

Park Pages

the magazine of Uddingston: Park United Free Church of Scotland



Letter from the Minister

Autumn 2025

Dear Friends

For various reasons, my attention has been drawn to Psalm 23 over recent days. This psalm is probably the most well known of all the psalms. In days past, when I was in my first charge as a parish minister, Psalm 23 was, along with *Abide with Me*, the stock hymns played at a parish funeral. In fact, they were jokingly referred to by ministers and undertakers as the “gruesome twosome”! Times have changed and that may well not be the case today. In truth, that is probably not a bad thing. For this psalm (and *Abide with Me*) are really meant to be sung by believers who have known the Shepherd King and have experienced His abiding presence during their life journey. It is not really a song for non-believers but perhaps because of its association with funeral services, Christians are at times not so keen to reflect upon its message. However, if we do, there is much to learn from it.



Firstly, David, the shepherd, is expressing his experiences of the Lord, in the context of his own life and work. He knew what it was to be a shepherd, and he is testifying to the Sovereign God, the Great I am, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, as his shepherd. Let us pause to consider this.

This is an amazing thing to state...that the Creator of all that is, the God of History, yet also the God of Eternity, the One who appeared in the wilderness from within the burning bush and revealed himself as **I AM WHO I AM**, is the One who acts as Shepherd to guard, guide him and us, as part of His flock. His **rod and staff** (v 4c) are there not to punish us but to comfort us and give us security. Perhaps as we reflect on this, we need to praise and give thanks to the Lord, for such a privilege of being in a relationship with Him. Jesus Christ, the Good Shepherd, has made that relationship possible and we are indeed in a fortunate place. As Jesus himself has said:

I am the good shepherd; I know my sheep and my sheep know me ... and I lay down my life for the sheep. John 10 v 14-15

Secondly, because of the Lord being his shepherd, David lacks nothing. To know such a God is to be in fellowship with the source of ALL good and perfect gifts. The writer of the **Book of James** says:

Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows. He chose to give us birth through the word of truth, that we might be a kind of firstfruits of all He created. James 1 v 17-18



Most of us reading this letter will have quite a good store of material gifts and provision. But for David, and for us, the bounty of the shepherd is not so much found in material blessings, but in the knowledge and experience of His spiritual nourishment and refreshment (v 2-3) and of His guidance in life even through the dark and difficult times (v 3-4). David can then say with confidence that he *will fear no evil for you are with me.*



Do you have that confidence as you face the challenges of life and the uncertainty of the times that we live in?

Lastly, David acknowledges that knowing the shepherding care of God in life will mean that as he faces enemies and even the final enemy, death, he can be assured of victory (v 5-6). He can look forward to God's goodness and love following him in whatever the here and hereafter will bring. He refers to having his head anointed with oil, the suggestion of kingship. He refers to having a banquet which is symbolic of a king's victory banquet over the nations. This language is picked up by Jesus when in the gospel record he says:

Blessed is the one who will eat at the feast in the Kingdom of God. Luke 14, 15 ff

And also this:

The kingdom of heaven is like a king who prepared a wedding banquet for his son. Matthew 22 v 2

These all point to the ... ***wedding supper of the Lamb. Revelation 19 v 9*** These are prophetic pictures that David alludes to when he reflects upon his shepherd.

Ultimately, all of this surely echoes the words of the Apostle Paul when he wrote this:

If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare His own son, but gave Him up for us all—how will He not also, along with Him, graciously give us all things? Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? It is God who justifies. Who then is the one who condemns? No one. Christ Jesus who died—more than that, who was raised to life—is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? ... No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord. Romans 8 v 31-39



A very familiar psalm. But as we have briefly reflected upon it, I trust that we have seen that it is very much a song for Christians who live with and under the care of our Good Shepherd, the Lord Jesus Christ. May its timeless truth encourage and enable us to journey as a congregation into this coming session. May it also encourage us as individuals as we move on in our lives into the season of Autumn. Whoever we are, and whatever our circumstances, if we are living in a relationship with Jesus Christ, we too can say:



The Lord is my Shepherd! I shall not want!

May the Shepherd King guard and guide us in these future days.

With my love and prayers

Wm B Russell

Fellowship Groups

Fellowship Groups are a vital part of our life as a church family here in Park. If you would like to join one, please speak to Bruce or Elizabeth and they will find the best fit for you.

The main aim of a Fellowship Group is for us to grow in our knowledge of Jesus ourselves and learn how we can make Him known to others. We do this in small groups where we can encourage and support each other by studying a passage of the bible together and discussing how it relates to our everyday lives. There is also time for fellowship where we get to know each other better and this is done over a cup of tea/coffee and biscuit. There is always lots of fun and laughter. Our session would then end with a time of prayer to pray in what we have learned or discussed and share prayer requests with one another. There is absolutely no compulsion to pray out loud, it's OK to sit quietly and pray so don't let that put you off!

Being part of a Fellowship Group can help you feel more connected to the larger church community and give you a real sense of belonging. Friendships are forged at a deeper level in a small group setting and we can support each other through the highs and lows of life.

If you have never joined a Fellowship Group before, why not give one a try this year?



PRIVATE PRAYER/DEVOTIONALS

The church will remain open on a **Tuesday** and **Wednesday** for private prayer and short devotionals given by Bruce at 10.30am on Tuesday morning and at 7.30pm on a Wednesday evening. These afford a time of quietness and reflection during the busyness of the week to rest in God's presence and experience His peace.



BIBLE STUDY GROUPS

Re-fresh on Wednesday is held weekly at 2.00pm in the church hall

Men at the Manse is held fortnightly on a Thursday at 7.30pm

Faith on Friday is held fortnightly on a Friday at 10am at the Manse

Women in the Word is held fortnightly on a Sunday evening at 8pm at the Manse

Refresh



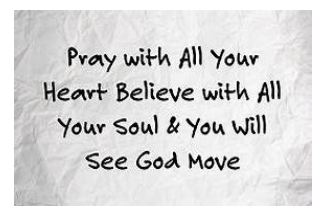
YOUTH MINISTRY

CONNECT—This is our youth group for P7+ and is held in the church hall on a Monday evening from 7-8.30pm. Children from other church or no church background are welcome. Spread the word! It's a safe space to find out more about God through bible study, discussions, games and outings.



OPEN TO GOD PRAYER GROUP

The **Open to God** prayer time on a Saturday morning at 9am continues on Zoom and you are encouraged to join with others in this vital corporate prayer ministry.



But encourage one another daily, as long as it is called Today, so that none of you may be hardened by sin's deceitfulness.

Hebrews 3 v 13

The Quiet Revival

Karen Stangoe

You may have heard rumours of 'the quiet revival' surrounding the increased interest in Christianity in those under 30 in Scotland and the UK. While part of us longs for this to be true and cry Hallelujah in response, perhaps if we're honest, we find ourselves wondering if there is any merit in these claims. And if they are true, then, where are these young people who are coming to Jesus?



This summer I had the privilege of serving on the team at **Magnitude** – a Christian festival for 11–18-year-olds held at Lendrick Muir. I was blown away by the sheer scale of the event which saw 2000 young people and their leaders from across 100 churches in Scotland gather together for an incredible time of worship and Bible teaching.

The atmosphere was full of camaraderie as the young people arrived with their church youth groups to set up their tents in one of the four camping villages dotted around the site. Many tents were decorated with bunting or fairy lights, adding even more to the festival atmosphere.

Throughout the event the young people had opportunities to compete in sports tournaments, make crafts, visit creative prayer spaces and attend seminars. All of which surrounded the morning and evening sessions they attended in the big top tent full of prayer, worship and Bible teaching.



It was a particular joy of mine to meet up with our own **Connect Group**, who arrived for the day on the Tuesday, and to spend some time with them.

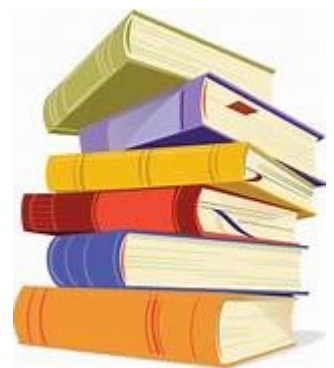
Throughout the course of the week I was humbled and challenged to witness, not just young people responding to Jesus and becoming Christians, but a boldness in young people that I've never seen before. During an open mic moment of sharing testimonies in the big top tent one night, a boy of around 14 stood up and addressed the group of 2000. His message to his peers was this:



Read your Bibles, dig deep into them because God will meet you there.

Another evening a church youth group felt led to respond to God by vowing to source and give out **200 Bibles** in the next year to people in their community.

Another example of this boldness came after a seminar I led called **How to set up an SU Group in your School**. One of the boys who had attended sought me out in the afternoon to talk further; he is 13 years old and eagerly wants to start up an SU Group in his school. Normally we would recommend young people be 15 and upwards before they take on such a leadership role. And yet this boy was adamant, he feels God is calling him to lead an SU Group in Brannock High in Motherwell and so I promised I will do what I can to support him in making this a reality.



There are so many more stories I could share of repentance and boldness, both of individuals and of the collective group of attendees. However, it is abundantly clear there was an openness to God as young people literally fell on their knees in worship. There was a heart of repentance as 150 young people turned to Jesus and became Christians, and there was a boldness and depth of conviction to go out and spread the good news that freedom and belonging can be found in Jesus.

Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen. Ephesians 3:20-21

And so, how should we respond to reports and stories of God's Spirit on the move within the *open generation*? We should humble ourselves in prayer before God in repentance, and in full surrender cry,

Your will be done, Lord.

To quote Duncan Campbell in his book *The Lewis Awakening*:

It is one thing to shout it, it is one thing to sing it, it is one thing to talk about revival, but give me a people on their faces, seeking to be rightly related with God, and when that happens, we will soon know the impact of God-realisation in our country.



To God be the glory!



Jessica is taking a group of our young people to the **Magnitude Worship Night** at Queen's Park Baptist church in Glasgow on the evening of Saturday 6 September. Let Jessica know if you would like to attend.

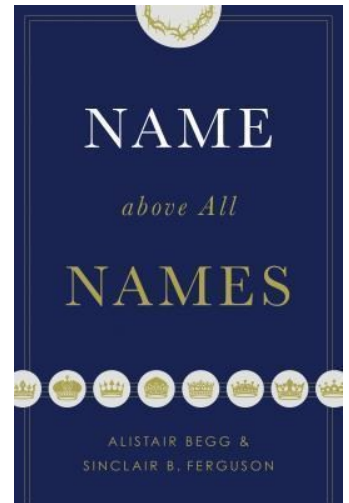
We are passionate about seeing young people encounter God in His word, in worship and by His Spirit. Magnitude exists to see a generation of young people captivated by the magnitude of who God is and transformed by encountering Him. Magnitude website



This too is our prayer for our young people!

Name above All Names

Who is Jesus? Is there any more important question that we can ask? In this book Alistair Begg and Sinclair B Ferguson, two home-grown preachers that moved to America, try to answer this question by studying the person of Christ as portrayed in the New Testament. From the promise of His coming in Genesis as “seed of woman” to the anticipation of His second coming as the “Lamb upon the Throne” in the book of Revelation, we gain a deeper understanding of who Jesus really is and that he does indeed deserve the title Name above All Names.



I was invited to download this book by email a few weeks ago and my interest was piqued. Never one to turn down a free offer, I quickly downloaded the book and the study guide that accompanies it! Both authors are respected and influential expositors of the Gospel, brought up in Scotland with a shared background and with decades of pastoral experience between them. In the Preface they write:

The book, as its title suggests, is a brief exposition of what Christians often refer to as “the person and work of Christ.” ...The chapters are by no means exhaustive...So these pages are meant as a taster, a beginning exploration...We hope these pages will encourage, instruct, refresh and challenge every reader. And we ask that your prayer as you read is, “Sir, we wish to see Jesus”. (John 12 v 21)

The book is divided into seven chapters:

- Jesus Christ, the Seed of Woman
- Jesus Christ, the True Prophet
- Jesus Christ, the Great High Priest
- Jesus Christ, the Conquering King
- Jesus Christ, the Son of Man
- Jesus Christ, the Suffering Servant
- Jesus Christ, the Lamb on the Throne

WHO IS JESUS?

The book begins in the Book of Genesis with Jesus being described as *The Seed of Woman*. The title of this chapter is taken from Genesis 3 v 15, where God addresses the Serpent:

**I will put enmity between you and the woman,
and between your offspring (seed) and her offspring (seed);
he shall bruise your head,
and you shall bruise his heel.**

Jesus is described as the second Adam who came to live in our world and win the victory for us with His finished work on the cross. There then follow chapters on *Jesus as the Prophet*. God sent His Son to speak to us “in these last days” (Hebrews 1 v 1-3) and *Jesus as the Great High Priest* who by enduring trials, died and paid for our sins with his own blood, something that the blood of bulls and goats could not do (Hebrews 9 v 11-12). Chapter 4 identifies *Jesus as the Conquering King* who has brought God’s Kingdom to earth and in Chapter 5 we see him as *The Son of Man*. Chapter 6 talks about *Jesus as The Suffering Servant* (Isaiah 53); He suffered in our place taking on our sins and Chapter 7 sees Jesus reigning in heaven as the *Lamb on the Throne*. We have the promise that one day He will return to reign on earth where “every knee will bow”.



A short review cannot do justice to this book. The book is less than 200 pages long so is not onerous to read. As well as giving us a theological overview of the seven key qualities of Jesus’ identity, it also helps us to worship him and reflect on how great Jesus really is. The accompanying study guide helps us reflect deeper on some of the points raised.

The Gospel According to Autumn

by Peggy Fitzpatrick

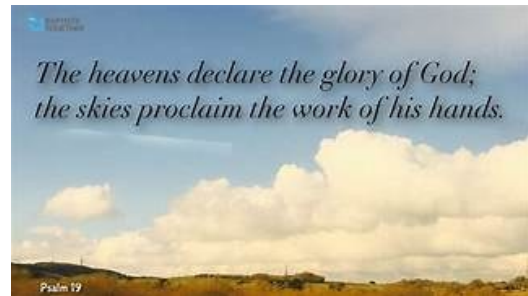
Oh October! Can we imagine more glorious images than the shimmering sapphire of October skies overhead, and the canopy of brilliant splendour that turns light to gold surrounding us wherever we go! What do we glimpse of our Creator's heart, we who live in the northern hemisphere and experience such heart-stopping beauty every year?!



During war time and peace time, tragedy and celebration, turbulence and tranquility in the affairs of men, the timeless hegemony of the seasons unfolds without fail, a wordless witness to the sovereignty of the King of the universe, **whose presence and power remain unshaken through all the shakings of humanity's conflict.**

What a Rock, what a Refuge, what a sanctuary of refreshment, this knowledge of our Creator who is also Love itself.

This autumn in particular, as our world is shaking with imminent threats and tumultuous upheaval, I am moved more than ever by "the beauty of the earth and the glory of the skies", stepping calmly through their seasons, as undistressed as the butterfly making its blossomy rounds, and I am moved to ponder **The Gospel According to Autumn.**



Here we stand between life's bounteous summer and winter's death-like nakedness. On the sombre grey or rainy days, there stands the invitation to reflection, contemplation, drawing inward as is appropriate as the glory of life approaches its passage into its dying; these are the quiet Days of Awe in response to the approaching Day of Reckoning, the call of Jesus to be sober and vigilant and consider our times, because we will each appear before our Maker at the end of our days.

But also in this passage, we are wrapped, entirely surrounded by overarching, breathtaking images of splendour, majesty, glory, **with all its promises of a Goodness that surpasses all dying.** There is hope everywhere, in the brilliance of every leaf, the saturated light that splashes so abundantly colour on meadows and woodlands and grasses even as they prepare for the colourless days just around the bend.



How can we but lift our heads and our hands in utter worship?!

How can we but entrust ourselves with absolute faith to the One who will be with us as we walk into the winter that is surely coming but is always followed by spring?

How can we not sing for joy over the hope of our salvation, and the magnificence of our God and His eternal plan!

Whatever comes of good or ill, there is our eternal Alpha and Omega and the glory of Resurrection!



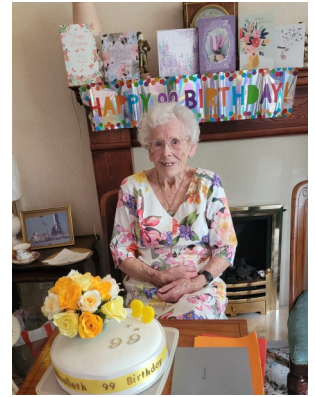
Be patient, then, brothers and sisters, until the Lord's coming. See how the farmer waits for the land to yield its valuable crop, patiently waiting for the autumn and spring rains. You too, be patient and stand firm, because the Lord's coming is near.

James 5 v 7-8

Church News

99th Birthday Celebrations

Elizabeth Thomson celebrated her 99th birthday on 12 June. Her daughter-in-law, Michele, had arranged a surprise birthday party for her and had invited the church family to attend. Elizabeth was delighted to see so many of her friends there and thoroughly enjoyed her afternoon. The guests enjoyed a lovely buffet provided by Michele as well as a cake. We look forward to celebrating Elizabeth's centenary with her next year!



Infant Baptism

The baptism of **Alexandra Dalziel Oates**, daughter of Kirsty and Ian, took place on Sunday 15 June. Many of Kirsty and Ian's wider family attended the happy occasion. Alex now joins her big brother, Laurie, at Park Tots and we pray a blessing on both children that they will grow up to know the Lord Jesus for themselves. We thank the family for the wonderful buffet and cake they laid on in the hall for the congregation after the service.



Renewal of Vows

Michelle Budd, neé Young, was brought up in Park Church and attended with her mum and dad, Pauline and David. She professed her faith as a teenager but, by her own admission, life got in the way and she fell away from following the Lord. However, once God has set his seal on someone, he does not ever let go; he watches and waits and by his grace and mercy he brings The Prodigal back to the fold. Sometimes difficult situations can rekindle our faith and through the loss of her precious dad, Michelle came to a renewed knowledge and awareness of her Father in Heaven. She wanted to make public proclamation of her faith once more and did this at our communion service on 22 June. To God be all the glory!



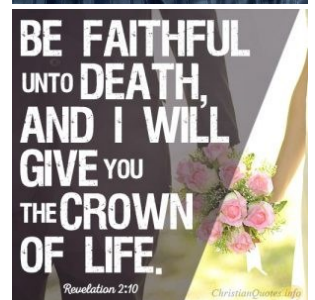
Ministry Assistant

Marcus Bailey joined us our new Ministry Assistant at the beginning of July and he will be with us for one year. His role is to work alongside and support the minister by leading fellowship groups, visiting members of the congregation and preaching once a month. He will hopefully also bring new ideas and perspective to how we can engage with the community in a culturally relevant way. Marcus is exploring his call to the ministry and we pray that this year will give him the clarity and wisdom he needs for the way forward.



Passed into Glory

The funeral of **Sheena Gibson** took place at Daldowie Crematorium on Monday 11 August. A woman of great faith, Sheena would have been 90 this September. Sheena suffered for many years with ill health but now, released from her suffering, she has gained the crown of life to be with her Lord for eternity.



Fire Drill

On Sunday 17 August we held our annual fire drill at the start of the morning service. The church was evacuated quickly and efficiently with everyone accounted for. Thanks to everyone for cooperating with this important exercise.



Ladies' Association Afternoon Tea

Pat Robertson

It was a great privilege again to hold an afternoon tea event in the Manse garden where 25 ladies attended along with Bruce, Marcus and John Fairful. The weather on the days leading up to Thursday 3 July were rather unsettled, causing us cause for concern. However, we remained positive and we were blessed with a pleasant day; lots of chatter and friendship was shared with one another. We enjoyed the pleasant surroundings of the garden where the tables were set with beautiful china, and the home baking supplied by the ladies of the committee was greatly appreciated.

The Ladies' Association fellowship meetings have an average of 26 folk attending which is so encouraging. We commence our monthly meetings on **Thursday 2 October** at 2pm and we provide a varied programme of speakers throughout October 2025 to May 2026. Our theme for this year is **For Such A Time As This**. It would be lovely to see even more ladies come along and share fellowship with us; you can be assured of a very warm welcome.



Back to School with God

This year's Scripture Union-based service was held on Sunday 10 August and was led by Marcus and Jessica. The theme this year was **The Lord is My Shepherd I have all I need** which explored the 23rd Psalm and the character of God as our Shepherd. Through our study we discovered that God is: **POWERFUL, PERSONAL, OUR PROVIDER and OUR PROTECTOR**.



We pray that as the children start a new school year they will know God's powerful presence with them through the good days and the not so good, and that they will come to realise for themselves that He is all they need.

Harvest Thanksgiving



This year's **Harvest Thanksgiving** service will take place on **Sunday 7 September** and donations will be in aid of Mission Aviation Fellowship (MAF). Special envelopes will be provided so that you can donate a monetary gift to this work as the Lord lays it on your heart to do so on Harvest Sunday.

MAF is the world's largest humanitarian air operator which flies medical supplies, doctors and nurses to some of the most remote places on earth—jungles, deserts and mountainous regions. Its aim is to bring help, hope and healing to people living in isolation and poverty.



Come let us sing for joy to the Lord!

Even if you are not a Christian or regular church-goer, you will be familiar with Psalm 23; it is sung at weddings and funerals alike. The original was written by King David who drew on his own experiences as a shepherd boy to portray God's providence, protection and persistence in welcoming us back into the fold when we stray. He is the good Shepherd. There have been many versions written over the years and no doubt there will be more in the years to come!



The King of Love my Shepherd is

This hymn was written by Henry Williams Baker in 1868. Baker was an Anglican clergyman and was a key figure in producing *Hymns Ancient and Modern* in which this hymn first appeared. An important feature of this hymnal was printing the text and tune on the same page, something we would take for granted nowadays!

The hymn is a metrical paraphrase of Psalm 23. The Lord is depicted as the good shepherd as in the original psalm but the hymn also draws on text from the New Testament in John 10:

I am the good shepherd; I know my sheep and my sheep know me...and I lay down my life for the sheep.

Although the original psalm of David talks of still waters, this hymn speaks of “streams of living water” that Jesus speaks about in John 7 v 38.

- | | |
|---|--|
| 1. The King of Love my shepherd is,
whose goodness faileth never.
I nothing lack if I am his,
And He is mine forever | 2. Where streams of living water flow,
my ransomed soul He leadeth;
And where the verdant pastures grow,
with food celestial feedeth. |
| 3. Perverse and foolish oft I strayed,
but yet in love He sought me;
and on His shoulder gently laid,
and home rejoicing brought me. | 4. In death dark's vale I fear no ill,
with Thee, dear Lord, beside me;
Thy rod and staff my comfort still,
Thy cross before to guide me. |
| 5. Thou spreadst a table in my sight;
thy unction grace bestoweth;
and oh, what transport of delight
from Thy poor chalice floweth! | 6. And so through all the lengths of days,
Thy goodness faileth never;
Good Shepherd, may I sing Thy praise
within Thy house forever. |

The first verse reminds us that if we have Jesus, we lack nothing. We find our fulfilment in Jesus rather than the ever-changing circumstances of life. God provides our physical needs such as food but verse 2 reminds us that He takes care of our spiritual needs as well. Verse 3 reminds us of the parable of the lost sheep. Although we know in our hearts that Jesus is all we need, sometimes we get distracted by life's glittering baubles, and stray off the narrow path; Jesus is full of love and gently guides us back onto His perfect one. Even in life's darkest moments, He gives us peace if we put our trust in Him. God's goodness never fails, He is always the same and we can trust Him to look after us now and forevermore.



To listen to the song, click [here](#)

After Your Heart

This song, written by **Chris Tomlin** in 2025, was inspired by the Amazon Prime series, **The House of David**. This series chronicles the life of David from when he was a simple shepherd boy through to his becoming King of Israel. Like all drama it takes some “creative liberties”, but it does give a good overview of David’s life. This song reflects David’s life journey from his humble roots as a shepherd boy to being anointed as God’s chosen one. David was in no way perfect; he had many glaring faults and shortcomings but he also acknowledged God’s faithfulness to him through “the highs, the lows” of life. He was a man after God’s own heart.

David was an unlikely king. We read in 1 Samuel 16 how Samuel came to Bethlehem and visited the house of Jesse. He invited Jesse and his sons, all strapping young men, to sacrifice with him. He thought surely the Lord’s anointed one must be among them but the Lord said to him:

The Lord does not look at the things people look at. People look at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart. 1 Sam 16 v 7

David was sent for, and the Lord told Samuel, **Rise and anoint him; this is the one. 1 Sam 16 v 12b**

God saw the potential in this lowly shepherd boy. David spent his days watching the sheep and playing his harp and the only weapon he had was a simple sling. However, despite life dealing him a difficult hand, he trusted in God and searched for His heart. Sometimes we feel that life is hard due to worries, illness, concerns about family, the state of the world, and we push God to the background. Rather than trusting in Him, we try to solve things ourselves. As believers we should also be people that search after God’s heart and His purposes.



1. **Got a harp in one hand and a sling in the other
For the battles I fight, I fight with these
Got a flock on the hill,
but the Lord is my Shepherd
And I have all I need**

Chorus

**My life will tell the story of Your faithfulness
The highs, the lows, the fields, the thrones, how
good You’ve been
Look how far we’ve come from watching sheep
under the stars
After all this time I’m still after Your heart, I’m still
after Your heart
After Your heart**

2. **Got a song in the storm, no fear in the valley
For I know the Lord will lead me through
Got a crown on my head and the keys to the kingdom
But I still bow to You, Oh, I still bow to you**

Chorus

The song mirrors the imagery of Psalm 23 with the Lord being seen as the good shepherd. God is all that David needs. David is taken on a journey from obscure shepherd boy to a position of great power but through it all and despite the crown on his own head, he acknowledges he must bow the knee and surrender to God. He recognises that God’s goodness and mercy will follow him all of his days. Despite his change in circumstances and achievements, he is unwavering in his pursuit of God’s heart and purpose for his life.

If we live our lives in fellowship with God and align our thoughts with His will for our lives, we too will be able to testify to His faithfulness. May we also sing, *we’re after Your heart*.

Bridge

**Surely Your goodness, surely Your
grace will follow me all my days
Will follow me all my days
Surely Your mercy, surely Your name
will follow me all my days
Follow me all my days**

Chorus

Outro

**Look how far we’ve come from watching
sheep under the stars
And after all this time I’m still after Your
heart, I’m still after Your heart
After Your heart**

**SEARCH ME, O GOD,
AND KNOW MY HEART:
TRY ME,
AND KNOW MY THOUGHTS:
AND SEE IF THERE
BE ANY WICKED WAY IN ME,
AND LEAD ME IN
THE WAY EVERLASTING.**

Psalms 139:23-24

**To listen to the song,
click [here](#)**



My case and cabin bag were stuffed full of English teaching resources, paper, felt pens, scissors, games, a Scottish rugby ball and flag, gifts for the children, multiple packs of shortbread and Tunnocks caramel wafers, Scottish gifts to thank those who were looking after us. Lesley texted me the night before we travelled: "I can't fit my tablet in my case. Can you fit it in yours?" I responded immediately, picturing an iPad slipping into the front zipped part of my suitcase. Arriving at the airport, I discovered it wasn't an iPad she was trying to squeeze in at all, but a large ice cream tub full of home-made tablet – the kind you eat!

This was my third mission trip to Hungary leading young people who are serving with SU Scotland on their gap year, and our wee team of four (John, Ewan, Lesley and myself) got on famously well. After a smooth flight, we arrived in Budapest. We were welcomed at our accommodation, handed a bag of stuff for breakfast, and left to unpack. Later on, Ádam, an SU staff member, came to lead us in a short devotional and prayer time. He gave thanks to God for sending us and stressed that we were all one team, Hungarians and Scots together. Our unity was in the Lord. That was certainly our experience over the next ten days. We met many different people, and we felt instant fellowship with each one – young and old alike. It was wonderful to hear different testimonies of faith; to hear about the challenges and encouragements of God's work in Hungary; to witness the hard work and sacrificial giving of time and talents of the pastor and church members at Ērd Reformed Church, who were hosting the SU English camp. Ērd turned out to be a church similar to our own in a small commuter town south of Budapest, about 15 minutes from the city centre by train – just like Uddingston.

Paul says in **1 Corinthians 12 v 27**, **Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it.**

We saw the value of teamwork, of the different parts of the body working well together. We were able to do things that the Hungarian team couldn't. This was an English camp – and we are native English speakers! We could teach the children English, tell them first-hand about Scotland, about Irn Bru, tablet and shortbread (and give them a taste). We could answer their teenagers' questions about Scotland's place within the UK. We could show photos of double-decker buses and the Loch Ness Monster, ceilidhs and highland games, and teach them 'Alice the Camel has 5 humps'. We could play 'new' games they didn't know, like Charades and Elephant Ball.



The children were eager to learn English, and Tami translated. I tried to learn their names: Brűno, Hanga, Balint, Gergű, Gűbor, Matyi, Noel, Ādam: all boys, apart from one girl. They progressed in learning and in confidence. I was very proud to watch them perform a drama at parents' night about ordering food in a Scottish restaurant, including chips and Irn Bru. All week Gűbor had been pronouncing the word 'burger' as 'boorger', but finally he got it right!

Then there were things that we couldn't do, but the Hungarians could. Matyi, Anna, Anna and Tami led Bible group discussions, performed a daily drama, led crafts and outside games. We cheered them on. We looked out for children sitting on their own and befriended the ones who looked a little lost. We sat beside the children as they made crafts, and tried to remember the Hungarian words they were teaching us. John, Ewan and Lesley were flexible, easy-ozy (Ewan's favourite phrase) and encouraging of one another. John was brilliant at drama, Ewan at playing volleyball and Ninja, and Lesley had multiple games up her sleeves through years of doing Sunday School.



The church folks looked after us wonderfully well. On arrival each morning we were asked, "Would you like coffee?" We discovered only later that the locals don't really drink much coffee, and they had bought in a new coffee machine especially for us coming. How kind.

Church ladies catered for the camp (30 children, 8 teenage helpers and 8 adult team). We ate what was put down to us, including cold fruit soup, twice in one day! We had toasted cheese and ham for breakfast; a cooked meal or soup and pudding for lunch; an afternoon snack of fruit, dinner of a main course and dessert. One afternoon we walked to a park, someone carrying 150 crêpes for the children's snack, each one home made. In the evening we were hosted for meals at the church, or were the guests of church members in their homes. The gift of hospitality is a beautiful one.

We saw God at work in different ways, sensing his peace, his presence, his provision. Transporting stuff from the SU office in Budapest to the church in Ęrd, somehow a bag was missed. A bag full of stuff the Hungarians needed! Anna returned to Budapest by train, but it didn't turn up. No matter... they carried on. The children didn't notice the hurriedly handmade score chart, or the missing outdoor games. Sickness threatened the team, as Anna and Matyi had already been to a camp the week before and had brought back a sore throat and a sore head. Every day, they carried on regardless, powering through tiredness and refusing to give in. One day I forgot to wear my anti-mosquito wristband, and I got a huge bite on my leg. The pastor rang a pharmacist in the congregation, and suddenly I was presented with a tube of cream and given a consultation!



And then there was the weather. We had asked for prayer to cope with the heat. Summers are hot in Budapest, and it was in the high 30s when we arrived. We travelled to Ęrd on Sunday, slept, woke up, and discovered it had rained overnight. There was a light breeze, the sky was cloudy and grey, and the temperature had fallen. It stayed overcast all week, and felt 'cool' to them at between 19 and 24 degrees. We were able to function! It felt like being back home on an average July day. The Hungarians were amazed when we told them that people had been asked to pray for us to be able to cope with their hot weather.

We thanked the Lord, and gave him the glory. It lasted for as long as we were at Ęrd. Incredibly, the heat hit us as we got out of the car back in Budapest. God had answered prayer in a miraculous way!

Another remarkable thing happened at our evening meals in Budapest. Each evening we spent in the city we were taken to a different restaurant. Eszter, Director of SU Hungary, joined us at each meal, but sat in silence. Eszter has no English, and although all the young Hungarians can speak it fluently, no one was translating for her. She looked lost and forlorn. Then Eszter discovered that I speak French. Suddenly, we were able to communicate and converse! I often pondered why God had given me a gift for languages. For what purpose? For this purpose! I have never before holidayed in France, or had to speak French, but God was able to use that gift mightily that week in Budapest. God truly knows the plans he has for us.



Our vision was to serve SU Hungary, to share the good news of Jesus with the children at Ęrd, and to display the love of Christ to each person we met. We feel thankful to God that he helped us meet all these aims. SU Hungary require English speakers in order to run their English camps. By going, we strengthened the team at Ęrd and enabled that camp to happen, which is humbling.

We shared the good news of Jesus with the children, most of whom don't attend the church. We displayed the love of Christ to the Hungarian team, the pastor, the teenage helpers and members – expressing appreciation, smiling, listening, being patient, friendly and flexible.



Friendships were made. Ewan gave 17-year-old Matyi a Scotland top and in return, Matyi gave Ewan a Hungarian football scarf. They want us back! I made up a wee photobook (ask if you'd like to see it) and I will treasure the memories. Thanks be to God! And thanks to you too, the back-at-home team who prayed. We are very grateful.

The Next Shepherd

When I was doing my research for this edition of the magazine, God put this article in my sight. It seemed relevant because we'd been talking about the shepherd king in the 23rd Psalm and also we are now entering Bruce's last year of ministry with us, and we will be looking for our own next shepherd. We need to start thinking about what sort of shepherd we are looking for to guide us in the future. This article gives us plenty food for thought.



Shepherds come and shepherds go. Some are around for a few years and some have the privilege of serving in a single congregation for the duration of their ministry. Some just simply move along but, inevitably the need to call the next shepherd comes around.

I remember as a young boy watching an associate pastor at a reception. He was going off into lands unknown to serve the Lord. I used to think that the local church should be static—leave well enough alone! Why are we letting this person go? If he is so good, let's keep him! But the Body, and the work of the Body is anything but static. Just like Paul who served in Ephesus for a time, and then, it was time to go. Another shepherd was needed. And so, it goes...

The next shepherd may be in the fields, like David tending to his father's sheep. Or in "Midian" waiting for the call to serve. In other words, in seminary, across town, or across the country serving another flock—maybe even sitting right there in the pews.

One of the most daunting challenges in the context of a church is identifying and hiring the person which is to be the next pastor of that flock. I suppose one of the things that confounds me most is the end product of some churches. Generally, I would suspect that when a pastoral search committee initiates the process, they have decided that they want someone to tend, and feed the sheep; they are looking for a shepherd.



The process begins. Profiles. Analyses. Interviews. Sermon reviews, etc. The desire is to find the "best person for the job." The temptation arises to find the "best possible" candidate. I suppose a measure of grace is to be given, as we all would want to be successful in targeting the right guy. But. Sometimes those lenses of shepherd get a little foggy and the person we end up looking at may not quite fall into that *shepherd* classification. They end up with an "anything-but-a

shepherd" in the role of shepherd—likely courting potential frustration for all.

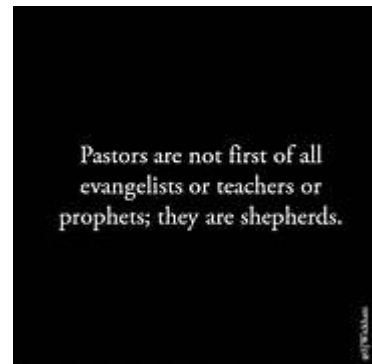
This guy may have excelled in one of many fields. He may evidence leadership abilities beyond measure. He may be beyond charismatic, successful, but the question according to our own job description needs to be asked. Yes... but, **is he a shepherd?**

Keep in mind. **A shepherd is a shepherd.** One gifted in, and called to work with, and care for... sheep. A cattleman certainly would not do. Or, a corn farmer. But a shepherd would. I am making a simple point, and an exhortation to remember the main requirement of the position to be filled.

What intrigues me is that sometimes churches insist it is time to get a new shepherd, and the person they eventually end up hiring is anything but a shepherd. I intentionally am using the word *shepherd* as opposed to any other including the term *leader*, or *leadership*.

For starters, let me suggest that the term *leadership* is a pretty broad term encompassing many areas of government and oversight in general, including the secular world. It's a pretty popular term being used to define church oversight in "churchdom" right now. My concern is that such a term can diminish or even obscure the spiritual component, or the servitude component of pastoral oversight. *Leadership* is a wide-spectrum umbrella, but much more parochial and relevant, at least for me, is *shepherd*, as we move and minister in the arena of Christian faith. Consequently, we do not get the full scope of true spiritual pastoral service when we limit it to a leadership paradigm or modern secular mechanics.

Whereas leadership is primarily focused on getting people to **do** things, and perform in right ways, shepherding is at the heart encouraging people to **be**, or to **become** more and more conformed to the image of Christ (transformation) as a part of discipleship. So, if I may, allow me to address “leadership” in the understanding of *shepherding*.



We can construct a pretty good fabric of the theology of shepherding from the woollen thread woven throughout the pages of the Scripture. Ephesians 4 identifies four offices/gifts used in the building up of the body: **Apostles (church-planters and missionaries), Prophets (preachers), Evangelists, and Pastor/Teachers (Shepherd-ers, disciplers)**. Shepherd/Teachers are one of the agencies, or offices which God employs to grow the church both in numbers and maturity. These four are on the same level, different, but all corporately serve to mature the Body of Christ. The question facing Shepherds is, “How do we do that?” What is it we do when we are doing what shepherds should be doing?

So, from a biblical perspective I would define Shepherd as: **One who has the privileged call to walk along side, to build up the flock in their journey of Christian faith.**

The office of Shepherd is a hands-on vocation, getting in the sheepfold where they smell like sheep. Walking with, talking to, rubbing, touching, caring... investment. Could that be why we as the church are losing traction with our culture, because we are embracing a secular, rather than biblical model? (I ask this in all humility as I struggle daily to execute my office faithfully). Not meaning to throw any stones, but are the people filling so many of the shepherd roles in the church actually the right person to have in *that* position, if a shepherd is truly a shepherd?

From the secular perspective he may be the living end, but is he a shepherd? We are not simply looking for a “leader,” we are looking for a shepherd. We are not looking for a great communicator, speaker, or an orator, catalyst, strategist, CEO type who has been a part of Fortune 500, or facilitator; or even simply a teacher. **We are looking for a pastor who can effectively handle the word of God in his communication, and walk alongside the sheep for the journey.** We are not looking for a “strategist to implement and assign analytically synthesized congregational components conducive to systematic holiness paradigms” – once again, we are looking for a shepherd to foster a love of God and others. I am not saying those gifts aren’t useful, or that they may not in time translate into effective shepherding, but they are not in themselves, shepherding. **A shepherd shepherds.**

Congregants are not simply components of a church equation, they are people whom God has placed under our care, custody and authority—to love, nurture, and grow into the image of Christ. I think of a shepherd dog, Lydia, here in Bishop. As a shepherding dog with shepherding in her DNA, and being around livestock it was her commission to surround and motivate all able parties in her scope of influence to move toward the shepherd of the home, my friend Laura. As Laura would walk, or even when she sat, Lydia herded chickens, pheasants, cattle, other dogs and yes, even toddlers closer and closer to her master. I remember she even tried to herd me closer to Laura. That was her task, and she took it seriously. I don’t think all those creatures even realized she was very intentional to bring everything around closer to the shepherd of the home, but she did. I have been reminded of that commission more than once, that it is my privilege as under-shepherd to move God’s sheep, a little closer to the Chief Shepherd.

Pretty much, in the Bible, when God was looking for someone to be a shepherd to His people, He called a shepherd.

So, point Number 1, and it is a big one... **If you need someone to do the work of a shepherd, hire a shepherd!**

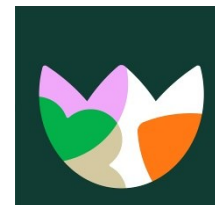
If someone is put into the shepherd role who is anyone but a shepherd, we cannot be surprised or disappointed with the outcome. People are gifted in many ways with many gifts. The Lord uses many for the building up of the Body, but if a shepherd is required for the position—then get a shepherd... because... **a shepherd shepherds.**



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Grow Uddingston Update

by Donald Burt



CLIMATE CHALLENGES

While trying **NOT** to sound like a weather presenter, this summer has posed some challenges for us. We have now had significant periods of dry (and hot) spells of weather, but with the very unusual event of a named storm in between. The dry spells have meant a lot more effort has had to be put into watering the floral displays around the village in order to ensure they continue to look their best. The unexpected storm arrived two days before the **Keep Scotland Beautiful** judges' visit and so a lot of clearing up and remedial work had to be quickly undertaken during this time! Some displays suffered more than others, but thankfully most have naturally recovered in the last couple of weeks.

As mentioned, the KSB judges visited earlier this month; the visit seemed to go very well and we await the results that will be announced in mid September. Thanks to everyone both in **Grow Uddingston** and in **Park Church**, who helped to make this visit a success; in particular to Rev. Bruce McDowall for the use of the church hall for the initial presentation. Apart from the direct assistance, this demonstrates to the judges that different groups and organisations work together for the good of the community, which the judges always like to see.

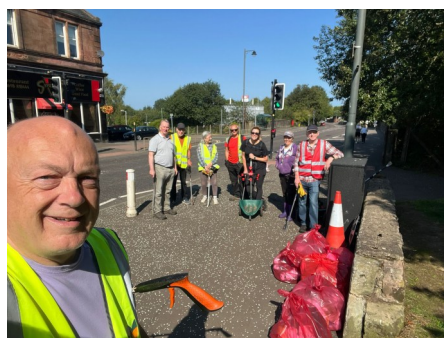


A couple of years ago South Lanarkshire Council announced that they would no longer be placing and maintaining the lamp post baskets and so at short notice we managed to get sponsors for a small number of baskets. This year we expanded the sponsorship and upgraded the lamp post plaques detailing the sponsor, including the one directly outside the church, sponsored by the Ladies' Association. The photograph shows an example of the plaque of a sponsor who wished to remain anonymous.



At this time of year, the floral displays are in full bloom and we are particularly pleased with the five new large planters at the train station that were only placed in April. The planting of these was a bit of an experiment, but the results have been excellent (see above for how they flourished over the summer).

Finally, our Litter Pickers continue their fantastic work and have picked about 800 bags of litter this year, with a running total of nearly 5,000 bags since starting in 2022. It is amazing to think how much litter has been removed from the village surroundings, helping to improve the environment around our village of Uddingston. As you can see from the photo below, all ages can help!!



Keep an eye
out for our
results in
September!



Dates for the Diary

Sunday 7 September	10.30am Harvest Thanksgiving Monetary Gifts for MAF	
Sunday 5 October	10.30am Communion Sunday	
Sunday 2 November	10.30am Morning Service 6.30pm Fish and Chips/ Film Night	
Sunday 9 November	10.30am Remembrance Day Service Youth Organisations' Parade	
14 September, 12 October and 16 November	Marcus will lead worship and preach	

And finally

Faith is believing
God is working,
even when you
can't see the
evidence.

Faith is not about having all the answers or seeing every step clearly. It's about trusting God's heart when you can't trace His hand. Life will bring storms, valleys and moments where the path ahead seems hidden in darkness. In those times, God calls us to keep moving forward, not because we know exactly where we're going, but because we know who is leading us. Walking by faith means believing that even when we don't see the outcome, God is already there, working all things together for our good.

When we rely only on what we can see, we limit ourselves to human understanding. But when we trust in the unseen promises of God, we step into His supernatural peace and provision. Faith opens the door for God to work in ways we could never imagine. So today, take that step, even if it feels uncertain. The One who walks beside you sees the whole road ahead, and His path always leads to life.

We walk by faith, not by sight. 2 Cor 5 v 7

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