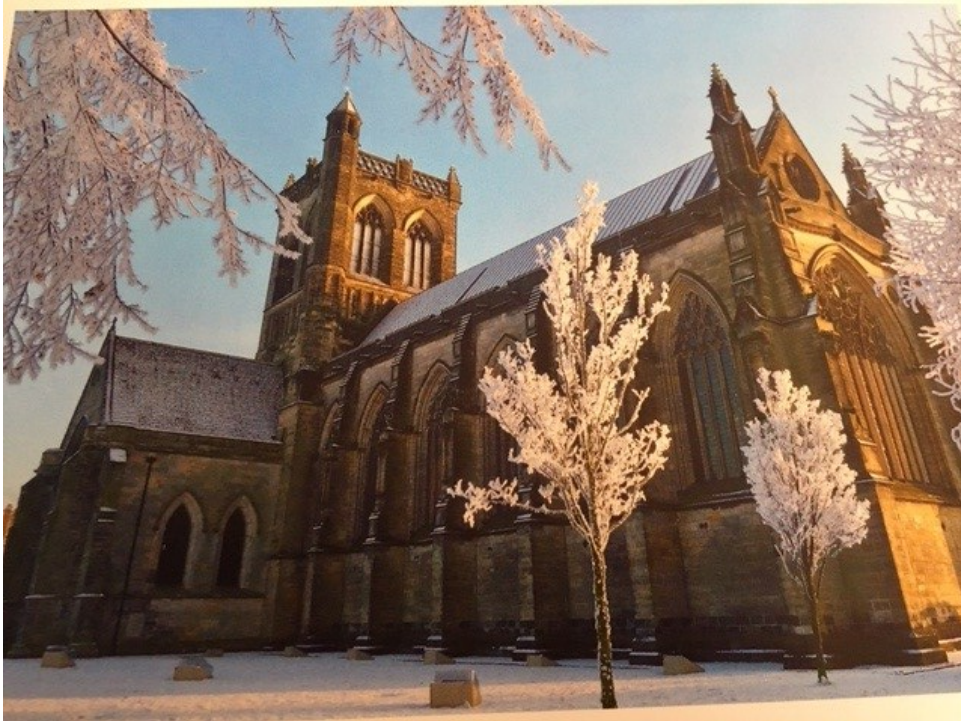


Paisley Abbey



Abbey Herald

December 2024

*Merry Christmas
and a Happy New Year !*

During November the Abbey Finance Committee undertook a Financial Review of Congregational Giving. It's the type of exercise that most churches undertake every few years and, because of Covid, it has been a number of years since the last one. Yet, would you believe, I can almost hear some individuals sighing. *"Not asking for money, again!"* .

Well: the Abbey Finance Committee and, therefore, Kirk Session, is absolutely right to do so. And the reason is obvious.

Money is important. It is important to all of us. In fact, it is one of the most important parts of our lives. Most of us think about it a lot. Some of us worry about it a lot. The importance of money goes very deep; and our attitude towards money says a lot about the kind of person we are. That is why Jesus talked about money more than he ever talked about anything else except the kingdom of God. Jesus understood clearly that the relationships we hold and the perspectives on life that we fashion have a lot to do with how we handle our money. For Jesus, that is a fundamental spiritual issue – just as the way we handle our bodies, and our time, and our lives are spiritual issues.

If our bodies, and our time matter to us (and, I am sure they most certainly do) then it must follow that our spiritual faith matters to us too. Our faith tells us that all we have comes ultimately from the God of all Goodness and Love. That is not a pious platitude. It is simply a fundamental belief of Christian Faith that makes us different from almost everybody else. God gives because God loves. Indeed: God is love.

As members of Paisley Abbey, we have so much for which we should give thanks. A truly beautiful, historic building, the walls of which seep the prayers and thanksgivings of generations. Music which, in its playing and in its singing, is acknowledged the world over as being of the highest human standards. We follow a liturgy which reflects the human condition and seeks to satisfy our longings. And we can participate in worship which in its essence is thought-provoking, inspiring, comforting and challenging.

And, if in winter it should be thought that 'the Abbey could sometimes be warmer', maybe we need to consider if our own level of regular giving to Abbey funds is at a sufficient level to allow extra energy bills to be paid.

Thinking about our own approach to money and understanding it with a sense of God's gracious goodness towards us, can make a big difference. It can help us see the whole issue in a new and positive way.

So: please consider carefully and prayerfully not only what you can give to Abbey funds, but also what you believe and how your giving can be an opportunity for you to make a real difference to the Abbey's life and ministry.

ADVENT BLESSING

'Advent tells us Christ is near'. So begins an old children's hymn. That one sentence says it very well. The whole purpose of Advent is to help us remember that, in the midst of everything else that is going on during December, Christ is near. He is very near,

All that makes the Church's Advent different from the world's 'holiday season' is found in that one sentence, . We will all spend the next three weeks preparing for Christmas in one way or another. No doubt, they will be full of hectic, busy, joyous (for some), depressing and hollow (for others); and a mixture of all that (for most). We will spend vast amounts of energy, emotion, time, money and effort in our preparations as most if us always do.

All this can enliven us, and drain us, in equal measure. It can move us, and leave us paralysed; it can excite us, and leave us terrified.

During Advent, which stretches right to the midnight hour on Christmas Eve, the Church calls us to pay heed to the man the Christ-child became. It calls us to pause temporarily for some silent contemplation and to ponder what the Christmas Festivity really means to us. We don't have to do anything to bring the love of the Christ-child to us. We are already loved. We don't have to put the 'Christ' back into Christmas. He never left. But we do need to discover him, to recognise him, and to worship him.

So Advent calls us to wait, to watch and to be prepared. If we can discipline ourselves to do this, we just might find ourselves empowered by a Love which is never absent, but often overlooked: missed in the rush for other things.

Advent tells us the truth.

Advent tells us Christ is near.

As Advent gives way to Christmas may Christ's love bring you and blessing beyond compare.

Jim Gibson
Minister
Extra Chaplain to His Majesty The King in Scotland.

Legend of the Shepherd Boy and the Wreath.

A poor boy had no gift to give the Holy Child, so he made a tiny crown of leaves from a nearby holly bush. Compared to the expensive gifts that others had given, the crown seemed of little value. So the little boy began to cry as he presented it. But when the Christ-child touched the crown with his tiny hand, the leaves suddenly gleamed and the boy's teardrops turned to scarlet berries.

Ever since, through the centuries, the Holly Wreath became a traditional Christmas decoration, reminding us of the miracle of Christ's birth.



A Poem for Reflection:

We Wait!

Every year for four weeks we wait.
Ours is not a passive waiting: we
wonder as we wait.
We encourage one another in order
to be a community of fresh expectancy.
And we pray, “O come, O come, Emmanuel”
and “Come, O long expected Jesus”.
Our generation is impatient.
Advent lasts too long. Notes are passed
to the minister, “Why don’t we just
sing some carols?” Everybody is
already having Christmas except
the Church!

By Fred Craddock.



WE THREE KINGS OF ORIENT AREN'T

Writer, historian and self-styled 'grumpy old bloke' Nick Page offers a humorous look at some of our classic carols.

Christmas. It's one of the best-known stories in the world. The innkeeper and the stable, the three kings and the shepherds are hard-wired into our collective consciousness. And nothing reinforces our image of Christmas so much as our favourite carols. We ding-dong merrily on high with gusto. We fa-la-la-la-la like mad. We rarely stop to consider that, when we look at the Bible accounts and consider the history, a load of our favourite carol lyrics are, well, just plain wrong.

I saw three ships come sailing in - No you didn't. Firstly Bethlehem has no major rivers, lakes, canals or other waterways. Secondly it's 35 miles inland. So if anyone really did see three ships sailing into Bethlehem, either the ships had built up a remarkable head of speed when they hit the Judean coast, or – and I think this is more likely – the witness had been drinking. (Apparently, the words of the carol actually come from a legend about three ships taking the supposed relics of the magi to Cologne in the 12th century. So I'm not quite sure why the song keeps going on about 'Bethlehem in The morning'.)

In the bleak midwinter - Er, probably not. The Bible doesn't tell us the time of year. The date of 25 December for Jesus' birthday was not agreed until the fourth century AD. Earlier traditions plump for November. (In 194 AD, Clement of Alexandria said it was 18 November.) The average temperature for Bethlehem region in November is 12 degrees Celsius. Not warm, exactly, but not much chance of 'snow on snow, snow on snow'. (And while we're at it, it would have been November in the year 5 BC, assuming that Herod the Great died, as is generally agreed, in 4 BC).

Once in royal David's city, stood a lowly cattle shed - No it didn't. The Bible never mentions a stable. Nor does it mention an inn. The Greek word Luke uses for 'inn' is kataluma, which more often means 'guest room', 'spare room', or anywhere you might put visitors. Luke says the Last Supper is held in a kataluma – a guest room. And anyway, this was Joseph's family home; they wouldn't need an inn, there would be relatives with whom to stay. What the story tells us is that the relatives were poor and their home was crowded with no more room for guests. And as for the stable, the Bible says Jesus was laid in a manger, but this would have been inside the house in peasant homes of the time. They were on two levels and at night peasant families brought their animals into the lower level (their body heat acted as a kind of primitive central heating). There would have been mangers set into the slope to the upper level, and it was there that Jesus was laid. So, no inn or stable. In Luke's account, Jesus is put downstairs with the animals, because the rest of the house is full.

While shepherds watched - Well there were shepherds, of course. But they were not the most reputable of characters. Jewish rabbinic literature says of herdsmen that 'their trade is the trade of thieves.' Another rabbinical list includes them alongside other low-lives such as dice players, usurers and tax collectors. 'For herdsmen, tax collectors and publicans, is repentance hard', it was said. As to washing their socks, the early sources remain silent.

We three kings of Orient are - No you aren't. The Bible doesn't mention kings. It talks of 'magi', a term associated with astrologers from Chaldea (the ancient name for the marshy lands in the far south of Mesopotamia, in modern day Iraq). We get three from the number of gifts they brought, but no number of people is mentioned.

So, all in all, the carols have a shaky grasp on history. But let's not be too 'Bah! Humbug!'. They do remind us of the joy of the event. This was good news for all mankind. Forget the innkeeper and the stable, and the kings and the miraculous ships: for the Gospel writers and their first audiences, the story of Christmas was that the Son of God came into the world of ordinary, simple peasants. That is something worth singing about. Oh and by the way, Good King Wenceslas? He was only a Duke. Merry Christmas, everyone.

Nick Page is the author of over seventy books for adult and children, including Kingdom of Fools, a history of the early church, and The Wrong Messiah, a historical look at the life of Jesus. Either, frankly, would make an excellent Christmas present. www.nickpage.co.uk



ELDER DUTY TEAMS

December - Marion Sommerville's Team

January - Team 3

February - Michael McGill's Team

PARISH REGISTER NOVEMBER

Funeral

1 November Elizabeth Tomlinson

19 November Margaret Vallance

Baptism

17 November Zachary Uisdean McPherson

ALLOVUS

Wednesdays - 1.30 pm - 3.30 pm

**Varied programme of activities, speakers and outings
Refreshments served**

**Next few dates
4 & 18 December
Re starting on Wednesday 29 January 2025.**



RENFREWSHIRE FOODBANK

The congregation of Paisley Abbey generously supports the Foodbank set up to serve our local community in Paisley. By doing so we are trying to assist the most vulnerable people for whom life can prove the most difficult. The Foodbank distributes to those for whom the need is most urgent. If you would like to contribute, please bring along your donations to the Abbey on the last Sunday of the month. Anything you may be able to donate will be much appreciated.

In the last year the Abbey congregation have donated over £700 in cash much of which is gift aided which adds an extra 25p to every pound you give. Thank you to all who faithfully donate each month and to those who now give support. Your donations show the community that the congregation of the Abbey care for others and actively contribute to the wellbeing of all.



CLOISTER CAFÉ

On July 17 2024 the Cloister Cafe was re-launched, supported by a very small, but dedicated team of volunteers.

The team, currently only 14 in number, covers 12 shifts per week. You don't need to be a whizz with numbers to realise this is a huge commitment by everyone, and one which cannot be sustained indefinitely. In November, average takings were over £70 per day.

We have great plans for the cafe, and there is scope to increase this valuable service to our local community and international visitors.

In order to develop the cafe further, the team needs to expand. Ideally, we would like a pool of 20-30 volunteers.

With an increased team, we would be able to work in pairs, and provide a greater variety of food and drinks.

Please please consider joining our group in 2025.

If you wish to know more, please contact the Abbey office.

info@paisleyabbey.org.uk or Jan Norris jan.norris@paisleyabbey.org.uk



AHMADIYYA MUSLIM ELDERS ASSOCIATION GLASGOW

Members from the Ahmadiyya Elders Association who attended the Morning Service in the Abbey on Sunday 17 November along with Revd. Jim Gibson.



ABBEY SHOP



*New in the Abbey Gift Shop,
light up glass angels.*

*These beautiful figures are
part of a range of glass
angels currently in stock.*

*We have a great selection
of Children's Christmas
books and a wide range of
gifts and decorations.*



Linda Barrett
Abbey Manager

Christmas & Epiphany Services

Sunday 8 December - Advent 2

11 am Morning Worship on the Second Sunday in Advent

Thursday 12 December

11 am Accord Carol Service

Sunday 15 December - Advent 3

11 am Morning Worship for the Third Sunday in Advent

Sunday 22 December - Advent 4

11 am Morning Worship for the Fourth Sunday in Advent

Tuesday 24 December—Christmas Eve

3 pm Christmas Shoppers' Carol Service

7.30 pm Lessons and Carols upon Christmas Eve

Wednesday 25 December - Christmas Day

10.30 am Christmas Day Choral Communion

including Charpentier's 'Messe de Minuit'

sung by the Abbey Choir accompanied by a small orchestra.

Sunday 29 December - First Sunday after Christmas Day

11 am Morning Worship with Sacrament of Baptism

Sunday 5 January - Epiphany

11 am Morning Worship for Epiphany



SATURDAY LUNCH HOUR CONCERTS

Saturdays at 12.30 pm

Admission is £5 payable at the door

21 December

Programme of Christmas Music

Abbey Brass

25 January

Programme of music in celebration of Robert Burns

Diane Merson-Jones (violin) George McPhee

15 February

Alastair Savage (Violin)

22 March

Scottish Clarinet Choir

26 April

Abbey Strings

24 May

Cheryl and Gordon Cree

21 June

Douglas Lawrence (violin)

EVENTS AT THE ABBEY

RENFREWSHIRE SCHOOLS CONCERT

Tuesday 3 & Wednesday 4 December at 7 pm

LONDON CONCERTANTE – *Viennese Christmas by Candlelight*

Strauss, Tchaikovsky & Brahms

Thursday 5 December at 7.30 pm

Tickets from £21 available from candlelightconcerts.co.uk

RAINBOW VALLEY CHRISTMAS CONCERT

Saturday 7 December at 1.30 pm

Tickets £15 (adult) & £5 (child) available from Rainbow Valley

CITY MUSIC PRODUCTIONS - *Vivaldi Four Seasons at Christmas*

Sunday 8 December at 7.30 pm

Tickets from £20.52 available from www.citymusicproductions.co.uk

VARIETY CHILDRENS CHARITY CAROL CONCERT

Tuesday 10 December at 10.30 am

ACCORD CAROL SERVICE

Thursday 12 December at 11 am

Tickets £5 available from Accord

LONDON CONCERTANTE – *Christmas at the Movies*

Home Alone, Elf, White Christmas & many more

Sunday 15 December at 6 pm

Tickets from £21 available from candlelightconcerts.co.uk

COME AND SING - *Fauré Requiem*

Sunday 2 February

More details to follow

SCOTTISH SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

Elgar The Dream of Gerontius

Thursday 27 February at 7.30 pm

Tickets available from bbc.co.uk/bbcso

MUSIC FOR DECEMBER

1 December

11 am
Te Deum
Anthem

4 pm

8 December

11 am
Jubilate Deo
Anthem

15 December

11 am
Benedictus
Anthem

22 December

11 am
Magnificat
Anthem

24 December

3 pm
7.30 pm

25 December

10.30 am

29 December

11 am
Carols

Advent Sunday

Morning Service

O Thou, the central orb

Gibbons (Short Service)
Wood

Advent Carol Service

Advent 2

Morning Service

Laetenur coeli

Weelkes (Short Service)
Byrd

Advent 3

Morning Service

This is the record of John

Gibbons (Short Service)
Gibbons

Advent 4

Morning Service

Hymn to the Virgin

Gibbons (Short Service)
Britten

Christmas Eve

Shoppers Service

Lessons and Carols upon Christmas Eve

Christmas Day

Service of Choral Communion

Including Charpentier's 'Messe de Minuit'
sung by the Abbey Choir

First Sunday after Christmas Day

Morning Service

THE PLACE OF PAISLEY . . . AN APARTMENT FIT FOR A KING

**God gives not Kings the style of Gods in vain,
For on his throne his Sceptre do they sway:
And as their subjects ought them to obey,
So Kings should fear and serve their God again.**

King James VI, *Basillikon Doron* (1598)

As I write, it is the beginning of a new liturgical year - a time of hope-filled anticipation that will culminate in the celebration of the arrival of Jesus. Already that is filling our hearts and minds with the peace, love, and joy that Christmas will bring – the joy heard in our voices when we sing *Hark the glad sound! The Saviour comes, the Saviour promised long. Our wonderful Advent Carol Service has taken us symbolically from darkness into light, helping us to reflect on the coming of Christ who brings light to the world. There can be few more spiritually inspirational experiences than to witness the magnificence of our brilliantly lit Abbey Church echoing its fabled choir's incantation: O Radiant Dawn, Splendour of eternal light . . . come, shine on those who dwell in darkness.*

The final Sunday of the last liturgical year, the Sunday before Advent, was *Christ the King Sunday*. On that day, gospel readings recount Pontius Pilate's interrogation of Jesus: "Are you the King of the Jews?" Jesus' reply, "My kingdom is not from this world," was a response full of meaning beyond the wit of Judaea's Governor to grasp. Pilate's understanding was confined to the idea of a king being an earthly ruler and fails to admit any conception of a heavenly truth, of a kingdom that "is not from this world." His misunderstanding does not necessarily imply that he was narrow-minded or lacking in intelligence. As Christians of today, we have had the great gift of being able to read the gospels and our thinking has been informed accordingly. We are used to interpreting the words of Jesus to have meaning beyond their everyday literal sense.

In the 16th Century, one of the principal drivers for change in the practice of Christianity that led to the Protestant Reformation was the desire to restore the Bible's authority above that of the institutional church. In reaction to the corruption and false teaching that had become rife within the Roman Catholic Church, the Reformation strove to make the Bible more available to everyone. Crucial to achieving that was the creation and dissemination of translations into languages understood by the masses. The earliest translation into English that became popular in Scotland was the *Geneva Bible*, published in 1560. That it was imbued with Calvinist Puritanical thought rendered it distasteful to King James VI.

Following his succession to the throne of England in 1603, King James was challenged by the radical extremism of counter-Reformation Roman Catholicism on one side and Puritanism (which he ranked with the Presbyterianism of the Kirk) on the other. His response was to address openly the issues by hosting the Hampton Court Conference, which resulted in the commissioning of his Authorised Version of the Bible, known to this day as the King James Bible. His interest in the project was far from passive. Even at the age of eight, the precocious James "could speak the French tongue marvellously well and was able extempore to read a chapter out of the Bible into French and out of French into English."

The 27th of March next year will be the 400th Anniversary of the death of James VI and I. Historiographic assessment during those four intervening centuries has consigned him a mixed reputation at best. He has been cast as an ill-mannered, cowardly degenerate with a reputation forever besmirched by his moniker, first applied by Henry IV of France, "the wisest fool in Christendom." "The Wisest Fool" is the title of one of James' most recent biographies, written by Steven Veerapen and offering a fresh, more nuanced assessment than had become the established tradition. It offers a highly readable and compelling argument for the rehabilitation of a misunderstood sovereign's reputation while never resorting to unjustifiable exonerative hagiography.

From the day of his birth in 1566, James - the only son of Mary, Queen of Scots and her second husband, Lord Darnley – was subjected to a life of challenge and turmoil. His showpiece baptism, stage-managed by his mother, was both a political and a religious statement befitting a future King of England as well as Scotland. It was conducted in the Chapel Royal of Stirling Castle with the full ceremonial of the Catholic church, presided over by John Hamilton, Paisley's last Abbot who had become Archbishop of St Andrew's. This induction of James into the Catholic faith was a blatant rejection of the Kirk's demands for a Protestant baptism.

Less than two months following James' baptism, Lord Darnley was murdered, and only three months after that his mother married her third husband, Bothwell, who despite clearly having engineered Darnley's murder, had been acquitted of complicity at a rigged trial. Public outrage prompted a confederation of Protestant and Catholic nobles to rebel against the queen who was taken prisoner and subsequently forced to abdicate in favour of her infant son. Following her escape from Lochleven, Mary, Queen of Scots' forces, the vanguard of which was led by Claud Hamilton, the Commendator of Paisley Abbey, were defeated at the Battle of Langside. Mary and her entourage, which included Archbishop Hamilton (Claud's uncle) fled south. Despite Hamilton's exhortations not to leave Scotland, she crossed the Solway into England where she was to remain in captivity until her execution in 1587. John Hamilton was captured at Dumbarton in 1571, convicted of "art and part" in the murder of the Regent Moray and Lord Darnley, and hanged beside the Mercat Cross of Stirling.

Only a month after his first birthday, blissfully unaware of the dramatic events unfolding around him, James was crowned King of Scots in a ceremony at Stirling's Church of the Holy Rude with John Knox preaching. When Knox died five years later, his dream of a covenanted nation in which parish ministers and their kirk sessions "cared for Scotland body and soul, and for education next to worship," was being realised. The country "was staking the claim of another King, another kingdom.

The Church of Scotland had meantime taken charge of educating the nation's earthly king, still a small boy, whom they determined would become the "best educated and most religious sovereign ever seen." George Buchanan, one of the most famous scholars in Europe at the time, was appointed to be James' chief tutor. Buchanan's harsh and austere manner caused James to fear him, and later to hate even his memory. That reaction led to James' rejection of Buchanan's beliefs, rendering the whole educational experiment to which he had been subjected, counterproductive.



James gradually chose to read beyond what was prescribed for him. In doing so, he discovered a book on the law of monarchy in which Bodin not only advocated absolute power for the sovereign but also that such power was the divine Will of God. This proved to be the founding principle for James' life creed. "It wasn't enough to be absolute: one had to be sacred too. With God on his side, it was sin to be against him." James became a firm believer in the Divine Right of Kings and in the right of his bishops to run the Scottish Church: "No Bishop, No King" he cavilled against Calvinist protests. Perhaps the Church should have been more careful of what it had wished for. As Elizabeth Whitley observed in her book *The Two Kingdoms*, "James grew up educated, and ever ready to preach: but also a cunning dictator, perverted and depraved." The day came when he would destroy the church along with many of its leading ministers, and his legacy in part became civil war, regicide, and a tragic internecine holocaust.



In reference to "two kingdoms," we must not confuse what Jesus meant in saying "My kingdom is not from this world" with James' belief in his divine right to be king. James' creed related only to the rule of an earthly kingdom and the polity of an institutional church. It fell to the famed theologian and religious reformer, Andrew Melville, to put James straight. Famously calling him "God's silly vassal," he asserted: "there are two Kings and two Kingdoms in Scotland: there is Christ Jesus, and his Kingdom the Kirk, whose subject King James VI is, and of His Kingdom not a King nor a Head nor a Lord, but a member."

Following his accession to the throne of England in 1603, and before leaving Edinburgh, James addressed the congregation in St Giles' Kirk. He assured the Scots that they would lose nothing: that he intended to establish peace and concord between the two nations and increase the prosperity of both. He promised to return every three years, little knowing that his first and only "hamecoming" would be delayed until 1617.

Once in England, James sought to promote his idea of a "sincere and perfect union" between his kingdoms. He established a commission to engineer his idea of that union but to little avail. He never would achieve his ambition to bring Scotland and England together as one state, not least because what he envisaged was an anglicisation of Scotland: the Kirk transforming to the English episcopal polity and English law replacing the Scottish legal system.

More than anything, what had prevented James from returning to Scotland was his own profligacy. He lived wildly beyond his means throughout his reign, and the envisaged cost of a Royal Progress north of the border was prohibitive. Finally, the coffers yielded to his persistent coercion (though surely not to the emotional blackmail of his harbouring "a natural and saumon-like affection" to see the land of his birth again!) Once in Scotland, his true motivation became apparent soon enough, but not before the beguiled burgesses of Edinburgh had welcomed him as their "true phoenix, the bright star of their northern firmament" and, more tangibly, with a gift of ten thousand gold marks.

Knowing of James' life creed, it must have come as no surprise when he began to make his political and religious objectives clear. Opening a session of the Scottish Parliament, he exhorted the Scots to embrace the supremacy of their sovereign in spiritual affairs and accept a gradual convergence with English practice. He next convened an ecclesiastical conference, where his proposals met with such resistance that he agreed to refer them to the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland. When the Assembly met in 1618, he forced through his *Five Articles of Perth* - measures intended to bring the worship and government of the Church of Scotland into line with the Church of England.

However, such was the strength of opposition, that he realised his error of judgement and neither enforced the Articles, nor did he try again to introduce ecclesiastical innovations during the remainder of his life.



Perhaps exhausted and frustrated, James resumed his Progress, visiting Linlithgow, Stirling, Glasgow, and Dumfries before crossing the border for a final time *en route* to Carlisle. More to his pleasure than any of these other destinations, the King had diverted to Paisley where he visited his old friends, the Hamiltons, on 24th July 1617. In his history of the Abbey, Cameron Lees described the hospitality afforded to James at “The Place:” he was *received in the “great hall” of Abercorn, and a “pretty boy” delivered a bombastic address, in which he compared himself to “the King’s parrot.”* Doubtless, James was “royally entertained” by it all or might it explain why 270 years were to pass before another monarch came to visit the Abbey?

In the summation of his biography of King James, Veerapen concludes: “it is fitting that he is remembered not simply as the *wisest fool in Christendom* but as a man who loved deeply, sought peace assiduously, joked terribly, and sought a sense of family which seemed always just beyond his reach.”

Happy Christmas!

David C Davidson

PAISLEY ABBEY REPRESENTED AT CLUNIAN CONFERENCES

Three Cluniac conferences were held recently, one in the town of Cluny in the south of Burgundy, another in England, and the third via video link. Unfortunately, some of their dates clashed and prevented the attendance of any individual at all the meetings. Nevertheless, Paisley Abbey was represented by members of the congregation variously travelling to the different destinations.

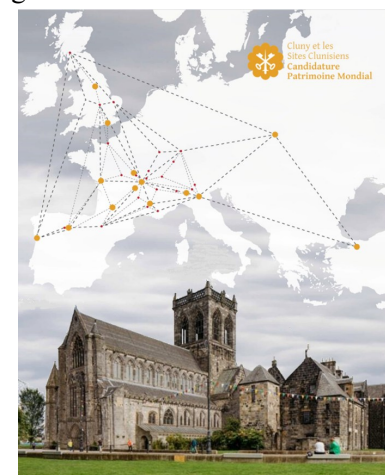
Margaret Sharp, Jan Norris, and Priscilla Routley headed to France for the weekend of festivities in celebration of the European Federation of Cluniac Sites (FESC) 30th anniversary. This was a three-day event that included social gatherings and concerts, in addition to business sessions. Of the last of these categories, an open forum was held that provided an update on the progress of the Federation’s serial application to UNESCO for World Heritage Status. Currently, there are just over 200 FESC member sites of which more than one hundred have committed to being candidates for World Heritage status. Paisley Abbey is one of these.

The application process, though primarily driven from the Federation’s headquarters in Cluny, involves each candidate site in having to seek inclusion on its national tentative list for UNESCO World Heritage. Ordinarily, individual sites would be unlikely to succeed in that quest but because the bid is a serial application on behalf of all the candidates, it is likely that individual countries will be willing to allow inclusion. Although the majority are in France, the sites are spread all over Europe, including Poland in the east, Germany, Italy, Spain, and Portugal.



There are about six sites in England and only one, Paisley Abbey, in Scotland. The process of being included on the UK tentative list is slightly different in Scotland, involving an approach to Historic Environment Scotland who act on behalf of the Scottish Government in recommending sites for inclusion on the UK list.

FESC initiated the preparatory work for its UNESCO application about five years ago. It is at best a protracted process but has now reached the stage where it is necessary to lobby the governments of individual countries for inclusion on tentative lists. Paisley Abbey will be embarking on that in the new year with the support of a range of public bodies, institutions, and corporate partners along with our individual champions from diverse backgrounds but including politicians and **you** if you are reading this!



ABBNEY CONTACTS

The UK Cluniac Forum held its 10th Annual Conference at Wrest Park in Bedfordshire on the same weekend as FESC's meeting. The clash was unfortunate but appeared to have been the result of a miscommunication. Hopefully, future meetings will avoid a similar situation from occurring. The delegates had the opportunity to visit English Heritage's Archaeological Collections Store - a treasure trove of unique and special objects. In addition to a number of presentations, discussions took place regarding the common and shared interests of the UK Cluniac sites, including the need to promote "Cluniac-ness" – the universal values that are the shared inheritance of former Cluniac monasteries. In keeping with Paisley Abbey ratchetting up its Cluniac credentials, our offer to host the next annual conference in October 2025 was met with enthusiasm by the other delegates. Who wouldn't want to come to Scotland and visit our wonderful Abbey?

In addition to the forum, a video conference of the UK Cluniac Sites Collaborative Group was held separately. This body will spearhead the drive for UK World Heritage sites to be included on the tentative list and share knowledge and experience in working towards that goal.

DCD

Minister:	Revd. Jim Gibson
Director of Music:	Dr. George McPhee
Church Manager:	Linda Barrett
Church Secretary:	Karen Kerr
Session Clerk:	Marion Sommerville
Depute Session Clerk:	Dr David Davidson
Treasurer:	Stewart McDougall
Abbey Herald:	Karen Kerr

The Abbey office can be contacted on 0141 889 7654 or by email at -
info@paisleyabbey.org.uk

***The Abbey, shop & café are now open
Monday to Saturday from 10 am - 4 pm with last entry at 3.30 pm
Tuesday & Thursday tours are at 2 pm.***

***Apart from 11 am Sunday Services on 29 December & 5 January,
the Abbey will be closed from 26 December
and will re open on Thursday 9 January at 10 am.***



*Abbey website - www.paisleyabbey.org.uk
Facebook - @paisleyabbey
Instagram - @paisleyabbeyofficial
X (formerly Twitter) - @paisley_abbey*