

# THE SCOTS KIRK PARIS

## From Bags of Hope...



The response to our **Bags of Hope** project has been outstanding. We have reached the grand total of 80 bags and have six weeks left to reach our target of 100. Yes, we can!

For all of us, knowing that someone cares is what keeps us going so let's show the homeless men looked after by the Missionnaires de la Charité that we care about them too, especially as the colder weather sets in. Thank you all for your tremendous effort so far.

## To Trees of Hope



The International Presbytery mission project encourages people to buy an olive tree to help the Nassar family in Palestine.

Through the Tent of Nations they are working to transform suffering and anger into hope.

More details about this project once we have reached our 100-bag target!

[www.tentofnations.org](http://www.tentofnations.org)



## A word from Laurence, our Interim Moderator

Warm greetings to everyone!

It's been a bit of an emotional roller-coaster over these past few days...past few weeks, to be honest!

A lovely, if brief, visit to Ireland to meet my new grandson, Daithi, was followed a few days later by the haunting sound of the Last Post played at the War Graves of Vevey on Armistice Day...then shortly after that, preparations for the funeral of a remarkable woman who, with faith, endurance, courage, grace and humour, had dealt with a long series of challenging and demanding illnesses - and had not sunk into bitterness or self-pity. Her example of faith was humbling and remarkable. It will be an honour to conduct the service of Thanksgiving for her life.

The people of the Scots Kirk Paris have had a very tough year, with pressures various, and challenges many - and it has been precious to be part of a loving and supportive team as you have tried to hold each other, understand each other and pray for each other.

Anyone who thinks the Church is just a bunch of people for whom life has gone swimmingly, gathered to applaud God for his generosity, protection and special favour, isn't seeing things right at all.

Rather, the Church is a gathering of the wounded, the failed, the searching, the hurting, the hopeful and the trusting, who somehow, manage to sing praises to a God who, it seems, has made no concessions to the believers, and granted them no immunity from the icy chill of real life in the real world.

I know that each Sunday, I see, worshipping with me, a gathering of extraordinary ordinary people...heroes and heroines of the faith, whose example inspires and humbles me. They know more about how to be a Christian than I ever will...and their faith is tested and tried - burnished by experience and worthy of the deepest respect.

In Paris, the same little miracle happens, Sunday by Sunday.

Love as ever,

Laurence

## Bible study

Rev. James Patrick, our locum until the end of the year, would like to hear from anyone interested in creating a Bible study group (probably by Zoom). Simply make yourself known to James or one of the elders and we will endeavor to find a time that suits as many people as possible. In today's hectic, troubled world we are fortunate to have the opportunity to take some time out to contemplate the Word of God and what it means in our daily lives.

## A willing helper!



Hello everyone!

Last September, I started attending my lycée and the head teacher told the class about a new project for the 'secondes': all students are supposed to commit themselves to helping out in a charity, tutoring primary school students or some other such activity.

I asked Louise and Denis if I could perhaps do my project in the Scots Kirk Paris and they agreed so in the coming months, I will be participating in the missionary project with the Bags of Hope, helping prepare and serve tea and coffee, reading in church, helping out in the children's Sunday school, etc.

My great-grandparents did the same in their time and my grandparents are still volunteering in their local church in Alsace, so I'm glad to be able to contribute to the services and the projects of the Scots Kirk Paris.

Thank you everyone for your support!

*Myriam Slisse*

## Toc H lamp

The international Christian movement, known as Toc H, an abbreviation for Talbot House, 'Toc' signifying the letter 'T' in the signals alphabet used by the British Army during the Great War, was founded in 1915 in Poperinghe, Belgium when a centre for soldiers' rest and recreation away from the front line was opened. With the explicit aim of promoting Christianity, the centre was named for the then Bishop of Winchester's son, Gilbert, who had died in combat in July of the same year. Styled as an 'Every Man's Club', the house was a place where all soldiers, irrespective of rank, were made welcome.



Five years later, in 1920, a Christian youth centre opened in London, also going by the name of Toc H; it developed into an interdenominational association for Christian service to society. Subsequently, branches of Toc H were established in many countries worldwide, their objective being to help others with acts of service, while promoting reconciliation and bringing together disparate sections of society.

When the Paris Women's Branch was formed in 1957, its stated aims were to maintain amongst the young the spirit of camaraderie engendered during World War II, support ex-servicemen, work in the general interest of society, instil a sense of responsibility and foster well-being. As in branches elsewhere, local activities were organised such as hospital visits and monthly tea and friendship meetings for retired members of the English-speaking community in and around the French capital.

During the latter years of the 20th century, Toc H suffered a progressive decline in membership, leading to the subsequent closure of branches, and sadly, the Paris branch has not been spared.

Throughout his ministry in Paris, Rev. Donald Caskie was chaplain to the local branch of Toc H and it seems that the lamp which was symbolically lit at all its meetings was entrusted to him. When he locked up the Scots Kirk in June 1940 as the invading German army approached Paris, Dr Caskie is said to have handed over the lamp to Monsieur Louis, the owner of the café next to the Kirk, along with the key to the church.

With the recent disbandment of the Paris Branch of Toc H, the question arose as to what the fate of the lamp would be. It seemed only fitting that it should return to the Scots Kirk for safe keeping once again and find its rightful place amongst other memorabilia recalling the Tartan Pimpernel.

*George Mutch*

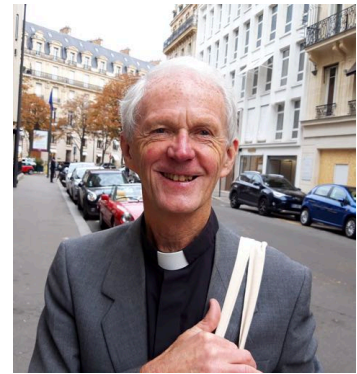
## And now a word from James, our locum

### Advent

“The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ....” (Mark 1:1)

What for you is the beginning of the gospel, the starting-point of the Christian life? Is it

- Conversion, when you decisively turn to Christ and acknowledge Him as Lord of your life
- The Cross, where God demonstrated His love for us in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us.
- The Cenacle or Upper Room where Christ gave us Himself in the sacrament of his Body and Blood
- Or going further back, the Ten Commandments as the revelation of the Holy Will of God
- Or, to begin at the very beginning (“and what a very good place to start”), Genesis 1:1, “in the beginning, God”?



Conversion, the Cross, the Cenacle, the Ten Commandments, Creation - all these are serious candidates for “the beginning”. But there is another answer, one that is recurrent and seasonal - Advent, when we begin again the whole cycle that takes us through the birth, life, death, resurrection and ascension of Our Lord and on to the fulfilment of all things in the Holy City, the new Jerusalem.

This coming week sees “the beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ”.

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God is a God of new beginnings. He is an inveterate beginner. He is for ever and ever beginning; and when the things that he began lose their elan, he begins all over again.

The Bible is the story of his new beginnings. Joseph, Moses, Samuel, David, Jesus - each of these children represents a new morning, a fresh start to a world grown weary. Indeed, “a new universe is created whenever a little child is born” (J.P. Richter). And there is a new beginning whenever an adult is born again of the Spirit of God.

Do you need a new beginning? Any of us at any stage may need to make a new beginning:

- A young person who has taken a wrong turning
- Someone in middle age who, disillusioned, feels his or her life is no longer going anywhere
- And also - perhaps especially - an older person: “When one becomes older”, as Soren Kierkegaard observed, “then the way to church is often very long and....it is far to heaven; and the earthly noises make it difficult to hear the voice of God; and if one does not hear it, then the earthly noises make it easy for one not to feel the want of it”.

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Advent comes as a clarion call to begin again. Advent is “the great Eastern window which opens upon the sunrising”. A beginning, however, is only a beginning. A new day may have dawned, but the sun takes several hours to climb the sky. In the same way, the good seed takes time to grow and mature. The gospel is not a quick fix: Christian spirituality is the spirituality of the long haul. Sunday may be the first Sunday of Advent - but there are another fifty-one to go. But there is nothing in the end that is not in the beginning; and “he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion”.

Pray, then, that as there is about to be a new beginning of the Christian Year, so there will be a new beginning in your own life - and in the life of the SKP!

## Getting to know you

Marion Boyd is one of our regular readers in church and we thank her for this valuable contribution to our church life. Marion is a very busy person who usually shoots off after the service so here's the chance to find out a little bit more about her!



### Marion, can you tell us something about yourself?

I was born in Huntly in Aberdeenshire, Scotland and spent the first 17 years of my life there. After my studies, I spent most of my adult life working in Austria, Germany and France. I spent 17 years in Frankfurt am Main before moving to Paris at the end of 2017 to start a new job.

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

I first came to the Scots Kirk in 1990 when I was doing a "stage" at the "Chambre de commerce" in Paris during my studies. I have always felt very at home at the SKP and I'm delighted to be back in Paris and part of the SKP community. It's an important part of my life here.

### Do you have any hobbies?

My main hobby has always been sport. As I have an office job and sit for most of the working day, I try to do an hour of exercise (usually very early in the morning!) to compensate for sitting down for the rest of the day. I also enjoy learning languages. I am happiest when I am outdoors surrounded by nature - especially in Scotland - either cycling or hiking.

### What is your vision for our congregation?

We have come through difficult times recently, e.g. lockdowns during the pandemic when we couldn't come to church. My vision for the congregation is for it to continue to overcome future challenges and to thrive so that the SKP is still here for future generations. As our Treasurer said recently, we have a special history to safeguard.

## What can you do for your church?



It takes an army of people to keep the SKP running smoothly! While it is neither feasible nor desirable to have everyone doing everything, there are numerous small ways in which you could help.

When you wash your hands, you probably take the soap for granted. Could you perhaps bring a refill from time to time? Or a small bottle of longlife milk that we can put in the kitchen trunk? Are you good with a screwdriver or handy with a paintbrush? Keep your eyes open for minor repairs we could do ourselves. Do you have a super fundraising idea? Tell us about it! Can you play an instrument? Can you sing? Are you a keen gardener? Do you have something you would like to share with the congregation? Could you be available during the day if someone needs to be shown round? Could you take our Bags of Hope to the Missionnaires in the 15th? Could you read the lesson in church? The possibilities are endless.

"Church" is not just a building, it's US! We are all part of the SKP family and by pulling together we will make our community even stronger. Get involved now in whatever way you can! Don't be shy! Anything you can do will be much appreciated!

## Taizé update



# Taizé 2023

You are invited to join us for a week at  
Taizé, Burgundy  
18-24 June 2023

Taizé is home to the community of the Brothers of Taizé and has been welcoming young people for many years.

Join us for a week of reflection, spiritual nourishment, community and inspiring conversation.

This trip is jointly organized by The Scots Kirk Paris, Chaplaincies of University of St Andrews and Glasgow and Logie Kirk, Stirling.

For further enquiries, please contact:

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Carolyn Kelly - [carolyn.kelly@glasgow.ac.uk](mailto:carolyn.kelly@glasgow.ac.uk)

Scott MacSween - [smacsween@churchofscotland.org.uk](mailto:smacsween@churchofscotland.org.uk)

Jan Steyn - [steynjan@gmail.com](mailto:steynjan@gmail.com)

The Scots Kirk Paris is committed to giving young people the opportunity to "take time out" and reflect on life and their place in today's difficult world. SKP elder Scott Macsween and our former minister Jan Steyn, now based in Stirling, will be taking a group to Taizé in June of next year.

The Church of Scotland has given them a generous grant of £1000 which is great news and testifies to the importance of this project.



If you would like to be part of the group, or if you know someone you think would benefit from a week of reflection and fellowship with other young people from around the world, contact Jan or Scott (their email addresses are on the flyer opposite). You don't have to be a church member to go to Taizé but a few days spent there could be a life-changing experience!

Click [here](#) to find out more about the Taizé community

"If the Church understands its mission, its ministry will be shaped in that direction. It is easy to think of the Church as having lots of different aspects and associated entities – education, buildings, missions, services, and charities. **The Church exists for nothing else but to bring Christ to people and to bring people to Christ.** If we are not doing that, all the cathedrals, local churches, urban, city and rural, ministers, missions, staff, sermons, plans are simply a waste of time."

Church of Scotland Trustees October update

<https://www.churchofscotland.org.uk/about-us/our-structure/assembly-trustees>

## Looking ahead

As James has reminded us, we are entering the period of Advent. Christmas means different things to different people; here is an extract from a poem by John Betjeman which speaks to Christians everywhere.

The bells of waiting Advent ring,  
The Tortoise stove is lit again  
And lamp-oil light across the night  
Has caught the streaks of winter rain  
In many a stained-glass window sheen  
From Crimson Lake to Hooker's Green.

The holly in the windy hedge  
And round the Manor House the yew  
Will soon be stripped to deck the ledge,  
The altar, font and arch and pew  
So that the villagers can say  
"The church looks nice" on Christmas Day.



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And is it true? And is it true,  
This most tremendous tale of all,  
Seen in a stained glass window's hue,  
A baby in an ox's stall?  
The Maker of the stars and sea  
Became a child on earth for me?

And is it true? For if it is,  
No loving fingers tying strings  
Around those tissue friperies,  
The sweet and silly Christmas things,  
Bath salts and inexpensive scent  
And hideous tie so kindly meant,

No love that in a family dwells,  
No carolling in frosty air,  
Nor all the steeple-shaking bells  
Can with this single truth compare -  
That God was Man in Palestine  
And lives today in Bread and Wine.

*Christmas* by John Betjeman

### Thank you!

The SKP newsletters would not be what they are without the contributions of many members of the congregation. Whether it is providing photos, planting seeds of an idea, writing articles or answering questions, all your input is gratefully received.

If you have something you would like to submit for a future issue, don't hesitate!  
Contact Valerie or Denis Prieur if you feel inspired!