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PRISM



News & views from Craigmillar Park Church, Edinburgh
A worshipping and caring community, following Jesus Christ

www.craigmillarpark.org



Letter from the minister **Rev Alex McAspurren**

Dear friends,

As we journey through the next period of lockdown I imagine that some of us are more than feeling the strain. With often beautiful weather outside many of us find it soul destroying to be stuck inside for most of the twenty-four

hours of each day. Not all of us have balconies or gardens to give us outside space where we can sit to enjoy fresh air and sunshine; not all of us are able to get out for a walk or even the grocery shopping. In a sense, without committing a crime, we have become prisoners in our own homes.

The writer of Psalm 142 says the following:

*I cry to you, O Lord;
I say, 'You are my refuge,
my portion in the land of the
living.'*

*Give heed to my cry,
for I am brought very low.*

(Psalm 142: 5-6)

There is an overwhelming sense that the writer of Psalm 142 felt something similar. His words convey a sense of being trapped, yet also of being innocent of wrongdoing. A sense of despair grows over him, and he cries out. Yet his cry is also a plea, a prayer, for help. In the midst of his troubles the psalmist calls out to the one who will hear him, and take up his cause; he calls out to God.

At present we are not just in a state of lockdown but also of confusion. We receive mixed messages from those in authority, both scientist and politician, and then there are also the falsehoods spread on some channels. Add into that some 'bad' theology that's emanating from some in the church, and you have a recipe for despair. So, where may we turn in such times? Who can we rely or lean upon to support us as we face up to our current challenges? The answer to these questions is found in the words of the psalm writer. Like him we, too, may turn to God.

The experience of the writer of Psalm 142 is that God may be relied upon to lift up his people irrespective of the situation in which they find themselves. It is God, he found, who gives him both hope and strength. Yet this is not in any way some sort of self-seeking approach for the author of the psalm seeks to be lifted out of his despair so that he may praise God! Verse 7 says:

*Bring me out of prison,
so that I may give thanks to
your name.
The righteous will surround me,
for you will deal bountifully with
me.*

We do not yet know what the weeks or months ahead have in store for us, though we may have some greater clarity by the time you read this. What we do know, though, is that we do not have to rely solely on our own strength and resources to get through it. True, we must make effort to support ourselves and, where possible, our neighbours and wider communities but we are not alone in our striving. As the psalmist found, we have a God who hears our cry and will lift us up. Perhaps we may find in these words of the psalm writer some encouragement to go on.

Yours in Christ,

Alex.

Church family news

Sadly, one of our members, Mary Davies, died last week in Liberton Hospital. She was 96 years old.



Next edition of Prism

Prism is currently only being produced in an online version. If you want to make sure you definitely receive the next edition of *Prism*, then please email the editor, Ruth, at prism@craigmillarpark.org and request to be added to the email distribution list.



Facebook

Did you know that Craigmillar Park Church has a Facebook page?

fb.me/craigmillarparkchurch

If you're on Facebook it would be great if you can like the page and look out for posts to share and like.



Beyond the NHS

The Coronavirus outbreak has highlighted what a debt we owe to the NHS. But what most of us had forgotten until a month into the crisis is that there is another “front line”. It’s in the care homes, and in individual homes in the community, where carers have struggled equally valiantly to save lives but at higher risk and with less pay. It’s a scandal which shames us all.

For 20 years, various governments have promised a “care plan” but nothing has been done about it. I suppose the reason for putting it off is because it will be expensive and politicians are frightened to suggest who will pay. Perhaps in the brave new world we all hope will emerge from the Covid-19 crisis it will be the time to finally address the issue. We need to pay our care staff a decent wage and have some sort of insurance that spreads the risk of chronic illness and disability fairly across the population.

In 2009 we came close to an agreed plan by all the parties when Andy Burnham was Labour’s health secretary. But the tabloid papers destroyed it, calling it Labour’s “£20,000 death tax”. In fact what he suggested seems very sensible to me. Everyone, when they reach retirement age would be required to put 15 per cent of their assets into a

National Care Service – usually capital released from their homes. This would fund their care to the end of their days, if they require it.



Of course there are other ways of funding a National Care Service – increasing National Insurance payments or income tax or VAT. But the advantage of the retirement “tax” is that

the burden of care would fall upon the older generation who can better afford it and who would especially benefit from it.

The Covid-19 crisis has exposed the care sector to be rather like the health sector before the Second World War – good enough for those who could afford it but otherwise shambolic, haphazard and grossly unfair. My mother used to tell me horrific stories of her childhood in her father’s GP practice in a poor part of Manchester in the 1920s and then when she was a young doctor herself working in the Edinburgh Medical Missionary Society’s clinic in the Cowgate in the 1930s.

Let’s hope that the same determination to do better than that, which followed the Second World War, will burst forth from the current crisis and give rise to a National Care Service just as wonderful as our NHS.

John Knox

Coronavirus vaccine article

Sheena Stenhouse has alerted us to a very informative article written by her niece, Leigh Fell, on the clinical trials to be undertaken prior to producing a drug to combat the Covid-19 pandemic.

Leigh was approached by a contact in *The Scotsman* with a view to

writing an article on the subject. This was published on 13 April and is available to read online: www.scotsman.com/news/opinion/columnists/covid-19-coronavirus-vaccine-must-first-go-through-rigorous-clinical-trials-leigh-fell-2537312

Life and Work

Life and Work, the magazine of the Church of Scotland, is available to read online for free for the month of May. Why not check it out?

This month there are articles about:

- The cancellation of the General Assembly
- Feeding people during a pandemic
- How Covid-19 is affecting the Church of Scotland
- Reflections of the Moderator Designate

www.lifeandwork.org/downloads/life-and-work-may-2020.pdf



The UK Blessing

The UK Blessing is a music video that brings together 65 churches of different denominations to sing a blessing over the UK. It had 1 million views on Youtube 48 hours after it was released. You can view it here:

www.youtube.com/watch?v=PUtll3mNj5U

Relying on God

As you probably know, I work with Bethany Christian Trust and manage the Care Shelter, a seasonal shelter that provides somewhere safe and warm for people who would otherwise be sleeping rough. With the current public health crisis it became vital to provide single room accommodation instead of a shared space for people to sleep in, and so the Care Shelter moved to the Old Waverley Hotel on Princes Street on 16 April.

It is great that our guests have somewhere they can be safe and socially distance from others, as we are all encouraged to do. It is a huge benefit to have contact with people 24 hours a day instead of saying goodbye to them in the morning and not knowing whether they will return that night. We are able to support them during daylight hours, linking them in with other services. We have seen lots of people move on to more settled accommodation which is great.

There are various challenges that come with supporting people in individual rooms rather than one shared space where staff can easily supervise. We quickly had to adapt and create new procedures to deal with situations we hadn't anticipated. It has been a very tiring and challenging time for the staff team. But through all the difficult circumstances we rely on God. When we've reached the limits of how we can help an individual, we

trust that God will continue to keep them from harm.

Sometimes I forget to rely on God as I did a few weekends ago. I was really tired from working too many hours and I was emotional from the burden of responsibility of caring for 60 people in a hotel. I couldn't get work out of my head and I didn't know how I was going to make it through another few months like this. That morning, I attended an online church service and God spoke to me through the sermon and one of the hymns called *Yet Not I But Through Christ in Me*. These lyrics really stood out to me:

*The night is dark but I am not forsaken
For by my side, the Saviour He will stay
I labour on in weakness and rejoicing
For in my need, His power is displayed.*

*To this I hold, my Shepherd will defend me
Through the deepest valley He will lead
Oh the night has been won, and I shall overcome!
Yet not I, but through Christ in me.*

Immediately I realised I had been trying to do everything in my own strength which is just not possible. God pointed out that I can hand over my stresses to him. My weakness brings Him glory! That is a reason to rejoice indeed.

We all need reminded at times that God walks beside us through the challenges that life brings. As the minister points out in his letter on the front page, God is with us during lockdown.

You can find the song, *Yet Not I But Through Christ in Me*, in full at www.youtube.com/watch?v=zundjUFazfg

Ruth Longmuir

Foodbank

The foodbank at Community Church is really busy in these difficult times. I have been taking food up every Thursday as our contribution from Craigmillar Park Church. It is hard for anyone to leave food in the church at the moment but if you would like to help with this do let me

know. I have already had some kind donations from some church members towards buying some food. My telephone number is 0131 664 2288 or there is an email address on the back of *Prism*.

Julia Yarker

Christian Aid week



This year, Christian Aid week was 10-16 May. With the current pandemic a lot of the usual events and fundraising activities were not able to be held but Christian Aid's work continues and they are still in need of donations. If you want to donate, you can find out how to do so at www.christianaid.org.uk

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The deadline for the next edition of *Prism* is Sunday 31 May.
Please send items to Ruth —
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