

The Church of St. Mark, Oldhall

No. 1.

Supplement to "Life & Work."

September, 1937

MY DEAR PEOPLE,

At the time of my Induction in April I spoke in anticipation of the joy we would have in fellowship and service in St. Mark's. Now, in my first letter to you, let me say that so far my hopes have been more than realised. The kindly reception you have given me, the interest you have already shown in the services of the Lord's House, and the hopes expressed by so many of you for the months and years ahead, have been immensely encouraging throughout these first four months of our congregation's history.

Thanks to grace, generosity and grit abounding in the lives of many lovers of the Lord Jesus, some well-known, others unknown, a most beautiful building has been provided. It was in the first place like a cradle prepared for a child yet to be born. Now the life has come into it. And just as the most beautiful of baskets becomes a hundred times more beautiful when the little one comes into it, "trailing clouds of glory," so the true splendour of the church is found not in brickwork and masonry, but in men and women, built up by the Spirit of God, into a spiritual house. May we and all comers to St. Mark's find it that, rich in the beauty not of a house to be let, but of a home to be lived in, and of a spirit to be shared. And may we all be living stones in the unseen temple.

I have been, as you would expect, quite as interested to get to know about you, as you about me. It has been heartening going round your houses, where I have been so cordially received, to see so many signs of eagerness in the good work to which we are committed. I am glad to have met so many who tell me that they have had a kind word from a stranger in the church which made them feel at home, or that in the hearty conviction of the praise of choir and congregation, or in the hush of reverence in the assembled multitude, their hearts have been steadied and strengthened. I think it must be a far easier thing to fill an empty church, or enrich a poor one, than to warm a cold one; and I do thank God for every breathing of friendliness and welcome and trust that has been found in our midst. "The Lord give mercy unto the house of Onesiphorus; for he oft refreshed me," Let us see to it that we quench not the cordial spirit of the evangel.

I trust that as we get to know each other in the coming days, and as we meet together with our Lord in the services, and, as in October, at the Communion Table, we may be guided into the knowledge of those things Christ would have us do in these challenging times. Various as we are in our denominational background, diverse (as the certificates show) even in nationality, and multitudinous in personal experience and temperament, we are nevertheless "all one in Christ Jesus," and I hope we may seek nothing before unity of heart and mind in the doing of His Will in this place.

I pray for you, that you may have joy in the sanctuary and in fellowship and service in the congregation. And I ask you to pray for me, that utterance may be given unto me, and wisdom, and strength, and love, in Christ Jesus.

Yours very sincerely,

GILBERT M. GEORGE.

Public Worship. 11 a.m. and 6.30 p.m. The attendance at services has been very encouraging, and the good work of the Choir and of the Collectors has helped considerably in the early stages of our development. It is commendable that so many children are to be seen in the services. Perhaps it is unavoidable that there should sometimes be late comers, and all the more because we have no bell. It would be a help, however, if, after the conclusion of the voluntary, any at the door would wait until the first singing is begun. Further, if the body of the church should appear full, there are usually vacant seats in the transepts, which may be approached by the side aisle or by the rear door east. The congregational singing has been from the first hearty and reverent, and the Choir have done well, especially so near to holiday time, to prepare so much special music.

Church Flowers. Thanks are due to the many ladies who have contributed flowers for the table. The donors for succeeding Sundays are: Sept. 5th, Mrs. C. A. Anderson; 12th, the Misses Craig; 19th, Mrs. W. A. Anderson; 26th, Mrs. Whitson; Oct. 3rd, Mrs. I. Reid. Pending the organisation of the women's activities, Mrs. George will be glad to have names of any ladies willing to give flowers after 24th October.

Baptisms. Baptisms will normally be observed on the second Sunday of the month, and the Minister asks that requests for Baptisms should reach him by the Sunday previous whenever possible.

Holy Communion. The first Communion Service of our new congregation will be observed on Sunday, 24th October, and a Service of Admission and Preparation will be held on the preceding Friday at 8 o'clock. Any desirous of joining by Profession of Faith at this time should get in touch with the Minister without delay, as catechumens' classes are to be arranged immediately. It is hoped that all who feel it in their hearts to commit themselves to the allegiance of Jesus Christ will take this opportunity of doing so. Those who are coming to us from other congregations but have not yet procured disjunction certificates should obtain them as early as possible.

Congregational Fellowship. To provide opportunity for members to meet each other at the beginning of this our first winter in the church together, meetings of a social nature are being arranged as follow. On Wednesday, 15th September, at 8 p.m., there will be a meeting for those who may be classed as workers, namely the provisional Kirk Session, the "Congregational Workers' Committee" (diligent in visitation and stewardship), members of the Choir, and all intending Sunday School Teachers. Near the beginning of October, probably on a Monday and Tuesday, there will be similar social meetings for the membership. It is hoped that as these are to be on adjacent nights those who may be engaged on the one evening may arrange to be free to attend on the other.

Sunday School. The Junior Sunday School will be opened on Sunday, 12th September, at 3 p.m. Miss Robb's series of talks for all intending workers in the Sunday School opens on Monday, 6th September, at 8 o'clock. The subjects are:—

- Sept. 6 (Mon.) "The Preparation of our Lessons."
- 13 (Mon.) "The Best Use of Time in Class."
- 28 (Tues.) "Training Children in Worship."

All who are to help in the Sunday School are expected to attend throughout the series, which will afford us an opportunity of fellowship and conference, and a common background of thought for our work together. The Rev. George Stewart's valuable booklets, "*Practical Hints on Sunday School Teaching*," and "*Worship in the Sunday School*," (6d. each), have been issued to most of the prospective staff, and may be obtained in the Vestry. While the meetings arranged are primarily for Teachers, it is hoped that Office-bearers, Parents, and any others interested will feel themselves perfectly at liberty to attend, and make friends with the workers. Arrangements for the launching of the Primary Department will be undertaken as soon as the Junior School is under way.

Further Developments. At the beginning of our first winter together there are many tasks to be undertaken and many questions to be faced. It will be wise to "hasten slowly." Nevertheless, it is hoped that after the opening of the Sunday School, preparation for our first Communion Service, and inauguration of Bible Class or Classes, we may go on without delay to organisation of Woman's Guild and Young People's agencies. The social meetings in October should help to open up the way for these things.

Baptisms.

- May 23—Sheila MacPhail Boyle, 41 Allanton Avenue.
- June 13—James Baillie Connell, 13 Newtyle Road.
- " 27—Muriel Semple Lyall, 34 Tyne Road.
- July 18—Elisabeth Stewart Strachan, 3 Dunchurch Road.
- " 18—Donald James MacKay, Pennilee Road.
- Aug. 1—Crawford Grieve Dick, 336 Glasgow Road.

Marriage.

- July 31—William Gillies Steven and Margaret Dun-Waters Tennant.

Kirk Session Notes.

As a Church Extension charge, the congregation of St. Mark's, Oldhall, is not yet at liberty to elect its own office-bearers. These have been appointed by the Presbytery of Paisley, within whose bounds the charge lies, and the court as at present constituted consists of the Rev. G. M. George, Moderator, the Rev. A. Barr (Minister Emeritus of Elderslie East), Messrs A. Callander (Paisley North), J. Fyfe (Greenlaw), and W. A. Anderson (St. James'), Elders. Mr. Anderson has been appointed temporary Session Clerk, and Mr. Callander Commissioner to the Presbytery.

To these is committed the gathering and oversight of the congregation, and upon them, with the addition of Mr. A. Gardner Andrew, Congregational Treasurer, has devolved the heavy task of building the machinery of congregational activity, and putting it into running order. The engine has now begun to function, but the plant is far from complete yet. Only when, as they hope, the necessary additions are made to their number, will the congregation go ahead with full driving force in every section.

Up to date 307 persons who have handed in certificates have been admitted to membership of the congregation, and a large addition both by certificate and by profession of faith is confidently looked for before the first Communion Service in October. Attendance at public worship has been most satisfactory, and the Session are grateful for the way in which members are supporting Mr. George in his work. The provision of Communion Vessels will require consideration immediately.

As a preliminary to a Sunday School, a series of four meetings for young people of Junior School age was held on Sunday afternoons in May and June, and was a notable success. A training course for intending teachers is now to be conducted by Miss I. E. Robb, M.A., Field Secretary for Youth Work in the Church. There has already been a fine response to the call for teachers. Thanks to a grant from the George G. Kirk Fund through the Sunday School Union of Paisley, a piano, small chairs, and equipment have been provided for a Primary Sunday School. A second piano and further equipment are required for the Junior School.

The Choir has also been successfully established with a membership of over 20, and the Session take this opportunity of acknowledging publicly their debt to Miss Gibson for her voluntary service as organist from the opening of the Church until the end of June. The advice and help on various occasions of Mr. Lawrie, organist of Greenlaw Church, has also to be mentioned gratefully. The fine quality and earnestness of the Choir have impressed everyone, and the Session have been fortunate in obtaining the services of an experienced Organist and Choirmaster to further their progress. Mr. James Ferguson, at present in Bonhill North Church, who has been appointed, is a fine musician, well-qualified for the post, and takes up duty on the first Sunday in September. The Congregation is fortunate in including in its number several capable organists, and thanks are due to Mr. Hume, Mr. Beckett, and Mr. Martin, for the help in the services during the holiday months.

There falls to be recorded a fine piece of work by a voluntary body which met under the ægis of the Session and assumed the name of the Congregational Workers' Committee. Twenty-five in all, including the Session, they made a personal call on every household in the parish area, and gave an invitation to join the fellowship of the congregation. They also secured information for an ecclesiastical census of the district. The results will be of great service to the Minister in his pastoral work, and will help in the allocation of districts to elders later on. From the same body of men, a rota of collectors was arranged for duty on Sundays at the collections.

The majority of the congregation have had the experience of taking possession of a completely new house, and they will therefore appreciate the work which the Session have to face in attending to the numerous details incidental to equipping a new church and halls. Seating the church with chairs has done away with the incubus of seat-rents, but does not allow members to leave their books in the pew. To meet this difficulty, two book-racks are being installed, with numbered pigeon-holes, in which books may be left by those who prefer to do so. A set of steps

has also been provided to give access to the platform from the floor of the hall. A small business-room has been furnished for the convenience of the Treasurer and Collectors. There are still needed a cupboard for Choir Books and Organist's music; a cupboard, easel and black-board for the Sunday School, a table and chairs for the small hall.

The Session acknowledges with gratitude the following gifts:—

Pulpit Bible.
Collection Plates.
Table and Chairs.
Flower Vase.
Linen.
Hymn Boards and Cards.
Bible Markers.
Electric Clock.

Mr. R. Cameron, Church Officer, appointed by the Presbytery for six months in the first place, deserves thanks for the ability and helpfulness he has shown in his work, "looking before and after."

Now that a congregation is in existence, the Session will take an early opportunity of calling a congregational meeting for consultation on many matters on which its views should be expressed, and for explaining the arrangements which are necessary for the successful organisation of the work of the church. A Property Committee will be required almost at once. The establishment of various branches of work among young people, delayed meantime, must also be considered.

The Congregation has no legacy from the past, no inherited traditions; it is free and unhampered in the efforts it may make. This is an opportunity which comes only once to any congregation. Let us see that we make worthy use of it.

W.A.A.

Treasurer's Statement.

GENERAL.—While the Church of St. Mark, Oldhall, remains an Extension Charge under the Home Board of the Church of Scotland, its finances will be subject to the supervision of the Presbytery of Paisley. The Home Board guarantees the minister's stipend until we are able to meet this charge ourselves. Any balance we may have at the end of the year, after making a reasonable contribution to the various Schemes of the Church, will be handed to the Home Board. Over a period of years it is hoped we may repay in this way a sum of £2,000 as our contribution towards the cost of the Church. The Church and Halls cost in all over £10,000.

INCOME.—Members should know that we are entirely dependent for Income upon the offerings taken each Sunday. There is no endowment, as in some churches; and no 'charge' for seat rents is being made. Under such circumstances may we ask that offerings be made as generous as possible.

MANSE.—Before the church had been opened, in order that the Minister might settle to work immediately, the Presbytery of Paisley procured the house at 25 Darvel Crescent, to serve as a manse. The initial payment made was £160, of which £100 was given by the Church and Manse Building Committee, and the remaining £60 contributed by the Presbytery as a loan, to be repaid in three yearly instalments of £20, with interest at $2\frac{1}{2}\%$. There is a mortgage on the manse for the outstanding sum of £860, and the congregation through its trustees (Minister, Session Clerk and Treasurer) is responsible for the redemption of this loan over a period of 21 years.

ORGAN.—As the Estey Organ at present in use in the church is on loan, and, moreover, is far from adequate for our requirements, we hope that before long a more suitable instrument may be obtainable. We are greatly indebted to Sir August Cayzer, Bart., for the generous gift of £250 to form a nucleus of an Organ Fund.

Collections.

April (Dedication, Induction, Introduction)	£68	16	11
May
June
July
	62	10	11
	47	5	6
	32	2	8

A.G.A.