turkey and Iran have been considering military operations in the region.



Tents like these are home to thousands of refugees; an average stay can be up to 18 years in this type of accommodation

“Love for the Least” (Jerry and Stacy’s ministry organisation) are currently looking into assisting the camps by supplying kerosene, heaters, possibly boilers, and food packages. They will be doing this all whilst continuing their programs of teaching children the local language (that their school curriculum has been changed to), running school support classes, and organising a camp cleaning project.

It was amazing to go to discipleship-making training courses for new Iranian believers in Istanbul and to hear their stories of becoming followers of Christ, to see their love for Jesus and to listen to them share their testimonies boldly (which often included stories of Jesus coming to them or family members in dreams).

It was such a blessing to accompany Jerry into to Syrian Kurd refugee camps and to see the beautiful people who live there and have the opportunity to listen to their stories.

They were such an encouragement to me in how they trust in God in such difficult circumstances.

It was a privilege to visit them recently and see how God is clearly at work in the region.



Please remember refugees in your prayers and other Christians around the world. We are part of such an incredible family of worldwide believers and I would encourage you to take every opportunity you have to know more of them.

Andrew Robertson

Announcements

Obituaries

“My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion for ever”.

Psalm 73, vs 26

❖ Wendy McDowall

Wendy was born to Robert and Joan Locke in Pretoria, South Africa.

When Wendy was growing up, they were tempestuous times as Apartheid was introduced in 1948 when she was a teenager. When Wendy finished school, she went to secretarial college. She worked for a lot of companies and was a good typist.



Wendy met Aubrey in 1963 in South Rhodesia. He was a Scot working there as a journalist and they ended up getting married in 1964 in Salisbury, South Rhodesia. Wendy and Aubrey had two sons, Keith born in 1965 and Bruce born in 1969.

The family moved between Scotland, South Africa and Rhodesia for a few years until 1982. When Rhodesia declared independence in that year, Aubrey was arrested twice under the regime of Robert Mugabe and the family eventually decided to return to Scotland, settling first in Netherlee, Glasgow in before moving to Greystone Avenue in Burnside in 1983.

Wendy became a Christian in the mid 1970's and the family noticed the impact that made on her life. One practical outcome was that Wendy became involved in Burnside Church and that was where she found friendships. As a sociable person, Wendy was good at making and keeping friends. She went to concerts with Anne Cowan, she got involved in Bible studies at the church and also became part of the Guild, she was also good at sewing and making clothes.

When she became a grandmother Wendy become known as "Ouma" which is the Afrikaans word for granny. She was a hands on granny and loved the role and that love was reciprocated.

Aubrey died in 2015 and Wendy had health issues over the last decade. Latterly, she suffered a stroke which deprived her of speech – a sore loss for her - but she didn't lose her resilience, something that is apparent in her whole life story.



❖ Margaret Wilson

Margaret Wilson died on Boxing Day in the Rodger Park Nursing Home after a recurrence of non-Hodgkin's lymphoma.

She was born in Denistoun and also spent part of her childhood in Carntyne. It was here she came to faith and she met John, her husband, when the youth fellowship of which he was part, visited Carntyne youth fellowship.



Margaret worked as a primary school teacher while John was a minister in the Congregational Church. They served at a church in Edinburgh before coming to Rutherglen Congregational Church where John was minister for 30 years. When they came to Burnside Blairbeth Margaret was involved in the Guild and continued her lifetime love of music. She had a constant stream of visitors in Rodger Park showing the strength of the friendships she had formed over the years.

Margaret was mother to Fiona, Pamela and Lorna who died in 2011. She delighted in being a grandmother. In preparation for her death Margaret had written copious notes of her life story. These spoke loudly of her love for Jesus and willingness to follow wherever He led her.



❖ Moira Dart

Moira Dart was the eldest daughter of William and Betty Aitken and grew up in Blairbeth.

She had one sister, Elizabeth. She trained as a shorthand typist and worked for Colville's. Later on in life she worked as a secretary for her brother-in-law Ian.



Although Moira went out with her husband Ian at school it was many years later when she married Ian Dart. By this time Moira was a mother to Andrea and Scott and it was a delight to her to now have Ian's daughter Yvonne as part of her family. Moira loved family get togethers, particularly Christmas Day when the wider family would get together.

She was a caring, fun-loving Gran who loved playing silly games with her grandchildren.

Moira served in Rodger Memorial Church from a young age. She was a Sunday school teacher and was involved in all aspects of the congregation's life. Later she became an elder in Burnside Blairbeth where her pastoral care gifts and love of people were used for the benefit of the congregation.

Moira was diagnosed with pancreatic cancer. She was treated for this, but it recurred. She faced her death as she had lived her life – with trust in God and a desire to accept His will for her life.



The next Issue of Contact

Copy Deadline: 12 March 2023

Available for distribution: 26 March 2023

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Services are on YouTube – search for:

Burnside Blairbeth Church live stream

- CDs will be available as soon as possible after the Sunday morning services and will be delivered to homes. If you, or someone you know, would like to have a copy delivered, please contact:

Kate Airlie Mob: 07787 558 790 // kate.airlie@burnsideblairbeth.church

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Burnside Blairbeth Church * Scottish Charity No. SC006633

Church of Scotland Congregational Reference: 160844

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