

THE SCOTS KIRK PARIS



Old faces, new faces

Church attendance on the whole has fallen dramatically since the beginning of the Covid-19 pandemic. More and more people are tuning in to online services rather than getting up and going out on a Sunday morning.

Modern technology certainly allows us to reach out to the wider world and is an excellent way of keeping in touch with family and friends but it can be no substitute for actually getting together and enjoying a time of fellowship.

People we have not seen for a very long time are gradually making their way back to rue Bayard and this is a source of joy to us all. Likewise, we are beginning to see new faces again; we hope they find the warm welcome for which we are renowned.

Our church finances have stood up well during the past 18 months. We are most grateful to all who give regularly through direct debit and of course to those who make a contribution on a Sunday. But the church is mostly about people, about sharing and caring for one another. Come and join us on a Sunday if you can and enjoy a quiet, reflective "time out" in your busy week with your SKP family. See you soon!



Letter from the minister

In the Big City of Lights

Dear Friends

Paris is an attractive city.

Perhaps this is a debatable statement. If not debatable, then at least it could be viewed from different perspectives.

Since the end of the lockdown and the lifting of travel restrictions, those of us who live in Paris have seen a surge in the number of tourists. This is most probably true of many cities around the world. But it definitely shows that tourists are heading to Paris and yes, Paris must be an attractive city. The Tuileries Gardens are filled with tourists, the steps in front of the Sacré Coeur are once again filled with multitudes of young people from all around the world. On the streets one hears Dutch, German, Italian, Spanish, English and (I suppose) Polish!

Surely, the City of Lights is attracting people - again.

But attractive also has another meaning. It can also mean aesthetically pleasing, beautiful, appealing. The grandeur of the buildings, the invitation to stroll down the Parisian boulevards and the pleasant atmosphere of the cafés surely contribute to a sense of attractiveness.

But for millions of inhabitants, Paris is not the temporary touristy attraction. It is home. It is their home which they - share with the tens of thousands of tourists.

And then, of course, Paris has her dark side, her sad side, her lostness, her loneliness. The frequently seen bundles of blankets tucked away in a corner or somewhere in the metro stations are a constant reminder of the harsh realities of this city. Sometimes the extent of human need in this hyped-up tourist destination seems overwhelming.

Within all this, the world of God is present and equally multifaceted. Churches are everywhere. Denominations abound. Charities are active and making a huge impact. People's hearts are open.

The Scots Kirk Paris is but a small fish in the gigantic pond of Paris. But we are there. On Sunday mornings at 11 am a small group of people come together to worship, to meet, to speak and to be heard. Once again - and more and more frequently now - we are joined by travellers who find the SKP online or by word of mouth. From time to time someone comes in, driven by



Caskie conference

In June of this year, a plaque commemorating war-time hero and former SKP minister Donald Caskie was unveiled in the presence of members of the congregation and dignitaries from the Mairie de Paris.

One of the events planned in association with this ceremony was a conference by amateur historian Dick Hallam. Unfortunately he was unable to travel due to the restrictions in place at the time and the conference was postponed until a later date.

We are now happy to announce that this event will be taking place at the church on

5th March 2022

Dick Hallam has carried out extensive research into Donald Caskie and his remarkable achievements during and after

WW2. His conference will really bring the story alive and you will have the opportunity to chat informally with Dick afterwards.



Final arrangements for this

exceptional conference have still to be made but in the meantime, make sure Santa brings you a 2022 diary and note the date!

We look forward to seeing you in March if not before.

a sense of need to reach out.

We are but a small light in the big City of Lights. But the Scots Kirk Paris is here.

And we ask you to pray for us. To support us. So that we can be what God wants us to be. The Presence of Himself.

Love
Jan Steyn

Volunteers needed

The minister might be the central figure at our Sunday morning services but many other people work behind the scenes to make our church a welcoming place for regulars and visitors alike.

• Are you good at talking to people? If so, you can be part of the welcome team.



• Are you happiest in the kitchen? Why not volunteer to make the tea and coffee?

• Can you bake? Homemade cakes and pastries are always welcome and we make sure any leftovers are distributed to those in need.

• Details matter too - the letter box needs to be emptied, soap dispensers need to be filled, toilet paper needs to be replenished and dish towels need to be washed.

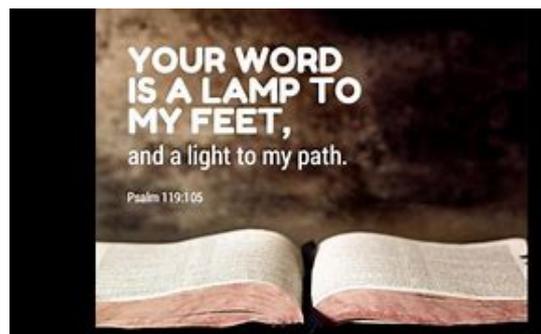
**Every task is important and every one of us can play a part
Can we count on you?**

Wednesday Bible studies

Due to popular demand there are now two Bible studies on Wednesdays, one at 11 am and another at 7.30 pm.

Led by the minister, these informal discussions or "Conversations" are open to all and offer a Bible-based time of reflection on the issues facing us in today's complicated world.

If you would like to take part in one (or both) of these Bible studies, simply contact Jan and he will send you the Zoom link.



On-line international presbytery meeting

The International Presbytery met on 8th and 9th October for what we hope was our last Zoom meeting. We were scheduled to meet in Bochum, Germany in October 2020 so this is where we will be going in March of next year all being well. Even though we have been able to conduct business very efficiently with Zoom we have missed the fellowship and catching up we enjoy when we meet in person. This is very important for the ministers and their wives scattered all over Europe and beyond.

It was with great sadness that we listened to the tributes paid to two longstanding members of Presbytery who died this year.

Alec Grant (elder, Brussels) knew everything there is to know about the workings of the Presbytery and had many connections at Church of Scotland headquarters in Edinburgh. He was, among other things, a valuable member of the Finance Committee and was the point of contact for queries regarding Salvesen grant applications which he coordinated, reviewed and submitted on our behalf.

Rev. Jim Sharp (Geneva), our Presbytery Clerk, had been intending to step down at the October meeting due to ill health. Jim was a very organized person, excellent at getting all the presbytery papers to us on time and always ready to offer help and advice. He was also more than willing to step in and preach wherever he might be required.

Both Alec and Jim will be sorely missed. Derek Lawson has now been appointed as Clerk of the International Presbytery.

A considerable amount of time was spent considering the way ahead for the Presbytery and the individual charges in light of the Church of Scotland's Radical Action Plan and its 5 Marks of Mission.

Read the article on page 5 to learn more about these 5 Marks of Mission and find out exactly what is at stake for the SKP and the Church of Scotland as a whole.

The International Presbytery project for 2022 is the Tent of Nations In Palestine. All congregations are expected to hold fundraising events and we at the SKP will be turning our attention to this in the New Year. Hopefully we will be able to have pot luck lunches and the like again very soon.

From the Tent of Nations website: "At Tent of Nations, our mission is to build bridges between people, and between people and the land. We bring different cultures together to develop understanding and promote respect for each other and our shared environment".

For more information about our discussions, contact presbytery elder Valerie Prieur (valerieprieur@wanadoo.fr).

Sale of the manse

Earlier this year the congregation voted overwhelmingly to sell the manse and find more suitable accommodation in a quieter area. The sale was approved by the International Presbytery Fabric Committee and we looked all set to go.

Driven by Douglas Anderson, our treasurer, there followed an intense exchange of emails with the Church of Scotland Trust in Edinburgh which owns the manse. We sought legal advice and the upshot was that as a result of Brexit, there was no guarantee that we would not have to pay capital gains tax. French church organizations are exempt from this tax as are all EU church organizations in France. As a result of Brexit, the UK is now excluded from the reciprocal agreement between France and other EU countries.

Our potential capital gains tax amounts to around €384,000. We have the possibility of claiming this back but there is no guarantee that we would be successful.

In light of this, we have decided not to go-ahead with the sale. The project has not been abandoned completely and we will see what the future holds.

Thanks to all of you who took the time to give your opinion on this, to the committee for all their hard work and to Douglas who really had a handle on things!



The church in Bochum



Getting to know you

Andrew Craig was ordained as an elder of the SKP in June 2019 - over to him!

Andrew, can you tell us something about yourself?

Yes, of course. I was born in 1962 in Nairobi, Kenya but grew up in Hull, East Yorkshire and then in Woking, Surrey. My father's family are Scottish. We attended a Presbyterian church in Hull and an uncle was a minister in the Church of Scotland near Kilmarnock.

I moved to Paris in 1988 and met Laetitia, my wife, here. Our three daughters were born during a five-year period we spent in London from 1999-2004. Laetitia contracted breast cancer and passed away in 2010. Our girls are now pursuing higher education in France. I pay the rent thanks to my job with BNP Paribas.



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

My family background and links to the Scots kirk meant the kirk was a place I immediately felt at home. The friendliness and warmth I encountered immediately made me feel very much at ease. I joined when Alan Millar was our minister. He baptised our three daughters. Having grown up attending Presbyterian and Methodist churches I was glad to renew with the church I had grown up with.

Do you have any hobbies?

I try and run regularly. I have been walking a week each year on the St James Way walk. We are now on the northern Spanish coast and waiting for the pandemic to pass before carrying on. Having lived in Germany many years ago I am a keen reader of German and travel there regularly. In Paris I have adopted the local habit of going to the cinema very regularly and also picked up a mild obsession with food.

What is your vision for our congregation?

Like the church everywhere, we face numerous challenges. I would hope that we can retain our warm family atmosphere and look after each other. Beyond our doors my vision would be for us to engage in the life of Paris and the community. We have the good fortune to have the church located in central Paris with good access. The building already fulfills an important role in the community as a place where groups meet to help one another. As we emerge from the pandemic we face a period where many will struggle. We have a role to play in giving the example of God's love and fellowship to support and help those in difficulty.

Our planet



COP 21 in Paris in 2015 and COP 26 in Glasgow, Scotland in 2021 - what did this mean to us in the Scots Kirk Paris? Over 200 world leaders had peaceful discussions resulting in some promises which will lead to improvements in climate and environment issues.

However, we can't expect governments alone to solve these problems, so we should ask ourselves the question, "What can we do as individuals, Christians, responsible for the care of our Planet?"

On a family walk recently, our five year old grandchild, Julie, stopped us all in our tracks when she came across a pile of cigarette ends which had been dumped on the path. Having obviously had a lesson on environment issues, she immediately lectured us on harming the planet!!

We all need reminding regularly of our carbon footprint and I wondered if we could share

stories, ideas for energy saving, recycling etc. to help keep us on track. Perhaps at the end of the Sunday Service, when our minister asks for information to pass on, we could spend a few minutes on this.

Anyone could speak, read, show something, make a short quiz on food or energy savings, or present a new project we might not know about. Pierre Mure intends to buy a tree to plant on our garden patio, Andrew Craig mentioned a disposable bag available free at the Mairie in Paris and Myriam Slisse has agreed to tell us about her school project on plastics in the ocean. I'm sure Nicola Davis' children could contribute too. Would Love's son Samuel recite the Lord's prayer to us again? Could Ben do a special drawing on the subject? There are plenty good songs to sing about God's World for children. But anyone could contribute in A FEW MINUTES FOR GOD'S CREATION at the end of the service. After reading this, perhaps you could speak to me at coffee time with your thoughts, ideas or questions and then we'll proceed from there. Thank you.

Louise Anderson

What future for the Church of Scotland?

In May 2019, the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland approved a Radical Action Plan designed to "radically reshape the Church of Scotland at every level from the local to the national and the General Assembly itself".



The Plan is designed, among other things, to cut central administration costs by 30%, focus on young people under 40 and ensure that the Church has "well-equipped spaces in the right places". The overall focus is on church growth, ministry and mission. However, like many denominations, the Church of Scotland is faced with a shortage of ordained ministers and many charges across Scotland have been vacant for years. The 43 existing presbyteries in Scotland are being reduced to 12, meaning that many congregations are having to consider linkages, unions and other innovative ways of working together. Our International Presbytery is expected to play its part and has seen its allocation of full-time ministers reduced from 11.5 to just 5. There are currently 14 charges in the IP spread over a very wide geographical area from Bermuda to Sri Lanka and many places in between. Linkages, unions etc. are practically impossible in our situation but we are going to have to find a solution. The IP has been given permission to employ ministers from outwith the Church of Scotland and this could be one of the ways forward. The IP Planning Committee has been examining all the possibilities for some time now in close collaboration with the Church of Scotland in Edinburgh. No decisions have been taken yet but we are expected to have submitted a Presbytery Mission Plan by the end of 2022. The firm intention is to keep all of our congregations going wherever possible.

What future for the Scots Kirk Paris?

Most of you will know by now that Jan has preached as sole nominee to take up a post in Scotland. For many of us, his news was a bolt from the blue and you might be thinking "what happens now?". Rest assured that the SKP will not be left in limbo.

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On 8th December 2021 the International Presbytery will be appointing an Interim Moderator for the SKP. His/her job will be to ensure that we have a regular supply of locums for Sunday mornings, thereby ensuring the continuity of our Sunday services. This does not necessarily mean that we will have a different minister every Sunday; it may be possible to find someone who is able to stay for a longer period, bearing in mind the new restrictions imposed by Brexit.

It should be pointed out at this juncture that any future ministry at the SKP will be determined by the new Presbytery Mission Plan. Consultation with the Kirk Session re. the Presbytery Mission Plan is likely to begin early in the new year. The PMP is unlikely to be approved much before the end of 2022.

Every congregation in the IP is being asked to consider how it meets the Church's Five Marks of Mission, namely:

- To proclaim the Good News of the Kingdom
- To teach, baptise and nurture new believers
- To respond to human need by loving service
- To seek to transform unjust structures of society, to challenge violence of every kind and pursue peace and reconciliation
- To strive to safeguard the integrity of creation and sustain and renew the life of the earth

The Board and Kirk Session met on 20th November for an honest, constructive discussion on the future of the SKP. One of the ideas mooted by the IP Planning Committee is some kind of partnership with the church in Brussels. This was touched on briefly at the meeting but will have to be considered in more depth. A meeting with the congregation is planned for the New Year to ensure that we can all have our say. We really are being encouraged to "think outside the box" so if you have any innovative ideas as to how we should be moving forward, please don't hesitate to share them!

We ask God to guide us through the weeks and months ahead and pray that His peace will be upon all those who are required to make difficult decisions in difficult times.

A message from our treasurer

The finances of the church for 2021 are in line with our expectations and we will have a small deficit of under € 10,000 for the year. The reserves will support this loss. Offerings are at the same level as last year and since September, the other users have restarted their activities. Bookings income has increased in the past few months but will still fall short of the amounts received pre-Covid. The grant from the Salvesen Trust is reducing year on year. Our 2021 grant is £17,000 compared to £30,000 in 2020. Whilst the grants are essential to the financial survival of the SKP, it is clear the Salvesen Trust will not be able to maintain the levels of support that we received pre-Covid. Our reserves will help in the years to come but are not an eternal cash cow.

Expenses are still being controlled tightly and will be below budget and below pre-Covid levels.

The continued financial support by the congregation and friends of the Scots Kirk is absolutely essential and allows the church to maintain its pastoral support. Thank you to all who make regular offerings to the church no matter how small or large. All income is welcome and I remind you of our bank details for those of you who may wish to set up a regular offering or make a donation.

Details of the church bank account with the BNP in France:

Name: Assoc Church of Scotland

IBAN: FR76 3000 4015 3300 0100 9031 587

BIC: BNPAFRPPxxx

We also have an account in the UK with the RBS:

Name: The Scots Kirk Paris

Sort code: 83-06-08. **Account number:** 00777709

IBAN: GB71 RBOS 8306 0800 7777 09



Christmas at the SKP - all welcome!

- **28th November:** first Sunday in Advent; this service was taken by elder Scott MacSween
- **5th December:** second Sunday in Advent; this will be a Communion service led by Jan
- **12th December:** third Sunday in Advent; service led by Jan
- **19th December:** fourth Sunday in Advent and our nativity service. The nativity story will be narrated with impromptu actions - feel free to come dressed as any character you like! Note that this is also the Sunday we ask you to bring wrapped gifts for the homeless men in the care of the **Missionnaires de la Charité**; these will be put under the Christmas tree and distributed after the service. Our time together will continue with coffee and cake in the hall
- **24th December:** Christmas Eve service at 7 pm; this will be a simple celebration with Christmas carols followed by mulled wine and mince pies
- **26th December:** a service led by Jan focusing on joy and hope



To be or not to be - Church and the COR (Covid online revolution)

We will all remember that eventful Saturday evening - February 2020. Shock news: a national lockdown in France was announced. And how our lives have changed since then.

At that time I was the Interim Moderator for the Church of Scotland church in Rotterdam. The next morning I was to "preach the congregation vacant" and the Nominating Committee was to be elected after the service. At the SKP one of our members, Sebastian Slisse, had prepared a sermon and he was to lead the service. Our Session Clerk, Dorothy Mure, called me. "What should we do?" My first reaction was that the service in Paris should go ahead. But as the evening developed, it became clear that almost all churches in Paris would be closed. And we decided to follow suit.

The service in Rotterdam was not cancelled. Nor was the sanctuary "vacant"! I preached and after the service we managed to elect a Nominating Committee. On Monday Rotterdam was empty. On Tuesday, Linda and I arrived back in Paris two hours before the start of the national lockdown.

We scrambled to start doing some sort of "service of worship" online. One of our members, Jim Amekporfor, was a great inspiration. He made the first few videos. Due to technical problems with sending files back and forth and making last minute changes, I gradually started to do the services with the help of many of you who did the readings.

Since then, we have continued with our "online reflections" - as have most churches around the world. Now, one could watch a service of worship from almost any church in the world.

How we have changed...

Someone said: "Ten years' change happened within 10 months". And it was forced upon us.

But overall and retrospectively, this was a blessing.

What are the guidelines and what is our - and my - thinking about the online services?

We have decided to stick to some sort of service with at least two hymns, a prayer, a Bible reading and a message. Obviously, this "liturgy" can vary slightly.

It proved almost impossible to re-create an "in church" service experience.

Once we tried a live-streamed service but immediately realised that more technology and more people were needed to make this work properly.

Instead of trying a full liturgical service recorded in the sanctuary, I chose to use Paris and various settings to record messages.

There are, of course, many questions just as there are many opportunities. Those of you who have watched some of the services will be aware of the changes and improvisations that I and we have made.

Of course, the Session would welcome your feedback. Should we use different locations? What should the format be? How should we go forward? What changes should we make?

The question is not to be or not to be. Online is not an option any more. It is a given. But we are all learning.

Jan Steyn



Church of Scotland advent calendar

From the Church of Scotland website: "'Light in the Darkness' (#LightInTheDarkness) is the theme of this year's Advent calendar, which runs from 1 December until Christmas Eve (Friday 24 December). This year's theme is inspired by John 1:5 'The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.'"

Each day during Advent, a new window will be available to open with a themed prayer, video, or story. Sign up [here](#) to receive notifications via email when the Advent calendar goes live.



Advent is "a time of prayer and preparation for the coming of God's son" (Church of Scotland website). At the SKP our first Advent candle, the candle of Hope, has already been lit and in the next three weeks leading up to Christmas we will be lighting the candles of Love, Joy and Peace. We hope that you will be able to join us on at least one of these Sundays as we prepare to celebrate the birth of Jesus.

**"I am the Light of the world,
whoever follows me will never
walk in darkness"**

Thanks to Antoinette for this photo!