Paisley Abbey



Abbey Herald

November 2026



Has this been the quickest year ever? It has sometimes seemed that way at the Abbey. I can hardly believe that not only have plans for Advent and Christmas already been made, we are turning our thoughts to what services may offer next Easter. Although a certain necessity demands this, we ought not to get too far ahead of ourselves. For one thing, we don't want to overlook the natural beauty around us.

As the years have passed, the more I have grown to really appreciate the mellow, changing patterns and shades of autumn and the onset of winter. It's the wonderful golden hue of the leaves, the shortening days and misty mornings that captivate my attention. Maybe that is just an indication of advancing years. If it is, I welcome it. I find autumn's splendour evocative just as I find winter's chill strangely cleansing and indicative of coming joyful times and family warmth shortly to be shared and experienced.

THANKSGIVING

In the United States of America, November is their month for Thanksgiving. Much food is consumed and generous hospitality offered. For them, it's almost as though Christmas has arrived early. It's very much a time for Americans to give thanks for their country, and the wisdom, vision and courage of its founding-fathers (something commemorated at a special service held within the Abbey in September) and its greatest sons and daughters.

For all their short-comings, Americans have not forgotten the importance of their history; and the pride they have in it. In this, they are so right and, perhaps, can teach us a lesson.
Remembering is important.

AND REMEMBERING

November begins with the celebration of All Saints' Day. One of the most important of our commemorations. We remember those who have gone before us over the generations and who have bequeathed us a rich legacy: faith, democracy, free-speech, inclusion of the stranger and so much more. Just as we remember those no longer with us whom we have known and loved, and love still. In this way, we keep their lives alive through our memory and our love.

Shortly afterwards, we mark our time of National Remembrance both in worship within the Abbey and by laying our wreathes at the War Memorial in the cloister garden. We wear poppies and, with a generation of younger men and women, we don our service medals. For a short time, we try to keep silent in order to remember the ultimate sacrifice made by so many for our freedoms as we are bid ponder the human cost of every war and conflict whether past or present.

This we do. Once a year.

"Hear, O Israel: the Lord is our God, the Lord alone. You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might. Keep these words that I am commanding you today in your heart. Recite them to your children and talk about them when you are at home and when you are away; when you lie down and when you rise. Bind them as a sign on your hand, fix them as an emblem on your forehead, and write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates".

These words come from the writing of the Old Testament book of Deuteronomy, chapter six and verses four to nine.

In Jewish tradition, these words are placed on the doorposts of Jewish homes within little prayer-boxes. These, often beautiful, containers hold the same sacred words over every room in the house (except, the bathroom, because it is considered unclean) reminding those entering that 'the Lord is their God, the Lord alone'.

Jewish people wear other items to remind them of God's presence: the Yarmulka is worn on the head as a reminder that God is above, and they are part of something bigger. The Prayer Shawl symbolically wraps the wearer in the Word of God, the fringes representing the Ten Commandments; and the Phylacteries wrapped around hands, arms and forehead again representing the God's Word surrounding and reminding.

Instead of a special one-off Day of Remembrance, Jewish tradition provides for a far more constant, consistent reminder of what is really vital to keep central in their living.

Come this month of remembrances, I cannot help recalling images of the factory building in which 8,472 men and boys (even, babies!) were murdered, while women and girls were raped and beaten and made to watch the slaughter, by soldiers of the Serbian army in Bosnia, over a four day period in July 1995. Nor can I forget the cemetery opposite. There I was privileged to meet a mother, and a son, who miraculously survived. Srebrenica is the greatest genocide the world has witnessed since the end of the Second World War.

If Christian Faith encourages us that 'to love God is to love each other', then, that is what must be the catalyst for peace. And if that is so, then maybe we need a more constant, consistent remembrance, if ever things are going to change?

Within our own nation today, antisemitism is on the rise. Members of the Jewish community throughout the UK, including in Scotland, live in fear of racial hatred as innocent, ordinary Jewish people are targeted for the actions of their government in Israel against Palestine.

Maybe, we need to remind ourselves that it was in that country that, centuries ago, a child was born. Following his birth, the child had to be smuggled out of the country in fear of being murdered by the authorities and, then, grew up living under the oppression of an invading power which, eventually, had him put to death.

Yet, in the midst of all that, the God-child Jesus, lived a life dedicated not to the power of humankind, but to the power of love for all humankind.

It's not easy to love someone you dislike or against whom you hold a grudge. Nor can love ever be simply taken for granted. Love requires effort.

St Paul states, "love endures all things". If that is true, there is hope for us all.
In spite of my natural cynicism, maybe one day we human beings might just manage to learn that lesson. Maybe then, the day of peace might actually dawn. What a joy that would be!

Peace and Joy to all.

Jim Gibson
Interim Minister at the Abbey.

WAR MEMORIAL REDEDICATION

On Monday, June 8th, the Minister was invited by Professor James Miller, Principal and Vice-Chancellor of the University of the West of Scotland to rededicate the memorial to members of Paisley Lawn Tennis Club which had been restored by the University and re-sited within the campus grounds.

At the dedication, Professor Miller gave the following address ….

The story of the Paisley Lawn Tennis Club is in many ways, the story of Paisley itself. Founded in the 1880's in the grounds near Garthland Place, it reflected a growing civic spirit- one that valued community, health and fellowship. Its leadership, drawn from families such as the Coats and the Greenlees, echoed the town's deep tradition of industry, philanthropy and public life. When the club moved to Thornly park in 1909, it did so with optimism, with pride and with a strong sense of belonging to the life of this town.

But like so many institutions across Scotland and beyond, it would soon be touched by events far greater than itself.

The names on this memorial- fifteen in total- represent members of that club who never returned from the First and Second World Wars. They were sportsmen, students, professionals, sons and brothers. Their lives rooted in this community, and in many cases, deeply connected to what would become Paisley College and, today the University of the West of Scotland.

We remember Major Matthew Hodgart, a member of the College's governing body who served with distinction in the Royal Engineers and was awarded the Military Cross before his death at Ypres and was married to the daughter of James Gardner, the College Secretary. We remember Andrew Gardner, James Gardner's second son, whose family was woven into the very fabric of the College, and who gave his life in 1918. We remember Ivan Allan, a young chemist, whose promise was cut short at the Battle of Loos and whose legacy endures through the prize established in his name, still awarded to students today.

And we remember William Coats, whose family did so much to shape both this club and this town., and whose life was lost in France in 1917. These are not distant, abstract histories. These are lives that intersect with our own through our buildings, our teaching, our shared spaces, and our continuing mission.

It is also right that we acknowledge the broader legacy of those families associated with this memorial. The Coats Family, for example, did more than build businesses- they built opportunities: museums, observatories, libraries, educational institutions and founded Paisley Philosophical Society. They invested in the idea that learning and community should endure. That spirit lives on across our Paisley campus today- in the Gardner building, in the Coats Building, and in the work we continue to do every day.

The relocation of this memorial to the campus earlier this year was undertaken with great care and respect. It ensures not only its preservation, but also its continued visibility. Here at the heart of a living academic community, it will not stand in isolation, but in conversation with students, staff, residents and visitors. It will continue to remind us that the freedoms we enjoy, including the freedom to learn, were secured at great cost.

And so, as we leave here today, let us carry that reminder with us. Let us honour these individuals not only in ceremony, but in our daily actions- in our commitment to education, to service and to the values of community and responsibility that they embodied.
May this memorial continue to stand not only as a record of loss, but as a lasting call to remembrance, to gratitude and to purpose.





ELDER DUTY TEAMS

November	Fiona Small's Team
December	John Kitson's Team
January	Marion Sommervile's Team

PARISH REGISTER

New Members

David & Heather MacDonald

Memorial Service

1 October Iain Andrews McTavish

Baptism

4 October Grace McDonald

CHRISTMAS TOY APPEAL

Once again, the Abbey wishes to support the Salvation Army in their Christmas Toy Appeal. These toys are distributed by the Social Work Department of the Council to families where the children might otherwise not receive a gift at Christmas. If you wish to participate, please bring your gifts (unwrapped) to any Sunday service from now until Sunday 6th December. The age group covers all from infants to teenagers.



RENFREWSHIRE FOODBANK

Over the last five years, the number of emergency food parcels provided to people in crisis by the Trussel Trust has increased by 73% and last year Renfrewshire Foodbank distributed 5595 food parcels to our local community.

Renfrewshire Foodbank is part of the Trussel Trust's UK-wide network of food banks, they provide food and practical support to help people in crisis, including offering advice and signposting people to other services, like debt advice that can help them break free from poverty.

The Abbey collects food for the Foodbank on the last Sunday of each month. The November collection will be on Sunday 29th. You will see trolleys in the Cloisters. The congregation is very generous with their donations of non-perishable goods and money which can be gift-aided. (a form can be provided) If you do not currently contribute, perhaps you could note the date in your diary each month and bring along a few items from the shortages list which is printed in the Intimations in the Order of Service.

The staff at the Foodbank are always really grateful to receive our donations. Every little helps. Thank you.



ALLOVUS

With regular attendance of thirty plus members, our club for all-ages continues to thrive. *Allovus* welcomes everybody whether members of the Abbey or not. We meet twice per month, on Wednesdays from 1.30pm till 3.00pm. Our programme is varied with activities to enjoy, interesting speakers to hear and, occasionally, visits to make. No membership fee is charged, just am donation towards the tea/coffee and cake served.

On 4th November our thoughts turn to Remembrance and we look forward to welcoming Alison Sturgeon from Erskine Hospital who will speak to us about *'Caring for Veterans'*.

November 18th welcome one of the Abbey's former Elders, Professor Hugh McLaughlin acclaimed expert on the '*Paisley Witches and Witchcraft in Scotland'*. We are very much looking forward to hearing about this unusual aspect of Paisley's social history.

December offers members an Advent Surprise on Wed 2nd and we are all excited about our Christmas Party being held on the 16th when lots of fun is assured.

Why not come and join us?
Everybody is welcome.



CHRISTMAS LUNCH FOR ALL THE CONGREGATION (and friends)

Following the huge success of the past couple of years, our Christmas Lunch will again be held with Ralston Golf Clubhouse on Sunday, December 6th at 1.00pm. Tickets have been held at last year's price of £25pp and are on sale from the Abbey shop/ Office. A two-course lunch will be served.

The lunch has proved very popular and last year a Waiting List had to be operated for those who left their attempt to purchase a ticket too late. So: don't delay. Make sure of your ticket this year!

PAISLEY ABBEY MUSIC SOCIETY (PAMS)

The Committee is holding a special fundraising event for the Abbey Choir/Music on Saturday, November 28th from 4.00pm till 6.00pm within the Place of Paisley. Music will be provided by choral scholars and there will be plenty wine and canapes to enjoy over conversation with friends old and new. Tickets priced £20pp are on sale on Sundays or from the Abbey Office.

REPORT FROM OUTREACH COMMITTEE

WaterAid

Ever since 2007 when we first selected WaterAid as our charity to be supported at Harvest time the congregation of the Abbey has given generously to this, sadly, work is still needed. This year unfortunately our donation was a little down from previous years but nonetheless the £380.00 (with gift aid of £255) will help greatly in this important work and will be much appreciated by WaterAid……./

Delivery of House Plants

Harvest is also the time for the Outreach committee and other members of the congregation to deliver a little plant to those in the congregation who are unable to attend Church in person or who have experienced some unpleasantness during the year. We know that the plants give much pleasure, but we are aware that very often the visits to the recipients bring as much joy as the plants themselves. The Outreach Committee is extremely grateful to everyone who helped with these deliveries, and we thank you all most sincerely.

SGC

FOR ALL THE SAINTS

And when the strife is fierce, the warfare long,
steals on the ear the distant triumph song,
and hearts are brave again, and arms are strong.
Alleluia, Alleluia!

William Walsham How

As the Second World War drew towards its close in 1945, Paisley Abbey Church continued as it has always done, fulfilling its role as the Mother Church of the town. According to the Minutes of the Kirk Session meetings, much of the Abbey's business also continued as usual. Matters relating to finance, property, and psalmody were recorded and in many ways are echoed down the years to the present day.

The number of communicant members on the roll was 1,658 of whom more than 900 had taken communion at least once during the year. Income for the year amounted to £4,648. 18s and 9d – an amount that nowadays would pay for approximately two days' upkeep of the Abbey.

> The boilers were giving trouble and there were murmurings of imminent replacement being required. The choir boys were going to be involved in concerts and, as they were to sing in their cassocks, it would be necessary to procure girdles for them "if such were available." The Woman's Guild was arranging a "Bring and Buy" sale.

A Service had been held on Good Friday (30th March) at 11 a.m., and a Service of Passion Music by the Organist and Choir had followed at 8 p.m. that evening. Only 704 had taken communion at the half-yearly Communion Service on 1st April – the weather had been "unfavourable which prevented many attending."

Didn't they know that there was a war on?

Of course they did, but they were keeping calm and carrying on.

The Kirk Session "took up consideration of the Presbytery Special Committee's Report on returning Service Men and Women" and agreed to the proposals submitted by the Moderator, the Rev. Dr. C. Guthrie Cooper. At the morning Service on 15th April, the minister "made special reference to the sudden death of President Roosevelt of the United States of America" three days' previously. "The Congregation stood in silence for two minutes in respect of his memory and thereafter the hymn 'For all the Saints' was sung."

Members of the congregation would later hear of British troops' horrific discovery and liberation of Bergen-Belsen Concentration Camp on that same day.

Services of Thanksgiving were held in the Abbey on 9th May – the day after the defeat of Nazi Germany had been declared – and on Sunday 13th May, and again on 15th August "on the termination of the war with Japan."

On 25th June, the Clerk reported to the Kirk Session that "immediately on the termination of the War with Germany" he had sought and received permission for "the removal of the wood from the windows in the Choir which had been boarded up." The quotation for doing so for the Clark Window alone was £32. 10/-, which "Mrs Clark had agreed to pay."

The Kirk Session Minutes at no point betray the slightest scintilla of jubilation, celebration, or triumphalism. The tone, if anything, is of relief, and the emotion, gratitude. Epitomising that, the long-serving Session Clerk, T. D. Laird made a gift of £1,000 to the Abbey as a "thank offering." In his accompanying letter to Dr. Cooper, he wrote in typically understated fashion: "You will no doubt remember that at the time bombing was going on in this district, those of us who were deeply interested in the Abbey were much concerned lest it should be destroyed or seriously damaged, which would indeed have been a calamity." Addressing the Session, according to the Minute, "Mr Laird spoke of the anxiety he had felt for the Abbey at the time of the air raids, and his thankfulness that it had been spared."

Considering that Paisley was such a large industrial town, and given the extent of the bombing of neighbouring Glasgow, Clydebank, and Greenock, it was strange, if not miraculous, that, as George Prentice later recorded, "throughout the whole of the Second World War only 34 bombs and 2 land-mines were dropped on Paisley by the Luftwaffe and this took place over a fairly brief period between March and May 1941." There was no focused attack, and the bombs that did fall were scattered over a wide area, but none was especially close to the Abbey.

The history is not as happy as those statistics might suggest, however. Lives were lost, and we especially remember that nearly one hundred of these resulted from the explosion of just one parachute mine at the Woodside First Aid Post, amongst them the young assistant minister of the Abbey, John Strathern.

In February 1946, a committee was appointed to consider and report as to what should be done regarding a memorial for those of Paisley Abbey who had lost their lives during the recent war. It was agreed that a memorial fund should be established and the proceeds invested. It was hoped to raise £5,000, and this was to be used to add the names of the fallen to those from the First World War on the Cross of Sacrifice in the Cloister Garth. The interest on the invested fund would be applied to the maintenance and furtherance of youth work in the Abbey.

Some time elapsed while the list of names that would appear on the memorial plaques was finalised and checked for accuracy. Finally, on Remembrance Sunday, 6th November 1949, the tablets were unveiled and dedicated.

These were sombre times in the life of the Abbey. As ever, there were financial challenges and post-war rationing and restrictions impinged. There was one incident recorded in the Minutes that on reflection seems like a moment of levity. The Kirk Session had "learned with dismay that the allowance of motor fuel granted to the Minister of Paisley Abbey for the six months period ending 31st March 1948 worked out at approximately 3½ gallons per week." The Kirk Session was "gravely concerned because of the serious effect which this totally inadequate allowance was bound to have on the work of their Church and Parish." They duly took the Regional Petroleum Officer to task, and when his response was to allow only one paltry additional gallon, they passed a lengthy resolution that concluded with their threatening ultimatum: if the Regional Petroleum Officer failed "to reply within the next ten days to the request that an allowance equivalent to seven gallons per week had been granted, [the Kirk Session] would without further delay make the necessary arrangements to have what it could only regard as the obstructive and unreasonable attitude of the local authority laid before the Ministry in London by friends in Government circles there, and, if necessary, have the matter raised by questions in Parliament."

Looking back at these old records as they fade from memory into history, this season of remembrance is an opportunity to recall and give thanks for those who have served our Abbey Church through passing generations in times at least as challenging as those of today. As we listened to the sermon in the Abbey on All Saints' Day, that reflection would be imbued with a fresh perspective. How saintly were our forebears? How saintly are we?

All Saints' Day has been adopted in our reformed Presbyterian understanding as a day to remember and give thanks for the lives of all the faithful Christians who have lived before us - "saints" being all who were believers in Christ, and not some exclusive subset. In the Abbey's pre-Reformation days, the monastery adhered to the Cluniac Order which had become the most import religious order in Europe during the tenure of Odilo, the 5th Abbot of Cluny. To him is attributed the foundation of All Souls' Day (2nd November) which was later adopted throughout the Roman church. Ironically, its observance in some senses anticipated the reformed idea of remembering all faithful departed and associated almsgiving with that remembrance and thanksgiving. However, the implicit concept that a monetary offering would lead to the relief of suffering souls in purgatory ensured the reformed church's rejection of that notion of All Souls' Day - superfluous in the light of its adoption of a redefined All Saints' Day.

The Paisley Abbey that is our church can acknowledge its Cluniac foundation and historic past while living in the present as a reformed Presbyterian Church, giving thanks for all the faithful Christians of times past and present . . . for all the Saints . . .

Alleluia!

David C. Davidson

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

COFFEE MORNING IN SUPPORT OF 'ERSKINE'
Saturday 7 November from 10 am
Please come along and support this worthwhile cause

LONDON CONCERTANTE
Presents 'Vivaldi's Four Seasons at Christmas'
Saturday 21 November at 7.30 pm
Tickets available from www.londonconcertante.com

LUNCH HOUR CONCERT
Saturday 28 November at 12.30 pm
'Trio Alba'
Tickets £10 payable at the door

PAISLEY ABBEY MUSIC SOCIETY
CHOIR FUNDRAISER
Saturday 28 November 4 pm - 6 pm
fizz and canapes with music provided by Choir members.
Tickets £20 per person on sale from Priscilla Routley
or from the Abbey office

LONDON CONCERTANTE
Presents 'Christmas at the Movies'
Friday 4 December at 7.30 pm
Tickets available from www.londonconcertante.com

CITY MUSIC PROMOTIONS
Presents 'Nutcracker Suite at Christmas'
Saturday 5 December at 7.30 pm
Tickets available from www.classical.tickets

CONGREGATIONAL LUNCH
Ralston Golf Club - Sunday 6 December at 1 pm
2 course lunch with tea/coffee
Tickets £25 per person on sale after the Morning Service
or from the Abbey office

MUSIC FOR NOVEMBER

8 November	**Remembrance Sunday**	
10.45 am	Service of Remembrance	
Introit	Thou knowest Lord	*Purcell*
Benedictus		*Elgar*
Anthem	Greater love hath no man	*Ireland*
4 pm	Choral Evensong	
Introit	Set me a seal	*Walton*
Responses		*Byrd*
Canticles		*Blair in B minor*
Anthem	For lo I raise up	*Stanford*
15 November	**Trinity 24**	
11 am	Morning Service	
Jubilate Deo		*McPhee*
Anthem	God be in my head	*Rutter*
22 November	**Christ the King**	
11 am	Morning Service	
Te Deum		*Harwood in Ab*
Anthem	Great King of Gods	*Gibbons*
29 November	**Advent Sunday**	
11 am	Choral Communion	
Communion Setting		*Byrd (Four Parts)*
Anthem	Drop down, ye heavens	*Judith Weir*
4 pm	**Service of Music and Readings for Advent Sunday**	
6 December	**Advent 2**	
11 am	Morning Service	
Te Deum		*Gibbons(Short Service)*
Anthem	Rejoice in the Lord always	*Anon*

ABBEY CONTACTS

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 normally open
Monday to Saturday from 10 am - 4 pm with last entry at 3.30 pm
Tuesday, Thursday & Saturday tours are normally at 2 pm.
Please check the website for up to date information.

The Abbey will be closed from Monday 9 until Saturday 14 November for University Graduations, the shop will remain open & tea/coffee will be available as take away as the café will also be closed

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

OSCR
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Cluny et les
Sites Clunisiens
Candidature
Patrimoine Mondial