

THE SCOTS KIRK PARIS

General Assembly

The General Assembly of the Church of Scotland will be held from 18-23 May. This annual gathering was first held in 1560 in the first year of the Scottish Reformation. The General Assembly is the supreme court of the Church of Scotland, the other two lower courts being the Presbytery and the local Kirk Session.

The new Moderator for 2024-25 is Rev. Dr Shaw Paterson from Strathaven Trinity Paris Church and we are honoured that he has accepted our invitation to preach in SKP on 7th July.

The Moderator's first task is to chair the General Assembly after which he will serve as the Church's ambassador in Scotland and around the world.



Attending the General Assembly will be more than 400 commissioners comprising ministers, elders, youth representatives and ecumenical delegates. Dr Paterson has said that one of the main themes of his year in office will be "building together" (he used to be a bricklayer!), stressing the need for us all to look forward against the background of the Radical Action Plan which has been and still is difficult for all congregations.

Find out more about the General Assembly and the role of Moderator [here](#).

A word from Laurence, our Interim Moderator



Warmest greetings, as always!

I never expected or particularly wanted to be an "expat", yet, here I am, nearly 8 years into my time in Geneva...and now I am

beginning to realise the price we "expats" pay for the colour, the weather, the food, the wine, the cheese, the beautiful towns and cities we are fortunate to enjoy.

We miss the people who are important to us...the friends from long ago, who know us so well, watched us become the people we are. They - be they family, old neighbours, fellow students...they have no illusions about us - and their down to earth sense of who we are prevents us having any delusions of grandeur or airs of sophistication just because we live here and they live there.

We miss them and their reminders of times past, that were true, and precious, creative - and to be honoured.

And multiply that feeling - by serious numbers - when it comes to family - the ones we like, anyway!!

The people who are most precious to us, might be far away, living their own life...but they are always in our heart - and the ache we feel because of their absence doesn't go away.

Such is the life of the ex-pat...so much that is good...so many things to long for and to miss with a heartfelt ache.

Spending five days with my son from Moscow and his wife, whom I had not been with since their wedding in Moscow two years ago was precious beyond words, and, if it required a trip to Istanbul to make it happen...it was worth all the effort.

Because of the "special operation" their options for travel are limited and Turkey presented as common ground - reachable by us all...Even a cold sunset boat trip on the Bosphorus, could not dampen the delight of just being with them after so long a separation.

Paris is a fabulous and seductive city yet for many ex-pats from across the world it is not home and the big empty space that home would fill seems daunting.

The Scots Kirk Paris can offer a place of welcome, embrace, warmth and support - and that is without doubt part of its calling.

Spotlight on...our new souvenirs



As you can see from the photo above, our souvenir table is weighed down with a new selection of souvenir items, all designed to be light and easy to carry.

Our tea towels have been revamped with a more modern design, also used for tote bags and magnets. Some of you may have noticed that this is a variation on the Christmas card we had on sale 10 years ago and which will no doubt be available again this year.



Thank you to Denis who created the original design and adapted it for these souvenirs.

Thank you too to Louise who looks after the "mobile shop" i.e. her big bag with samples of everything which she faithfully brings out during coffee time.

Our range includes pens, tea towels, tote bags magnets, recipe books, notelets and postcards so there really is something for everyone.

These souvenirs provide the church with a small but steady income. Thank you for your support.

But, of course, there is no "it" without "us" - and being that welcoming people - prepared to offer friendship, compassion, hospitality and love is why God has placed his people where he has placed them.

A high calling indeed.

Love as ever,

Laurence

AGM of the Association Church of Scotland

The AGM of the Association Church of Scotland was held on 14th April after the morning service. The SKP is an Association Cultuelle 1901 and as such we are required to hold an AGM every year before June to approve the accounts and the action of the Board for the previous year.



These meetings are an important source of information as to how the church is being run and all the interesting, encouraging things that are going on.

Below is an extract from the minutes regarding our financial situation:

"Mr Douglas Anderson, the treasurer, presented to the congregation the 2023 annual accounts which showed a surplus of €28,204, compared to a surplus of €6893 in 2022. He explained that this surplus was due to three main factors: an exceptional donation of £10,000 from the Bomber Command Association, a reduction in Ministry costs because locum fees are considerably less than the stipend for a full-time minister and the fact that there had been no major repair costs for the church or manse in 2023. It was also encouraging that the income from offerings and other users of the church had remained steady. The amount of the accumulated reserves on 31st December 2023 was €121,675. These would be needed when approval was received from the central church to employ a full or part-time minister as grants from the Salvesen Trust were being drastically reduced.

The budget presented for 2024 is for a surplus of € 6000, based on a full year of locum ministers. No major repair bills or other substantial costs are foreseen in 2024".

In her report on 2023, the Session Clerk stressed how important it was not to consider the vacancy as a "nothing's happening" period. Quite the contrary, we have to see it as a time of opportunity to work together, strengthen our fellowship and build up our church community. More and more people are coming forward to help out in various ways, new ideas are coming to the fore and we have welcomed a number of new members in recent months.

So as we go into our third year of vacancy, let's keep the momentum going so that when we do finally get permission to call an associate minister, he/she will find a vibrant, enthusiastic congregation looking optimistically to the future.

International Presbytery meeting



The International Presbytery met on 15-17 March in Rome. We stayed in Casa Lasalle, a religious guest house a 20-minute metro ride away from St. Andrew's Church of Scotland. Located in extensive grounds, it was a lovely quiet place to go back to after a long day.

The church is in the via XX Settembre, so called because it was on 20th September 1870 that the papal states were finally defeated and Italy unified. It seemed fitting to build a Protestant church here as a mark of defiance, Italy being, to this day, a predominantly Catholic country. The orange tree in the courtyard was a delight.

Rev. Betsi Thane, minister in Malta (front row, pink shirt, grey cardigan), was installed as our new Moderator, taking over from Rev. Joanne Evans-Boiten whom we know well since she has been our locum twice since the vacancy began.

The International Presbytery Tech Team has been hard at work creating a new website. www.Internationalpresbytery.org is now live and full of information about all the churches in the presbytery. Like any website, it will only be as good as the contributions congregations make to it so this is something we will have to keep in mind.

Compliance with Church of Scotland safeguarding policy has been an important item on the agenda of the last couple of meetings and was so again in Rome. All SKP Kirk Session and Board members be required to undergo safeguarding training. The two presbytery members responsible for training are Rev. Betsi Thane (Malta) and Rev. Aaron Stevens (Budapest).

The first annual evaluation of the Presbytery Mission Plan has taken place, it being stressed

that a light approach was taken given that it was considered too early to make any meaningful assessment. Colombo and Lisbon remain under guardianship, the linking between Geneva and Lausanne has become a deferred linking and the committee is still working on a solution for Paris now that the EPUB has ruled out any linking with Brussels.

You may remember that some time ago I sent out a questionnaire from Rev. Joanne Evans-Boiten asking for our thoughts on how presbytery could work together. Cross-presbytery Bible studies received considerable support and it is hoped to have at least an Advent Bible study. As is often the case, many suggestions were well received but no-one was willing to take the lead! I also sent out information on a proposed trip to Scotland but unfortunately this was cancelled due to a lack of participants.

As usual Scott and I have all the committee reports for anyone who is interested. As a reminder, the committees are:

- Finance
- Superintendence
- Mission and Creation Care
- Fabric
- Education, Training and Safeguarding
- Mission Plan
- Business
- Tech Team
- Vacancy Procedures

And looking further ahead, it'll be our turn to host from 6-9 March next year so note the date in your diary now! Help will definitely be needed when the time comes!

And a word from our locum

Dear friends,

It is hard to believe that I am writing this half-way through our time with you in Paris. A month is really a very short time. As Valerie, your Session Clerk, said in her report at the AGM, I think it makes sense, after Scott has finished his probationary placement at the Scots Kirk, that you work with Laurence, your Interim Moderator, to try for the remainder of your vacancy to have locums stay for a longer period. This allows relationships to develop and ministry to deepen. We were certainly glad last year to spend three months in Rome with the congregation of St Andrew's. Having said that we have greatly enjoyed what contact we have had with you, and hopefully will still have before we leave.

A prolonged vacancy is never easy and we remember in our prayers the International Presbytery as it seeks to find a way to include the Scots Kirk in Paris in their revised Presbytery Plan in a creative way. However, in the meantime, we need to remind ourselves that a vacancy need not be a time to sit back and tread water until the next minister comes. It is a chance for members to stand up and be counted. Some may discover, develop and deploy the gifts God has given them, believing that each one of us can contribute something to the life and mission of the congregation.

What an exciting time lies ahead this year with the coming of the Olympic Games with visitors coming from around the world. Then the centenary of Eric Liddell, which you marked last month in the Searchlight production "Chariots of Fire" ... and, as always, visitors are drawn because of the attraction of the wartime ministry of Rev Donald Caskie, made known worldwide through the book "The Tartan Pimpernel".

Here is a chance to extend welcome and hospitality, to share worship and fellowship, and to find imaginative ways of making the church's presence known beyond its four walls. Take time to share ideas, however fanciful they might be. Do not worry if some never fly. We are the Easter People of God who believe in new beginning, in miracle and in life in all its fullness. Let's live that out in the power of the Spirit, and discover the wonder of the adventure of faith.

Thank you for your welcome to Ruth and myself. We are enjoying discovering more about your city and also about the presence of the Church of Scotland in its heart.

Every blessing and with our love and prayers,

Colin and Ruth



From the archives of Life and Work - April 1944

An interesting article at a time when we have "Chariots of Fire" very much in mind!

"Those who are interested in the use of films for Church purposes have been disappointed at the little progress that has been made. This has been inevitable since production of new films has been brought almost to a standstill by the needs of the war, and projectors are practically unobtainable. Yet some progress is being made. In England one or two films have been produced and preparations are in hand for a wide expansion immediately after the war. Elsewhere there has been considerable advance.

In Australia the Church is devoting a sum of £50,000 to this purpose, and the Churches in America have far-reaching plans. It has been interesting to learn that it is not only the Churches but the commercial film producers that are showing an interest in the screening of religious subjects. It is announced that every major studio in Hollywood has on its schedule for 1944 at least one film of a religious character. Many of these will be from various religious novels which have had wide popularity, such as 'The Robe', by L C Douglas, 'The Song of Bernadette,' by F Werfel, and 'The Keys of the Kingdom,' by AJ Cronin. One should be glad to see anything like a sincere representation of religion in the Picture House; yet somehow it takes one aback to learn that the production of one of these films is budgeted at £2,000,000. Interest in religion is one thing; it may be quite another thing to find that 'there is money in it.'"

Getting to know you

Luciano Freitas and his wife Camila have only been with us since January but already Luciano has volunteered to be our new treasurer and a replacement pianist when Nathan is unable to be in church. We absolutely have to get to know him better!

Luciano, can you tell us something about yourself?

I consider myself to be inherently curious and deeply investigative. I'm continually amazed by the profound depth of knowledge that emerges when we approach any subject with genuine care and scrutiny. This fascination with uncovering layers of understanding serves as a testament to the magnificence of God, whose presence can be discerned in every facet of creation.

From the moment I encountered Carl Sagan's 'pale blue dot' poem in middle school, it left a profound impression on me. Even now, I find myself drawn to the image captured by Voyager 1, where our planet appears as a mere speck amidst the vastness of space. I even use it as a profile picture :)



Initially, it instilled in me a sense of humility, underscoring the insignificance of human existence in the grand scheme of

things. However, as I've matured and embraced my faith, my perspective has shifted. While the photo still serves as a poignant reminder of our relative smallness, for me it now also underscores the extraordinary love and significance that God bestows upon us. Despite our seemingly insignificant place in the cosmos, He cherishes us deeply, to the extent of sacrificing His own son to ensure our redemption and communion with Him

When and why did you start coming to the Scots Kirk Paris?

My wife, Camila, and I first attended the SKP on the first Sunday of 2024, inspired by a New Year's resolution to find a spiritual home that resonated with us both. Previously, we had tried another church close to our home but didn't feel a connection, largely due to it being a different denomination that didn't align with our preferences.

The turning point came during the COVID-19 pandemic when the Presbyterian Church in Brazil, where Camila used to attend, began streaming their services. I was immediately struck by the profound messages and the engaging way they were delivered, markedly different from our prior experiences. This led us to search for Presbyterian churches in the Parisian area, and

the SKP appeared at the top of our Google search. We even watched some of Jan's messages on YouTube, which further piqued our interest.



However, we hesitated because of the distance, and I must confess, the idea kind of slipped from my mind. Our resolve was reignited after a trip to Edinburgh last Christmas that profoundly influenced our decision. Visiting the historic St Giles' Cathedral and learning about John Knox and the Scottish Reformation deepened our resolve to connect with a church rooted in these traditions. We promised ourselves that upon returning, we would make a point of visiting the SKP.

Since our first visit, we've been warmly embraced by the SKP community, finding both solace and inspiration in its congregation. So far, we have heard four different pastors preach the Word, and every single time we heard something important that struck our hearts, made us see the Scriptures in a new light, and drew us closer to God in a meaningful way. The church has become not just a place to worship, but a spiritual family where we engage deeply with the word of God every Sunday. The sense of belonging and fellowship we've experienced here reaffirms our commitment to making SKP our spiritual home.

Do you have any hobbies?

I have several hobbies that I'm passionate about, including music, reading, and playing video games.

My musical journey began when I started playing the keyboard at age 15. Although I took a break due to challenging courses, my move to France reignited my interest, leading me to experiment with the violin. Unfortunately, the close quarters of my student dorm made practising difficult. However, during a trip back to Brazil in 2022, I reconnected with my love for the keyboard. Upon returning, I bought a piano and, with Scott's encouragement, I've stepped in as Nathan's substitute when he cannot join us. I'm writing this before my debut, so hopefully, everything went fine by the time you read this.

Daily Bible readings are a cherished routine at home. Besides this spiritual engagement, I also started exploring books on apologetics. While I still consider myself a novice in Christian studies, I find that these readings profoundly enrich my understanding of God and the faith.

What is your vision for our congregation?

As I step into the role of treasurer for our Church, my primary objective is to ensure that our finances are meticulously managed. I am committed to transparency and diligence, ensuring that our resources effectively support all church activities.

In my role as the reserve pianist, I am dedicated to providing inspiring and uplifting music every Sunday to enhance our worship and praise of God. Music is a vital part of our services, and I aspire to contribute meaningfully to this spiritual experience.

As a member of our congregation, I cherish participating in our church events. I am particularly enthusiastic about expanding our community engagement through additional activities like the Lent Bible study and YoPro meetings. By increasing these opportunities, I hope we will foster a deeper connection and involvement among our members, enriching our community life together.

Eric Liddell commemorations

Our Eric Liddell commemorations got off to a rousing start on 23rd March when the Searchlight Theatre Company gave two outstanding performances of their play "Eric Liddell: the Chariot of Fire". A sincere thank you to all those who came along and supported the event, helping us to raise €960 euros for church funds.

The SKP's Eric Liddell exhibition has been set up and can be viewed in the hall. A series of photos and accompanying texts take us through Liddell's life from his birth in China, his time in Scotland, his sporting career and his work as a missionary teacher to his death in a Japanese civilian internment camp in China. This exhibition is in its early stages and will be supplemented as new material becomes available.



An uncanny resemblance!



Our exhibition



The cast (l to r) - the newspaper reporter, the coach, Eric Liddell and his wife Florence



Eric and his coach