

PRISM



News & views from Craigmillar Park Church, Edinburgh

A worshipping and caring community, following Jesus Christ

www.craigmillarpark.org



From the pulpit

Rev Alex McAspurren

Light at the end of the tunnel?

Dear friends,

Growing up, many of us will remember the television or cinema antics of Wile E. Coyote and Roadrunner. Originally created in 1948, they were cinema shorts designed to entertain children before the main feature. They followed the same pattern each time. Wile E. tries to get the better of the Roadrunner; the latter outsmarts the former; Wile E. meets a violent end, only to reappear in the next adventure. In one episode the Coyote pursues the Roadrunner into a train tunnel: up ahead he sees a light that he takes to be the other end of the tunnel. It wasn't; it was an oncoming train.

Life may sometimes feel as though it is a journey through a long dark tunnel, especially in circumstances such as our country finds itself in today. A second lockdown, through the darkest months of winter, saps both energy and strength of spirit. Darkness is something that most of us do not particularly like. It is a dislike, or fear, that we share with our ancient forefathers in faith. Time and again scripture speaks of being in shadow, or deep

est darkness; we see it most clearly in the Psalms. For the Hebrew peoples, their image of what we would call hell was not fire and brimstone, but a land of shadows. Shadows mean darkness, yet they can only exist where there is light.

As I write, it is on the eve of the publication of the route-map out of the current lockdown. For many it will provide some light at the end of the current tunnel. Yet, as Christians, we also may rely on God and His word to offer us that light. There may be shadows, but time and again God offers us the light that will lead us out and into peace.

In the tender compassion of our God the dawn from on high shall break upon us, to shine on those who dwell in darkness and the shadow of death, and to guide our feet into the way of peace.

Luke 1: 78-79

Yours in Christ,

Alex.



Holy Week Services 2021

In a change from our traditional pattern of Holy Week services, this year sees the member congregations of Newington Churches Together unite for a service of worship on the evening of Maundy Thursday, 1st April, at 7:30pm. This gathering will be led by members from each of the congregations, and will be available on the NCT Facebook page [Newington Churches Together | Facebook](#).

Joining Craigmillar Park Church

In the last few years Craigmillar Park congregation has gained a quite unusual churchgoer: a young man with a penchant for arriving late to services, coming from Eastern Europe and studying economics at Edinburgh University.



I am this youngster. I will finish undergraduate study soon and have been attending Craigmillar Park services since September 2017. In the autumn of 2019 I became a member of the congregation. Below I write why I chose Craigmillar Park, and what I liked in my time with the congregation.

Why Edinburgh?

I chose Edinburgh over English universities due to money - I did not want to be in debt after finishing studies and received a merit scholarship here. However, I was miserable after arriving to the city. I did not participate in 'welcome' drinking parties, and initially was all alone. Different customs and Scottish weather hit me hard, and I was running out of money as the University processed my scholarship slowly.

Churchgoing was unusual for me then - I was religious before coming to UK but avoided visiting churches in Slovakia - I was taken to formal one to two hour church services as a child, and found them very boring.

Why Craigmillar Park?

Yet the first time I entered Craigmillar Park church was significantly different to my previous experiences. The service was very interesting, offering substance over ritual. I found myself thinking of church in terms of sermons and questions about God and faith, rather than rituals and

hymnaries. Additionally, the church congregation was very friendly and welcoming. It was touching to see people in church being happy that I joined them for a service.

I continued visiting the church even after moving to Pollock Halls. What kept attracting me back to Craigmillar Park was the friendliness of the ministers and the congregation. There were some youth faith initiatives at University, but I was spending all my time with peers and wanted something different for worship. Many Edinburgh students never venture out of student bubbles in Newington. Craigmillar Park helped me see Edinburgh and Scotland more authentically.

As I kept attending, I began wanting to be a full member. I remember hearing at annual meetings how the congregation keeps shrinking as members die and was motivated to support my church.



I started preparing for my confirmation with Betty the Locum Minister and completed it with Alex. Liam Fraser, the Edinburgh Campus Minister, has been a great help to me in this.

In the future I will work in London but hope to keep being involved with Craigmillar Park.

Michal Solcansky

In Memoriam Dr Isabel Smith

As a congregation, we were all saddened to hear of Isabel's death in mid-February. We remember her below with a tribute from long time family friend Roy Pinkerton and a selection of personal memories from her friends in the parish.



ISABEL SMITH – a tribute by Roy Pinkerton

Isabel grew up in Ayr, where her family were active members of Sandgate church. Isabel inherited from her parents her deep and life-long love of the kirk and her comprehensive knowledge of its ministers, its churches and its practices and procedures.

She came to Edinburgh to study in 1947 and began her long association with Mayfield South. Graduating both BSc and PhD, she moved to a research post in the University of Aberdeen, followed by some years at the Torry Marine Laboratory, where she studied bacteriological diseases in fish.

In 1962 she returned to the University of Edinburgh's Department of Bacteriology and to Mayfield South. In the 1960s, virology – the study of viruses – was beginning to be recognised as a distinctive discipline within bacteriology, and Isabel was appointed as one of the first specialist virologists, with an additional remit to assist in developing a diagnostic virology service for the NHS.

Her commitment to her church extended much further than her local congregation. She faithfully supported the World Day of Prayer and the vari-

ous activities of the Newington Council of Churches. As a Guildswoman she held office in the Presbyterian Council and as a Guider she was a member of the Trefoil League and the management committee of the Training Centre at Netherurd.

She was an active member of Soroptimists International and a former President of its Edinburgh branch. An accomplished needlewoman, she was particularly proud of being one of five Soroptimists who stitched one of the panels in The Great Tapestry of Scotland. Stained glass was another of her interests, and she assisted the Scottish Stained Glass Symposium with its recording activities.

Isabel was generous with her time, an inveterate volunteer for many good causes. She was generous with her money, quietly making substantial gifts to her chosen charities. Above all, she was generous with herself: she touched many lives and her friendship and good companionship have ensured that her memory will live on in the minds and hearts of so many of us.

Craigmillar Park Church member Anne Deane looks back on her long friendship with Isabel

"I first met Isabel just under sixty years ago when she came back to Mayfield South Church (now Craigmillar Park Church) from Aberdeen. She and I were very involved in the Brownie side of the Girl Guides. She was the Brown Owl of the Church Pack (101st Edinburgh) from the early sixties until she retired in the mid-nineties.

Dozens, possibly hundreds, of young girls of the parish learnt all about Guiding from a wonderful Brown Owl and had the opportunity to go to Pack Holiday when they became eight. And what fun that was for them. I have had a few ex Brownies and Guiders contacting me and reminiscing about

the wonderful times and experiences we all had with Isabel at Pack Holiday over many years. Isabel was also a Scottish Trainer, training many young women throughout Scotland to become Brownie Guiders. Latterly, she was a member of the Trefoil Guild and a 'Friend of Netherurd', the Guide Training Centre in Peeblesshire.

Isabel was involved in many aspects of our Church: a member of the Congregational Board; a choir member; a Guild member (becoming President for a few years); serving on the Edinburgh Presbyterian Council (now the Edinburgh Guilds Together) for many years (a quote from the present Convenor

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In Memoriam Dr Isabel Smith

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'Isabel was a very approachable lady who was happy to help in whatever capacity she could and a font of knowledge on a range of subjects'). The quizzes she produced for fundraising events were legendary! Another task done quietly every week was watering the plants in the church. Isabel's memory of events and people was amazing. Not only was Isabel a keen walker – she was a member of Mayfield Church's walking group 'Mayfield Milers', she was also a 'well-kent face' in the

parish, with always a kind word when she met neighbours at the bus stop and in the street.

Isabel and I spoke every Sunday over the past year. Like me, there will be many people who will miss her dearly but feel safe in the knowledge that she had a wonderfully long life with close friends, an interesting career, many hobbies and interests and now is safe with her Maker.

Rest in Peace Isabel."

Anne's daughter, Katrina, who now lives on the other side of the world, shares her memories of Isabel

As a wee girl who had just turned seven, I recall my Mum asking me if I would like to start Brownies. My immediate response was 'Yes'; off we went down to the Church Hall and so began my long association with Dr Smith and the Girl Guide Association. My memories of Dr Smith are mainly associated with Guiding, although I also came into contact with her through Church.

Over the years, I was a Brownie, Pack Leader and Young Leader in Dr Smith's Brownie Pack. On Dr Smith's retirement from the 101st Brownie Pack; I took over as the Brown Owl, which were very big shoes to fill!

Brownie Pack Holidays with Dr Smith were a highlight; as a Brownie we always went to Traquair Village Hall for about a week. Camp beds lined up in rows in the hall with the leaders sleeping on the stage. I remember Dr Smith patrolling the Hall after lights out to ensure there were no midnight feasts or shenanigans. She always came up with

the most creative crafts, everything was efficiently organised and a tight timeline was adhered to. I remember one afternoon activity being lighting fires on a 2 pence piece with Brasso (or it may have been Duraglit). Dr Smith had a great imagination and designed many wonderful activities and adventures based around the Pack Holiday 'theme'; Alice in Wonderland was a highlight for me, with Dr Smith being called 'Cheshire Cat' for the week!

One of my lasting memories of Pack Holidays was the year that I complained of a sore throat - Dr Smith's remedy was to give a lump of butter coated in sugar to suck on, not sure if it helped my throat but I enjoyed the sugar!

Even after getting married and moving to New Zealand, Dr Smith and I still exchanged Christmas cards.

Katrina Hogg (nee Deane)

From Gordon Braidwood

"So sorry to hear the sad news. I joined the Scout Troop in Mayfield South Church (now Craigmillar Park) in 1956 and, although I am not sure when Isabel assumed the role of Brown Owl, she was certainly a significant force in the 1960s running a very efficient and effective Brownie unit. It was also not unknown for her to remind the

Scouts to keep within certain behavioural limits!!

She was a stalwart at the regular Church Parades held by the uniformed organisations in the good old days and the Brownies were always well presented.

From Alex Our Minister

"Isabel was well known and liked within the wider community. Shortly before the current lockdown I was involved with a family who asked fondly after their former Brown Owl some forty plus years after they had moved on. I will remember her clear thinking, humour, and the unforgettable sight of her miniscule yet carefully crafted hand-written notes. As a number of you have already shared, she will be sorely missed."

Lockdown Links

Community mental health chaplains: provide spiritual care to people experiencing mental health problems and their carers.

Phone: 0131 220 5150 or 0131 537 6516

Edinburgh Crisis Centre: a 24-hour service providing community-based emotional and practical support to people over 18 who are using or have used mental health services in Edinburgh – and their carers

Website: www.edinburghcrisiscentre.org.uk

Email: info@edinburghcrisiscentre.org.uk or crisis@edinburghcrisiscentre.org.uk

Helpline: Freephone 0808 801 0414

Breathing Space: a free and confidential helpline for any individual who is experiencing low mood or depression, or who is unusually worried and in need of someone to talk to. The phonenumber is open 24 hours at weekends (6pm Friday – 6am Monday) and from 6pm to 2am Monday – Thursday.

Call 0800 83 85 87.

The Samaritans: confidential, non-judgmental emotional support, 24 hours a day for people who are experiencing feelings of distress or despair, including those which could lead to suicide. The service is offered by phone, email, or face to face.

Website: www.samaritans.org

Email: jo@samaritans.org

Phone: Helpline 08457 90 90 90



Further Resources:

Some self-help principles from the Samaritans.

<https://www.samaritans.org/scotland/how-we-can-help/if-youre-having-difficult-time/if-youre-worried-about-your-mental-health-during-coronavirus-pandemic/>

A page offering links to find advice around specific issues.

<http://ewanm1.sg-host.com/self-help/#>

Who's Who at Craigmillar Park

Minister	Rev Alex McAspurren	0131 667 1623 (Saturday to Thursday Only) amcaspurren@churchofscotland.org.uk
Session Clerk	Pauline Weibye	0131 668 3545 session@craigmillarpark.org
Treasurer & Depute Session Clerk	Christopher McLeod	0131 667 1475 treasurer@craigmillarpark.org
Roll Keeper	Julia Yarker	rollkeeper@craigmillarpark.org
Chairman Congregational Board	John Kelly	0131 663 2428 board@craigmillarpark.org
Organist	John Cranston	0131 664 7114 organist@craigmillarpark.org
Prism Editor	Linsay Given Black	0131 667 2849 prism@craigmillarpark.org
Hall Letting	Norman Weibye	07766 888 644 lettings@craigmillarpark.org
Mission Development Worker	Michael McMullin	07444 082 627
Church Website	www.craigmillarpark.org	webmaster@craigmillarpark.org

A Few of My Favourite Things

Continuing our new series, long time member of our Church Seonaid Wilson shares some of the things that she loves.

Hymn:

'O Love that wilt not let me go' is a hymn often sung at funerals. It was written by Rev George Matheson while living in Innellan. He was born in Glasgow and went blind while studying for the ministry.

The words are beautiful and comforting and seemingly just flowed from the writer. The music was also composed easily, according to Albert Peace, a well known Scottish organist.

The hymn first appeared in Life & Work in 1883. The tune is Saint Margaret.

The Rev Matheson had the charge of St Bernard's parish church in Stockbridge, Edinburgh, which had 2,000 members. It is a thoroughly Scottish hymn.

[Editor's note: It was written on the evening of Matheson's sister's marriage. Years before, he had been engaged, until his fiancée learned that he was going blind—that there was nothing the doctors could do—and she told him that she could not go through life with a blind man. His sister had been the one to care for him through the years, but now she was gone. He was now 40, and his sister's marriage brought a fresh reminder of his own heartbreak. It was in the midst of this circumstance and intense sadness that the Lord gave Matheson this hymn, which he said was written in five minutes.]



Place:

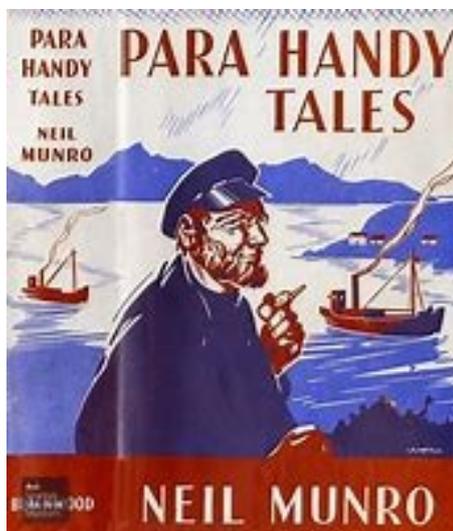


All the islands of Scotland are magical. Each has its special charms. I particularly like the smaller islands of the Inner Hebrides like Coll, Tiree, Gigha and Colonsay but most especially Islay, from where my father's people came.

The Celtic church speaks about 'thin' places where one can feel a spiritual connection.

Islay is my thin place.

Book:



I love books but the one that has amused me since I was about twelve is Neil Munro's West Coast stories of Para Handy, the skipper of the puffer The Vital Spark. The tales of Para Handy and his crew make me laugh out loud. There were at least two series made for television, very successfully too, but the book gives me the most satisfaction.

Members of the congregation are asked to share a few of their favourite things: the constant is the hymn (though we may change to carol for December!) but otherwise it is quite free form – you can

stick with film and book or choose, perhaps, painting or city or graphic novel. As long as you choose three things, the world is your oyster.

Linsay, Editor

CAN THE VACCINE SAVE US ?

Our regular column from congregational member John Knox



Edward Jenner, a GP in Gloucestershire, performed the first “scientific” vaccination in 1796. His “volunteer” was the eight year old son of his gardener. Jenner gathered pus from a cowpox sore on a milkmaid’s hand and scratched it into the boy’s arm. A few days later he scratched smallpox pus into the boy’s arm and found he was immune to what had been, up to that point, a killer disease. There is now no smallpox left in the world.

Scotland can share a little of the glory since Jenner studied medicine at St Andrew’s University. Incidentally, he helped Darwin with research into the nesting habits of cuckoos and was a keen balloonist. He once came down (inadvertently?) in a Gloucestershire garden and ended up marrying the girl he first met there.

Jenner has been followed over the years by vaccine scientists from all over the world. Louis Pasteur in France developed vaccines against rabies, chicken pox and cholera. In Germany Robert Koch worked on preventing tuberculosis. In America, Thomas Peebles invented the measles vaccine and Thomas Francis and Jonas Salk derived a vaccine against influenza from hens’ eggs.

Unfortunately, the influenza vaccine came too late to save the 50 million people who died from the flu pandemic after the First World War. It’s thought half the world’s population caught the infection and even though nine

out of ten people recovered, the death toll here in Scotland has been variously estimated at between 22,000 and 70,000. It puts our Covid-19 pandemic into perspective, with deaths at around 9,000.

And we now have a vaccine!

But what if the clever scientists in Oxford or Germany or America or at the Valneva lab in Livingston had not been able to find a vaccine? What would the death toll be? What would the Lockdown be like, or the damage to the economy? But even now, we are faced with tough choices. The one nobody likes to mention is: what level of deaths are we prepared to tolerate in exchange for getting life back to normal? About 800 Scots die from influenza each year, is this what we’re looking for with Covid-19?

As a doctor friend of mine reminded me recently, we must all die of something. I think the Kirk should be doing more to lead the debate on life and death in a pandemic. No doubt we will get more troublesome viruses in the future. We need to get used to the idea that we don’t have the right, or the means, to live on this planet for ever, either as individuals or as a species. We are only here by the grace of God and we should make the best of it.

As the Christian Aid slogan says: “We believe in life before death.”

The deadline for the next edition of *Prism* is Sunday 28 March.

Please send items to Linsay —

prism@craigmillarpark.org or 0131 667 2849.