

Marksman

August / September, 2025



National Book Lovers Day : Saturday 9 August

St Mark's Church of Scotland (Oldhall), Paisley

334 Glasgow Road, Paisley, PA1 3DL

Office Telephone – 0141 882 2755

Email: office@stmarksoldhall.org.uk

www.stmarksoldhall.org.uk

Scottish Charity SC011210



From the Manse



I wonder if you have spent the last few weeks glued to the Television?

Our screens have been full of many different sporting competitions – the tennis at Queens and Wimbledon, the Golf Open Championship at Portrush, the Test Cricket at Lords. If you are a football fan, maybe the Women's European Championships have been your choice or the UEFA Champions League Qualifiers? Or perhaps you like the speed and the noise of the Grand Prix?

There has certainly been plenty of sport to choose from.

Whether we play or not, and perhaps, especially if we have played in the past, sport inspires us, enthuses us, entertains us, and yes, frustrates us as well.

There is something about the challenge that excites us, and even if you know your football club is never going to win the Premiership or even the Championship League there is always the hope of just beating your long-term rivals.

In tennis and in golf we watch as players face over and again opponents they had played many times before, and also against new opponents they had never come across before, whose skills and strengths they are less sure of. And the same is true for every sport.

However, there are challenges in other spheres of life as well. In our school days, the challenge of gaining good exam results, and gaining entry into the college or university of our choice. Then comes the challenge of finding a job, and of working our way up the career ladder. Then might come the challenge of parenthood, or the challenge of fertility treatment, possibly with the eventual challenge of adapting to a life of childlessness.

The goalpost of retirement offers a different type of challenge, how best to fill your day, which charity or organisation to volunteer for, how to cope with the demands of caring for grandchildren, and elderly parents, sometimes both at the same time. Or the challenge of coping with deteriorating health or mobility, or simply just not being as able as you used to be.

There are other kinds of challenges too, some we set for ourselves, like a New Year resolution, a weight loss goal, a month off the booze, and the number of steps to walk in a day, or a week, or a month. I'm currently working towards targets set on my *Goodreads* app (other book apps are available!) in the *Summer Challenge*. I like doing this because it challenges me to read books about subjects, and in different styles of writing to what I would usually choose. I'm also 40 books into my yearly challenge of 60 books in the year – and I hope to be much closer to the end, by the end of my holiday.

Our Christian life offers different types of challenges too : the challenge to be faithful when others encourage us to go astray ; the challenge to read your Bible and pray every day, when you might rather be doing other things ; the challenge to apply the Bible's teachings to our daily life, to use it to guide us in what we do, and what we say ; the challenge of becoming more like Jesus.

In my sermon on Sunday 20th July, the last day before I went on holiday, I issued a challenge to those of you who were there, which I now extend to everyone who reads this, and it is to pick up your Bible, your old favourite, or maybe a modern version you don't normally use, and read the story of Jesus again, as if for the first time.

From the Manse

Read one of the Gospels all the way through (not necessarily in the one sitting), read it as a story, and learn anew about Jesus. Maybe choose Mark – it's the shortest, or John if you want more of a challenge. Read it as a story, and imagine yourself being part of the story, being there, seeing the events happen. If you have the time and the motivation, read all four, and see the different stories each of the Gospel writers thought was important, and how some stories are told differently by different writers. None of this means the facts are wrong, just that different people tell

different stories in different ways. We can learn from them all.

Challenge yourself this summer, not just to take a rest from the routine of the year, but to do something different, to spend more time in God's word, or more time talking to him, or just resting in his presence, and I pray that you will be blessed as you do.

Your friend and minister,

Sonia



Choir

Choir Rehearsals will commence on Thursday 4th September at 7pm in the church café. Rehearsals only last 1 hour and involve singing through the hymns for the forthcoming Sunday morning worship and also rehearsing a choir anthem and sometimes introit for the same service. Due to Sonia's forward planning, these anthems and introits are usually rehearsed for several weeks prior to worship so are quite familiar to the choir members by the time of public singing. There is no requirement to read music. The only requirement is to come along and have fun while worshipping our Lord and Saviour.

Please do consider joining us, even one week to have a try. It is good fun and also good for your health in so many ways. Singing is a proven mood booster, and just 5 minutes a day will do the trick, according to research by the British Academy of Sound Therapy. As well as releasing feel-good endorphins, singing engages abdominal muscles, stimulates circulation and helps us to breathe more deeply, which can bring relief to some long-term lung conditions. Further research has also proved that singing can aid breathing issues caused by long COVID.

Have I convinced you yet? If not, then speak to me or any choir members please.

Dawn Hope



Worship Matters

- Sundays 27th July and 3rd August :** Joint worship at Sherwood Greenlaw Church
(while Sonia is on holiday 21st July – 4th August (incl).
- Sunday 14th September :** Harvest Thanksgiving
- Sunday 21st September :** Morning Worship will be led by our Worship Team while Sonia is at Iona Abbey with a group from St Mark's (away 20th – 26th September).
- Tuesday 26th August :** Next meeting of the Kirk Session

Funerals

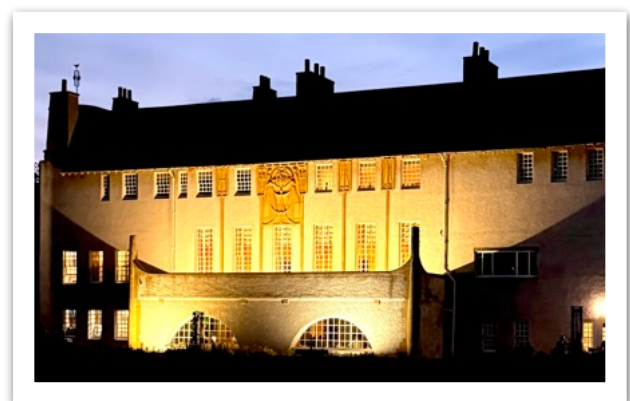
- 9th June** Anne Scott, Penilee Road.
- 18th June** Elizabeth Rutherford, Glasgow Rd.
- 16th July** Margaret Graham, Renfrew Care Home, prev. Atholl Crescent.

We have also learned of the death of Mrs Ernestine Shotter of Erskine Care Home.



Weddings

On **14th June 2025** at The House for an Art Lover, the wedding of Roisin Brown and Andrew Roberts.



Session Report



At our last session meeting on 24th June we received an update on an inspection of all out electrical system and heard that there were historical and more recent problems that need to be repaired, some as a matter of urgency, at a cost of just under £10,000. Fortunately the church finances are in a reasonable state and we can go ahead with the work.

We also agreed to replace windows and back door of the manse but, thankfully, no electrical problems were identified there.

As you may be aware ROAR has ceased funding for the group which meets in St. Mark's but session has agreed to support their endeavours and the new arrangement will be Ralston Seniors Club. They will be affiliated to the church and safeguarding checks will be carried out on the management committee of the new venture to comply with church law.

Over the summer we have 2 joint services at Sherwood/Greenlaw- on 27th July and 3rd August. Our proposed union is progressing slowly, but it is hoped that both kirk sessions will come together and agree a Basis of Union to allow the churches to unite by September 2026. Please keep this situation in your prayers.

We are taking part once again in the Ralston Community Games on 23rd August and the church will man the tea/coffee/baking stall as well as having a home baking section for takeaways. Any left over (some hope) will be on sale in the church after the service on 24th.

It would still be good if there were any new volunteers to help in the church café and also to help maintain the grounds. Please contact the office or myself (07780 695998) if interested.

Colin Reid, Session Clerk



Sunday Duty Team Rota

DATE	TEAM	LEADER	DATE	TEAM	LEADER
03/08/25	5	Mr A. Boyd	07/09/25	1	Mr J. Goodall
10/08/2025	5	Mr A. Boyd	14/09/2025	2	Mr A. Taylor
17/08/2025	6	Dr C. Reid	21/09/2025	2	Mr A. Taylor
24/08/2025	6	Dr C. Reid	28/09/2025	3	Mrs C. Hair
31/08/2025	1	Mr J. Goodall			

A letter from our prayer partner, Rev. Muriel Pearson, Church of Scotland Associate Minister in Tiberias.



Dear Friends,

For more than 600 days, wherever you are, you have watched horrified, feeling helpless, and angry, as the people of Gaza have been relentlessly attacked following the dreadful events of 7th October, 2023. Most Gazans have been displaced many times, famine is now a very real threat and the suffering is unimaginable.

In the West Bank, settlement expansion has been going on apace and settler violence has increased. Since 7th October there are 800 new checkpoints. Unemployment is about 80% and folks are beyond weary.

Israelis, too, are weary. Call-ups to reserve duty are repeated. The families of hostages have been pleading for a ceasefire and a return of their loved ones. More and more are dead.

Humanitarian aid to Gaza, never enough at the best of times, is now cynically in the hands of a private company which has no experience of distribution and many Gazans have been killed, desperate to feed their families.

Many Palestinians are held without charge in appalling conditions in Israeli prisons.

The international community has failed to find a way forward.

And then, on Friday 13th June, Israel attacked Iran, targeting scientists and military leaders and seeking to degrade Iran's capacity to enrich uranium and produce a nuclear bomb. Last night counterattacks from Iran led to alerts throughout the night. Those lucky enough to have shelters and secure

rooms spent the night there. As I write, I can hear air force jets overhead.

Worship was on Zoom on Sunday and will be until the state of emergency is relaxed.

Thank you for your messages of support and for your prayers.

Here are a few pointers:

- Pray for clear international consensus on a way forward which will lead to peace with justice for all.
- Pray for the most vulnerable, the children and the elderly, the injured and the sick; that aid will reach them quickly and plentifully.
- Pray for those bereaved and those held prisoner by a spirit of revenge.
- Pray for all working on the logistics of aid delivery, all those seeking diplomatic solutions, all those prepared to risk talking to the enemy.
- Pray that apathy and a feeling of helplessness will be replaced by a sense that everyone can contribute.
- Pray for the staff of our hotels and school, and our students and their families. Pray that kindness and unity in diversity will continue to shape their common lives and give hope that things can be different.
- Pray that Stewart (Rev. Stewart Gillan, Church of Scotland minister in Jerusalem) and I will be given wisdom and grace as we seek to minister here.
- Pray that God's love in all its abundance will be the hallmark of our communities and of our work.

Ralston Seniors Club

Where friendship, fun and good health meet.

Every Friday at St Mark's Church

11.15am – 2.00pm

Fitness

Support



Enjoyment

Inspiration

Health and Wellbeing

Membership Enquiries

Phone: [07721 911 234](tel:07721911234)

Email: ralstonseniorsclub@stmarksoldhall.org.uk

and leave your contact details.

Funding for *Ralston ROAR Club*, which has been running successfully for the past 14 years, is being withdrawn at the end of July. Rather than allow the club to stop functioning, the members and volunteers felt strongly that the club should continue.

Alternative funding has been secured and so from 1st August, 2025 the club will be renamed *Ralston Seniors Club*, has a new Management Board and will continue to meet every Friday in St Mark's.

Whilst previously under the auspices of

ROAR Connections for Life, the club will now come under the umbrella of St Mark's Church.

The club offers a pre-lunch, gentle physical activity followed by soup and sandwiches and concludes with an entertainment or social activity.

The club anticipates recruiting new members but would welcome additional volunteers. If you would like to volunteer or would like more information about volunteering, phone :

Bill Whyte at 0141 882 7188.

1st and 2nd East Rainbow Unit.

In April when we resumed after the Easter holidays, we had a visit from Margo who put the girls through their paces for their *Agility* badge.

The 30th of April saw a visit from *Let's Connect* and the girls got the chance to construct wind turbines. Funding from *Tesco Bags of Help*, *Grow Girlguiding Fund* and *Arnold Clark Foundation* helped fund the exciting opportunities the girls have had at Rainbows this year.



May

The dash is on to complete badges, visit Brownie units and welcome our waiting list for an evening of fun.

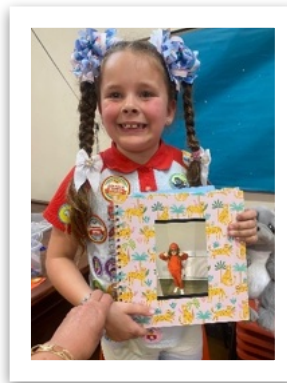
We had a silent disco at the start of May for our P1s and ten girls from the waiting list.

Twelve girls visited the 39th Brownies and 39th A Brownies over two nights as part of their *Gold* journey.

Over the next 3 weeks, twelve girls shared their time at Rainbows : how nervous they felt when they started ; their favourite game, song and experiences ; the badges they had the most fun completing.

In May we also completed *Girlguiding Scotland Out and About Challenge 2025 : Up in the Air*. We made paper aeroplanes to see how far they would fly and the next week we made wind-propelled cars.

Our final night was the 28th of May when we were joined by the families of 28 Rainbows, our church elders Mrs Elizabeth Macdonald, Mrs Julie Wright, and both units' Brown Owls : Mrs Sheena Tonner and Mrs Christine Hair.



Purple Award . This is for girls who are in between badges.



Ellie, Skye,
Mia, Tillie, Elsie
and Breagha.

Bronze Award



Imogen, Ella,
Sophie H, Sadie
and Isabelle

1st and 2nd East Rainbow Unit.

Silver Award



Mia G, Jessica C, Eilish, Bronagh, Ava, Jess, Harper and Mollie

Jessica C, Mia G and Summer completed all 12 Interest Badges. This is the last time this award will be presented as from 21st of July Rainbows will have 24 Interest Badges to choose from.

Best Group

Ellie, Alba, Grace, Tilly and Isabelle.

Best attendance 1 year

Jessica C, Eilish and Bronagh

Best attendance over 2 years

Summer, Grace & Eilidh

Brown Owls from 39th Paisley and 39th A welcomed girls advancing to Brownies after the summer break. While meetings are paused for now, we will soon greet a new group of Rainbows in September.



Gold Award

This is the highest achievement in Rainbows and not everyone gets this award. But this year we presented 12 GOLD awards.



Everly, Daniela, Alba, Sophie C, Eilidh, Jess, Mia G, Jessica C, Summer, Laurie, Grace and Jessica F.

Waiting List 2025+

If your child will begin school in August 2026 and you wish to register them, please do so soon.

Rainbows is for children aged 4-7; however, our team has set the guideline that girls should have started school before joining the unit.

www.girlguiding.org.uk/register-my-child.

Purple





Girl Guiding Appeal

Girl guiding in East District is in need of some help .

We have in the last year lost a unit at St Mark's, reducing the availability to girls aged 4-7.

With 2 units we could offer between 36-40 places for girls to have fun and join in guiding activities. We also lost 4 volunteers : 3 with the closure of the Tuesday Rainbows and 1 from the Wednesday Rainbows .

Our volunteer team managed up to thirty-one girls this year, but has decided to reduce numbers for the coming years. Thus the 2025/26 waiting list is now closed. Any enquiries will be redirected to nearby Cardonald units, as all three East district units currently have no availability.

The Rainbows waiting list for 2025/2026 is now open, but I think will be full very soon.

East district **needs volunteers** to share in guiding experiences with girls aged four and up.

Volunteers are needed to prevent another unit from closing in summer 2026, which would further limit opportunities for girls.

East District has three Rainbow units—1st North, 3rd East and 1st East —with a total capacity of 60 girls. We are in desperate need of volunteers to keep units open. There is a variety of roles volunteers can do within units and not everyone is a leader, but support is always welcome.

If you think you could help the girls , want to know more or are interested in supporting Guiding, please register your interest at www.girlguiding.org.uk.



The Haven

Drop-In Café

(for anyone living with dementia, including their families and friends)
in

Ralston Community Café

2 - 4 p.m.



Future Dates

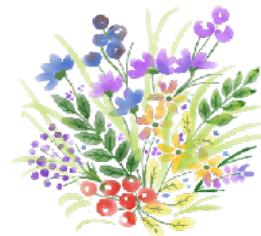
Thursday 21 August

Thursday 18 September



Flowers in Church

03.08.25	Mrs M. Currie
10.08.25	Mrs N. Macgregor
17.08.25	Mrs A. McLachlan
24.08.25	Mrs A. Fisher
31.08.25	Mrs K. Sheils
07.09.25	Mrs J. Forson
14.09.25	Mrs D. Grant
21.09.25	BB Co. Section
28.09.25	Mrs S. Smith



Ladies Delivering Flowers

03.08.25	Mrs J. Dempster	
10.08.25		
17.08.25	Mrs M. Robin	
24.08.25	Mrs M. Adam	
31.08.25	Miss I. Higgins	
07.09.25	Mrs S. Tonner	
14.09.25	Mrs K. McLauchlan	
21.09.25	Miss J. Chapman	
28.09.25	Mrs J. Dempster	

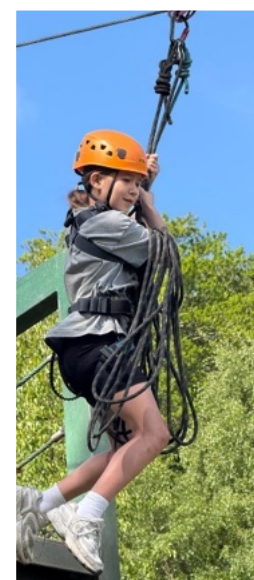
39thA Paisley Brownies

The term finished in a flurry of activity including an outdoor weekend, a trip to the *Festival of Friendship* in Greenock, lots of badges being completed and welcoming parents to our final meeting. The Leaders all needed to lie down in a dark corner for the month of June!

What an amazing weekend full of fun and friendship we had at *PGL Outdoor Centre* in May. 16 Brownies and 4 leaders had a great time taking part in different activities including zip wire, giant swing, archery, blindfolded sensory trail and survival skills. The Brownies challenged themselves in so many ways and had lots of laughs as they did it!

All the Brownies achieved the *Land Adventure* badge while 12 gained the 1 and 2 *Nights Away* badges and 4 of them received a badge to celebrate achieving 5 nights away with Brownies.

At the end of May, 13 Brownies and 2 leaders ventured on the train to Greenock for an afternoon event called *Festival of Friendship*. There were over 200 girls attending from across the County. There was lots of singing and dancing as we were entertained by a Taylor Swift tribute band. Many thanks to Greenock Division for organising this.



39thA Paisley Brownies

As we approached the end of session, there were lots of Brownies completing badges that they had been working on. It was great to be able to present so many badges on our final meeting. Parents all received an invitation, hand-written by the Brownies so they were able to hear about all our activities through the year and share our excitement of badges being awarded.

Big Garden Birdwatch – Imogen ; Poppy

Super Slumber Challenge – Aoife ; Breagha ; Charlotte McN ; Eve ; Leah ; Keavagh ; Tilly

Interest badges

Aviation – Anna ; Keavagh

Baking – Eve

Dancing – Imogen ; Poppy

Inventing – Anna ; Tilly

Jobs – Charlotte L ; Francesca ; Georgia

Painting – Anna

Performing – Imogen ; Poppy

Mindfulness – Anna ; Imogen ; Maisie

Space – Tilly

Theme Badges

Express Myself – Anna

Skills For My Future – Anna ; Charlotte L ; Francesca

Have Adventures – Anna ; Eve

Be Well – Anna ; Maisie

Take Action - Katie

Bronze Award – Keavagh

Silver Award – Anna ; Maisie

Gold Award – Anna ; Katie

Anniversary Badges

4 year – Nina

Special mention to Tilly who has now completed all 18 Brownie Interest Badges that are available. Luckily, Girlguiding are producing 18 new badges in August so there will be a bigger range of challenges for everyone next session!



The Pack had some farewells to say at our final meeting. Four of the Brownies are leaving as they are at the upper age for this section. We wish Carla, Felicity and Katie good luck as they have decided to end their Girlguiding journey [at the moment]. Anna is also leaving, but intends to move on to Guides and we are sure she will continue to have fun there. We also were very sad to say *au revoir* to Goldie Owl [Emily] who has been an important part of the leadership team for 4 years. It is hoped that when Emily completes her university course in Edinburgh, that she might manage to rejoin us. We will miss you, Emily!

After a little rest, the leadership team is starting the preparations for next session. We look forward to welcoming 7 new starts who are transferring from Rainbows so Wednesday nights will be even busier! The new session begins on Wednesday 3rd September and we have an outing to Blair Drummond Safari Park for a Girlguiding Scotland event on Saturday 13th September.

If you have any new neighbours with girls in the family, please encourage them to come along and enjoy the fun and friendship that Girlguiding offers. Local Girlguiding is desperate for adult volunteers and a very warm welcome awaits anyone who would like to join in the fun. Interest should be registered at :

www.girlguiding.org.uk/joinus.

Christine Hair, Brown Owl

Prayer Diary



		AUGUST, 2025
Fri	1	Ralston Seniors Club will start today.
Sat	2	We remember our local community and pray for the Community Council.
Sun	3	Pray for Rev Gordon Armstrong as he leads us in worship at our joint service with Sherwood Greenlaw. We ask that we have a blessed time of fellowship together. We pray that Sonia has a good holiday.
Mon	4	This week we pray for those living in Oldhall Road, Ossian Road and Penilee Road.
Tue	5	Remember all the young folk who will be receiving results today and be with them. As Sonia returns to work today, we pray that she will be refreshed and re-energised after her break.
Wed	6	We pray for the Café, for Meena and all the volunteers who help.
Thu	7	Pray specifically for Sonia today that she will be blessed in her ministry. Pray for her family too.
Fri	8	Pray for Street Pastors as they are out and about. Sonia is on duty tonight.
Sat	9	Pray for local businesses in our area.
Sun	10	We pray for Sonia this morning and ask you to bless the message she brings to us. Help us to be ready to listen to what you have to say to us.
Mon	11	Ralston Avenue, Roffey Park Road and Rosshall Avenue are our streets for prayer this week.
Tue	12	International Youth Day.
Wed	13	Give thanks for Stuart and the work he does editing and producing the Marksman.
Thu	14	Pray for Peter and all the work he does, and for Amy as she supports and helps him. Pray for Renfrewshire school staff returning to work today.
Fri	15	Official opening of the Ralston Seniors Club today. (This replaces ROAR)
Sat	16	We pray for emergency services who work tirelessly to help and support our communities.



World Humanitarian Day : 19 August

Prayer Diary



		AUGUST, 2025
Sun	17	As we gather together, may our worship be acceptable to you.
Mon	18	Pray for those in Rotherwick Drive, School Road, and Southwold Road this coming week. We pray for all our young folk returning to school today. Be with them as they start this session.
Tue	19	World Humanitarian Day.
Wed	20	Prayer Group in church and on Zoom this evening.
Thu	21	The Haven Café on today. May all who come along have a happy time together.
Fri	22	We pray for Peter and Sonia in the work they do in the school. We ask that they to be used by God to support the pupils, staff and parents in our community and share God's love.
Sat	23	Pray for all those in local, national, and international government. May they be led to seek your wisdom to lead wisely for the good of all.
Sun	24	Pray for all who gather this morning in person or online. May we know a sense of your presence with us and be with Sonia as she leads us. Evolution starts again this morning. Pray for Ruth and the team as they plan and work with the youngsters.
Mon	25	Prayers are for those in Springfield Avenue, Strathmore Avenue, Tylney Road and Woodend Drive this week.
Tue	26	Kirk Session on this evening.
Wed	27	Prayer Group in church and on Zoom this evening.
Thu	28	Remember all those on the media team who bring the service to those watching online and support us in the church.
Fri	29	Remember all those we support through Renfrewshire Foodbank and also the Women's Refuge. We pray for those less fortunate than us.
Sat	30	We pray for all those countries that are experiencing conflicts and wars. Hear our prayers and bring them relief, safety, and peace.
Sun	31	Thank you for the freedom to come together to worship and help us remember those who don't have the same freedoms.



Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfil the law of Christ.

Galatians 6 : 2



General Assembly of the Church of Scotland 2025

The Church of Scotland

As this year's General Assembly drew to a close, the Moderator, the Rt Rev. Rosie Frew, urged the Church to 'remember that God is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine'. In her closing address, Mrs Frew told the Assembly that the past week has been challenging, but also inspiring.

She said: "All of us - whatever the age and stage - have a shared vocation... And sometimes it can feel really hard. For most of us in this room, our whole Christian life has been lived out against the backdrop of decline. That line on the graph that's due to hit zero all too soon. The whole of my ministry, year on year. It can feel so dispiriting. And we see the reality of it as we look around our congregations and we're still one of the young ones..."

But she said there had been encouragement, having Lady Elish Angiolini as our Lord High Commissioner – such a positive message of unity and friendship. The involvement of our youth delegates. Young adults involved and invested and excited. The singing, the sharing of bread and wine, the conversations enjoyed, the friendships made. The contributions of so many people – honest, raw, questioning, encouraging. And the good news stories. And there are so many of them. People saying they've left this Assembly knowing so much more, and being so encouraged by what they've heard and seen.

In her closing speech, Lady Angiolini spoke of visits to Stirling, Dundee, the Central Mosque in Edinburgh and the Free Church of Scotland's General Assembly. She had taken part in services at St Giles' Cathedral and St Andrew's Roman Catholic Cathedral in Glasgow on the same day, which was a first for the Lord High Commissioner.

She told the Assembly: "I have genuinely loved witnessing your sincere and informed debates and engagement, peppered with good humour."

Assembly Trustees

'With heavy hearts', the Assembly Trustees introduce a report warning that 'the Church of Scotland is at a tipping point in terms of its financial viability' and 'needs to act now'.

While the 2024 financial results were not as bad as anticipated – an operating deficit of nearly £5.9m was £2.25m less than budgeted, due mostly to higher than expected investment income and legacies – initial calculations for the 2025 budget showed a deficit of £7.625 million. The Trustees report that they refused to approve this budget 'and instructed the Senior Leadership Team to come up with a further plan of action to significantly reduce the budgeted deficit and move towards a break-even position for 2027'.

Among the areas of work affected is the Seeds for Growth fund, which has seen its allocation for awards for the remainder of 2025 reduced from £2.2m to £500,000 (grants already agreed will be honoured). There has also been a voluntary exit scheme for staff from the national office, to be followed later this year by compulsory redundancies.

'Considerable work is being undertaken' towards a sustainable model for financing ministry, with proposals being developed for next year for implementation from January 2027. The principles underpinning the new model would include charges that can afford a full time minister being able to call, with provision made for those not able to meet the full cost. Presbytery income would come not from the national budget, as at present, but from local presbytery dues.

The church membership statistics make predictably grim reading, with total membership falling by about 14,000 to less than 245,000. This is the first time membership has dipped below 250,000,

and represents a drop of over 50,000 since 2020. The eldership has decreased by over 5000 people to 19,180 in the same period. There were 695 Professions of Faith in 2024, a fall of 65 compared to 2023, but higher than each of the three years before that.

The Church offices at 121 George Street are now 'housing a range of tenants' and generating 'at least £400k per annum income'.

The Business Committee brings proposals that the General Assembly should become a four-day event, from Friday to Monday, from next year. The proposed model includes a shortened opening ceremony and incorporates Holy Communion into closing worship on Monday afternoon. The Guild's Big Sing would take place on Saturday night, and the Moderator's Reception, Beating Retreat and Holyrood Palace reception on Sunday.

The committee predicts that the shortened Assembly will result in financial savings (estimated at £111,000 in 2026) as well as being easier to attend for elders of working age and Commissioners with family commitments.

Assisted Dying

The Joint Report of the Theological Forum and FAPLT on Assisted Dying examines the debate from a scriptural and theological perspective, as well as exploring issues around pastoral care, personal autonomy and 'slippery slope' concerns.

It concludes that the range of views in the Church – those who would continue to support opposition to assisted dying, those who would not choose it for themselves but 'recognise the ethical legitimacy of that choice for others' and those who would consider it for themselves – 'can all be held with theological integrity within the Church of Scotland'.

A list of areas on which Christians agree include that life is precious, fear of becoming a burden to loved ones should not be an acceptable reason for assisted dying, that legalising it is a 'serious step... with inherent risks' that must not be rushed, and that 'death is too much of a taboo subject in society'.

The Deliverance includes calls for the 'development of excellent palliative care services' and for 'robust safeguards' if assisted dying is legalised.

The convener of the **Safeguarding Committee** has warned the Church of Scotland not to be complacent on issues of safeguarding.

The Rev Dr Sonia Blakesley told the General Assembly that while the Kirk's Presbyterian structure meant that it was less vulnerable to the 'failures of leadership and lack of accountability' that contributed to the John Smyth abuse scandal in the Church of England (and which led to the resignation of Justin Welby as Archbishop of Canterbury), 'we can get better at this'.

And she warned that people must be aware of their duty to report concerns: "Too often priests and ministers and others are allowed to continue in abusive relationships because people do not want to believe that a church leader, a colleague, even a friend, would do the unthinkable..."

Social Care Council (CrossReach Board)

The CrossReach report unveils a new five-year strategy, entitled 'Love from CrossReach'. The board states: "The strategy builds on 155 years of delivering care and support to the people of Scotland, in Christ's name, and as part of the Church of Scotland. It recognises that the way in which social care is designed and delivered is changing around us, and that we need to adapt and change with it. We have taken the opportunity to refresh our core purpose and set out a number of principles which will help the CrossReach Board to steer a steady course for the future, despite the acute challenges faced by CrossReach and the wider social care sector.

Thanks to Life and Work for their reporting from which this summary has been gathered. Fuller reports are available on <https://www.lifeandwork.org/features/general-assembly-2025-reports>

or on the church of Scotland website <https://www.churchofscotland.org.uk/about-us/general-assembly> where transcripts of speeches and full reports can be found.

Prayer Diary



		SEPTEMBER, 2025
Mon	1	Pray for all those who live outwith our District.
Tue	2	39 th Brownies start again this evening, and 5 new Brownies will join them.
Wed	3	Prayer Group in church and on Zoom this evening. 39 th A Brownies start back this week.
Thu	4	Hopefully, the Choir restarts tonight, and we pray for Dawn and members as they practise. New members of any age would be made most welcome.
Fri	5	Boys' Brigade starts up this week. Pray for for the Anchor Boys, Junior Section and Company Section lads as they come together after the break. Pray for the leaders and helpers too. They would also welcome prayers for the continued working together with 22 nd Paisley from Sherwood Greenlaw as they move forward into the new session.
Sat	6	Help us to do our part to look after our world. We pray for our Green Team as they look for ways to reuse, recycle and reduce waste.
Sun	7	This Sunday we pray for Sonia in her preparation and as she brings your word to us. Bless all who meet together.
Mon	8	We remember those living in Allanton Avenue, Alton Road, and Atholl Crescent this week.
Tue	9	We pray for other churches in our town and community as they seek to do your work. Bless them as they reach out to others.
Wed	10	Prayer Group in church and on Zoom this evening.
Thu	11	We give thanks for the Property Team who do so much to keep our buildings and manse in good order.
Fri	12	Most organisations are now up and running. Continue to pray for all the leaders, helpers, and young folk as they meet each week.
Sat	13	Bible Study recommences on Zoom this morning. Pray that more will join in and bless us as we study your word. We pray for all those who are bereaved and mourning loved ones. We remember all those who are lonely and find the weekends long and difficult. Bring comfort and peace. Also pray for a day out planned for Brownies and Leaders to Blair Drummond Safari Park.



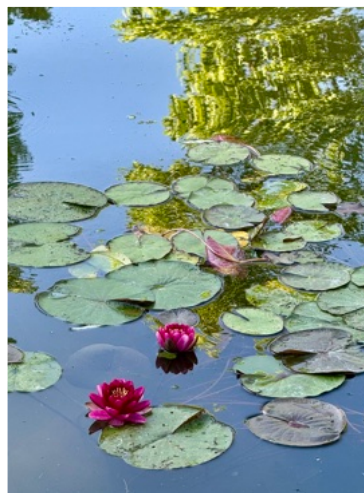
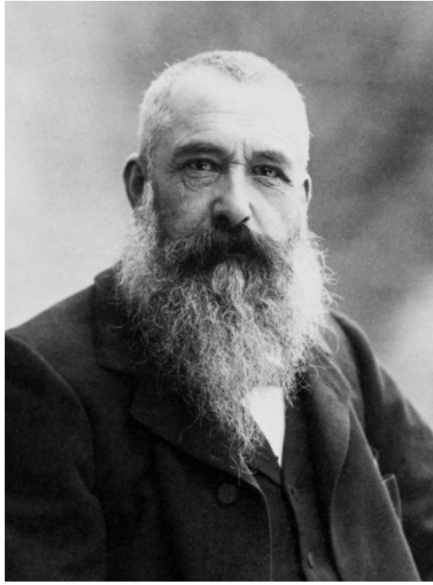
International Day of Democracy : 15 September

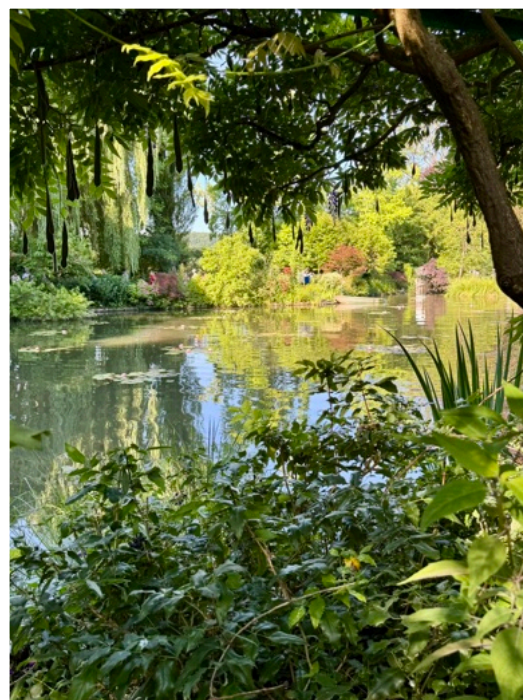
Prayer Diary



		SEPTEMBER, 2025
Sun	14	We gather this morning to celebrate our Harvest Thanksgiving. Be with all who attend and give us a real attitude of gratitude for the many blessings you give us.
Mon	15	We pray for all in Auchmannoch Avenue, Balfron Road and Barshaw Place this coming week.
Tue	16	Tonight is the meeting of Clyde Presbytery. We pray for discussions and decisions made here and that you would be with all our Presbytery Elders who represent their congregations.
Wed	17	World Patient Safety Day. Prayer Group in church and on Zoom this evening. This is followed by the first Bible Study. Again, pray that more will be led to join in and find out more about you through the studies. Pray for Fiona in the Office and all the work she does there.
Thu	18	The Haven Café on this afternoon. Be with all who come along.
Fri	19	Thank you for people who help out with the car run, for Myra who organises this and for the fact that people can get to church more easily.
Sat	20	International Day of Peace. Today is the day Sonia, along with others, head off to Iona for a Church trip. Be with all who attend, give them safe travel and may they know your presence with them and enjoy fellowship together. They are away until Friday 26 th September.
Sun	21	Pray for Jack as he leads worship this morning and for all who are involved in our service today. Remember those on Iona.
Mon	22	Our streets for prayer this week are Bathgo Avenue, Blair Road, and Buchlyvie Road. Pray for those on the Iona Trip.
Tue	23	May those on the Iona Trip be blessed by their time together.
Wed	24	Prayer Group in church and on Zoom this evening. Remember those on Iona this week.
Thu	25	We pray today for the Iona Trip people to be enjoying a real time of fellowship together.
Fri	26	Iona Church Trip concludes today – again pray for pleasant weather and safe travel for all.
Sat	27	Bible Study meets this morning on Zoom. Help us be grateful for days of leisure, whether they be at the weekend or at other times. May we appreciate your model of having time to rest.
Sun	28	Be with us in our worship today. May we come ready to hear your word.
Mon	29	This week we pray for Crookston Drive, Dalfoil Court and Darvel Crescent.
Tue	30	As we reach the end of September, we pray for other organisations that will be starting up in the next month.

Summer Portrait : Monet's Garden at Giverny





***One is nearer God's heart in a garden
Than anywhere else on earth.***

Dorothy F.B. Gurney 1858-1932

How many of the plants can you name?

Christian Education



As we look forward to a new session a warm welcome is extended to all to join in our **Prayer Group** meetings on Wednesday evenings at 7.00pm. There are two options – in church or on Zoom. The Zoom link can be sent to you if you let Irene Pollock know on : irene.pollock03@gmail.com.

We are encouraged to meet together to pray and maybe that is something you've never thought about doing. If so, why not give it a go? There is always room for more.

Our first evening will be on August 20th and every Wednesday following.

The other invitation is to our Bible Study groups. These meet on alternate Saturday mornings on Zoom at 10:20 for a 10:30 start. Again, contact Irene for a link. The church meetings are held on Wednesdays after the Prayer Group. We study the same things so if you cannot make it on a Saturday, you can go along on a Wednesday, or vice versa.

These will run on the dates below.

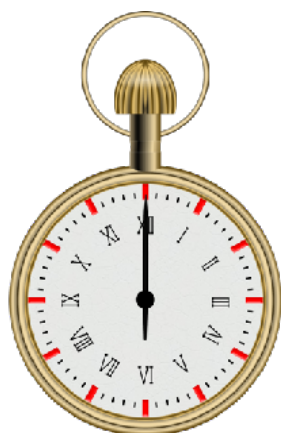
SATURDAYS	WEDNESDAYS
13 September	17 September
27 September	1 October
11 October	15 October
25 October	29 October
8 November	12 November
22 November	26 November
6 December	10 December

We have still to make a decision about what book of the Bible we are going to be looking at, but information about that will come out. Booklets are ordered for those who wish to participate and usually cost a few pounds.

Irene and Bob Pollock



International Literacy Day : 8 September



Please send articles for the *Marksman* to the editor at :

marksman@stmarksoldhall.org.uk

Contribution deadline for the next edition : 12 noon, 18 September, 2025.