

# Park Pages

the magazine of Uddingston: Park United Free Church of Scotland



## Letter from the Minister

Spring 2018



Dear Friends,

I recently watched the film, *The Darkest Hour*, which charts the story of Winston Churchill becoming Prime Minister in May 1940, just as our country faced the greatest military crisis in its history. Questions could be raised about the historicity of some of the story line, but it does portray a powerful picture of a leader who, despite his human flaws, was passionately convinced about the need of our nation to “stand and fight” despite massive pressures around him to seek a compromise peace. How right he was. How wrong the appeasers were!

I have also been reading a recent biography of Clement Attlee, the leader of the Labour Party from 1935-1955. In many ways, you couldn't imagine two more different men - in temperament, style and political position. And yet, it was Attlee and the Labour Party's refusal to serve under Neville Chamberlain, that precipitated the political crisis that led to the appointment of Churchill as Prime Minister, and Attlee as his deputy. Whilst neither man was a professing Christian in the biblical sense, Churchill, in particular, often referred to our need as a nation to recognise Almighty God's sovereign care and guidance. He spoke of his own dependence on that as he sought to see our nation, and our world, delivered from the evils of Fascism and Nazism. Thank God for leaders like Churchill, Attlee and many others, who led our nation at such a critical time in its history. Under them, we were delivered from our enemies and brought into the peace that we have enjoyed for 73 years. See **Psalm 124**.

We are probably facing one of the most critical times in our history since the Second World War with the Brexit issue today. It is questionable whether we are led by political leaders, on both sides of the *argument*, who have the same qualities of mobilizing passion, wisdom and leadership that Churchill and Attlee had. History tells us that when political leadership is lacking, or not very inspiring, people can be led to support all sorts of ideas and movements in order to see things “sorted out”! How pertinent is Paul's exhortation that,

**“...petitions, prayers, intercessions and thanksgiving should be made for all people—for kings and those in authority, that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness. This is good and pleases God our Saviour”. 1 Timothy 2 v 1, 2**

Interestingly, the very next verses in that letter say,

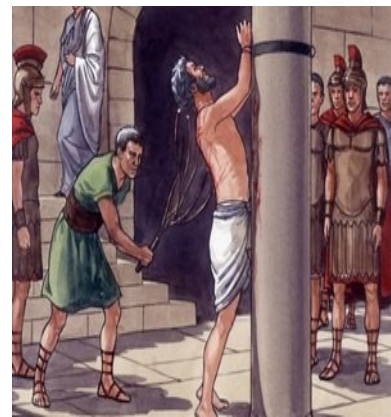
**“God our Saviour wants all people to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth. For there is one God and one mediator between God and mankind, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for all people.” 1 Timothy 2 v 3-5**

This shows there is a vital connection between the world of politics and power and the Kingdom of God. Certainly, the political machinations of the Jewish leaders and the Roman authorities are part of the backdrop of the Easter story. The religious leaders were shown up by Jesus as spiritually and morally bankrupt. Whilst he taught as “.....**one who had authority....**”, the Pharisees formed an unholy alliance with the Herodians “**...to plot as to how they might kill Jesus**”. **Mark 3 v 6**



**“They feared him because the whole crowd was amazed at his teaching....and began to scheme as to how they could arrest Jesus secretly and kill him.” Mark 11 v 18 and Mark 14 v 1**

Despite their disdain for the Roman governor, Pilate, they **“...stirred up the crowd to have Pilate release Barabbas instead of Jesus”**. Mark 15 v 1  
Pilate, a weak leader, **“...wanting to satisfy the crowd, had Barabbas released and Jesus flogged, and handed over to be crucified”**. Mark 15 v 15



Through it all, the gospel writers present Jesus to us, NOT as a rabble rousing troublemaker, but as the Prince of Peace. John's gospel gives us a vivid insight into the tensions within and around Pilate as he sought to find a way to get Jesus off! Desperate to appease the religious leaders and to hang onto his own power, he resorted to making threats to Jesus about what he could do - only to be met with this answer:

**“My kingdom is not of this world. If it were, my servants would fight to prevent my arrest. But now my kingdom is from another place....The reason I was born and came into this world is to testify to the truth. Everyone on the side of truth listens to me....You would have no power over me if it were not given to you from above.” John 18 v 36, 37 and John 19 v 11**

Despite the awfulness of all that He was to enter into, Jesus Christ knew that His Father's sovereign purpose of deliverance for his people was being worked out in the events of that first Holy Week. He had

**“...brought you, Father, glory on earth by finishing the work you gave me to do. And now, Father, glorify me in your presence with the glory I had with you before the world began”**. John 17 v 5

As the resurrected and glorified *Risen Conquering Son*, Jesus could say to his disciples:

**“All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore, go, and make disciples of all nations...and surely I am with you to the very end of the age.” Matthew 28 v 28**

In these very unsettling times, we rejoice that the same God who brought forth men like Winston Churchill to deliver us from our earthly enemies in the past, is the God who sent his Son, **“Yeshua - because He will save/deliver us from our sins”**. Matthew 1 v 21  
As we pray for our earthly leaders, we must ask that they will have a recognition of their dependence on God and seek that wisdom that comes from above in their decisions and direction. (See **Romans 13 v 1-7**)



Above all, as members of the Kingdom of God, we rejoice at the one who is **King of kings and Lord of lords**, and who will ultimately triumph over all evil and will bring with him **“...all his called, chosen and faithful followers”**. Romans 17 v 14 and Romans 19 v 16

May that confident hope give us the courage of faith to stand for the truth in these chaotic times.

Yours thoughtfully,

*Wm B Russell*

You can find further readings on **God and Churchill** in the book written by Jonathan Sandys, great-grandson of Churchill and Wallace Henry, former White House aide to President Nixon.

# Mission Pennies

by Janice Clark-Dick

I am not sure how many of you are aware, that as a Church family, we collect *Mission Pennies*. These pennies are used to support the work of the **Cogwheel Trust**, a charity supported by The United Free Church of Scotland.

The sum of £20 per month provides a child in Uganda with a home, food and clothing, medical care and an education – that is approximately 15p per month per member of the congregation – absolutely incredible value for money. At the moment we support two boys whose photos, school reports etc are on the Missions Board in the Church Hall. Please have a look – they are **our** children. Wouldn't it be wonderful to add more children to our flock?

PLEASE think about saving your loose change – no need to count it – just put it in the mission pennies' basket on the table near the front door. If you can't be bothered with small coins, we are happy to accept larger ones too!! This is a really easy way to give children a chance to flourish; we can't put a price on a child's future.

*1 Corinthians 12.28 – God has appointed for the Church those who can help others.*

## Cogwheel Trust International

This charity was founded in 1995, working originally in India but now primarily based in Uganda. Although it is a Christian charity, a child's religion or background is not a deciding factor in their eligibility for help; only their need is taken into account.

The charity's strapline is **Giving Children a Future**. Their website states that "our aim is to provide holistic care for disadvantaged children, within a Christian environment, from birth to independence".

The charity runs a children's home in the village of Namugongo, quite near the capital of Kampala, which provides a home for up to 100 children. Some of the children are orphans as their parents have died from AIDS but some have just been abandoned at the gate and others have physical or learning disabilities. Some have been physically or sexually abused and others have inherited HIV from their mothers. The charity accepts them all regardless of background. The charity relies on people like us sponsoring a child and details of how to do this can be found on their website at <http://cogwheeltrustinternational.org.uk/>

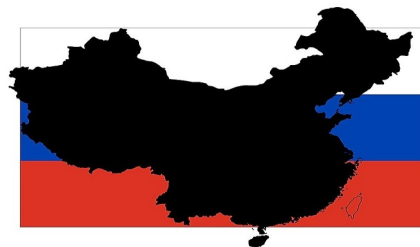
The charity also runs a school for the children in Mpoma which currently provides education for about 125 children. It opened in February 2014 and caters for children from Primary 1 through to Primary 7. There are five new classrooms and eight teachers. A new toilet block is being built presently because of the increase in the number of children; it will provide four extra toilets and a bathing area. The classes do not exceed 20 children so that each child can receive as much individual attention as possible. The school holds regular meetings with the PTA and relatives of the children and this encourages people to become more involved. These meetings also encourage families to ensure the pupils are punctual for school and that homework is done. Again, the school relies on child sponsors and if you would like to become involved, please refer to the link above or to the newsletters on the Missions Board in the church hall.

One of the charity's greatest needs at the moment is for a minibus to transport the children to and from school. Let's pray that God will provide this vehicle for them!



# Trip to Russia – January/February 2018

- by Ian McQuarrie



## Banyas and Plov

The strange subtitle comes from the fact that, in each of the four places that we visited this time, Derek and I were treated to a *banya* (Russian sauna) and a meal of *plov*, an Uzbek dish made from lamb and rice; we must have been the cleanest and best fed that we've ever been on a Russian trip! The banyas ranged from a plush, rented city establishment to a hut in a pastor's back garden in the middle of nowhere, close to the Arctic Circle, and each plov was different from the others, so it turned out to be a very varied experience.



## Asbest

One of our main purposes in going to Asbest was to visit Alyona, widow of Kostya Klimonov, the overall leader of the Salvation Centres, who died in December as a result of hepatitis, contracted when he was an addict. It was very moving to meet up with her, and also to visit Kostya's grave, and to be able to give Alyona financial help in the wake of her bereavement. She was overwhelmed by the generosity of the gifts that we were able to bring from different churches and individuals. These will enable her to cover the cost of Kostya's funeral, and to develop her small business in order to support herself and her daughters in the days to come. Thank you to all who helped with this.



The picture on the right shows Alexei. He has taken over as Director of the Asbest Salvation Centre. He accompanied us on our travels this time. The photo shows him with the trailer used in one of the centre's ministries – emptying septic tanks in the local village! As well as providing some funds, it is a very real service to the community, and a great witness that they are willing to do this. In addition to speaking at the rehab centre, we were also able to visit the flat now used for the adaptation stage of the Salvation Centre work in Asbest. From here, the men work on repairs and renovation of flats and houses, and they also run a fresh vegetable delivery service.



## Lobva

We were unable to visit Kachkanar, due to lack of permission from the local security chief, but Suma, the Pastor at Kachkanar, managed to arrange for us to visit a small village further north, Lobva, and take part in the service there on the Sunday. Folk from the Kachkanar church joined with the Lobva people to make it a memorable time of worship and fellowship. Imagine travelling 100 km for your Sunday morning service as the Kachkanar people did! It was wonderful to be able to see them, in spite of the authorities denying permission.



## Orenburg

We were looking forward to seeing the progress on the new building for the Orenburg Centre, so it was exciting to see it with the roof now on. It was also a contrast not to have to wade through deep snow to get there, as we have had to do in previous years. This year, the winter has been milder, and there has been hardly any snow in Orenburg – I think it all came to Scotland instead!

Another interesting development is the business opened by Stas, the Centre leader, and his friend Vitaly. It's a bakery business called **House of Bread** (which is *Bethlehem* in Hebrew) seen in the middle picture below. They now have three branches open in the city. The profits support the men and their families, as well as contributing to the work of the Centre.

While in Orenburg, we also had the privilege of attending the men's meeting in a local Pentecostal church, whose pastor visited us in Park a couple of years ago. They had less than 20 attending the Men's Fellowship until recently, but now have more than 80 on a regular basis. We're not in the photo for security reasons.



## Penza

We visited Penza, which lies 600 km south-east of Moscow, in 2013, and hadn't been back until now. It was encouraging to see the progress that has been made under Sasha's leadership. (Sasha is on the right in the photo with the horse.) Sasha is another example of the transforming power of the Gospel which we see so often in the work of the Salvation Centre; he was an addict but is now healed and happily married with two small children. He is very ably directing the work in Penza.

The second photo on the right shows the new building, which is partially habitable, but which they hope to finish soon. They have won favour with the local authorities because of their work, being given retrospective planning permission against all the odds.

The picture also shows our plov being cooked by Yura, in below zero conditions!

Please pray for all the centres and churches mentioned. Pray too for the future of our visits to Russia, as there were certain restrictions placed on us this time, in addition to the ban on visiting Kachkanar, which we've not experienced before. Thanks for your prayers for this trip; they were certainly needed and greatly valued by Derek and I. Our God is faithful to the prayers of His people.



**We give thanks for Ian and Derek who have responded to the Great Commission and have been willing to further God's kingdom in sometimes very difficult conditions. We thank God for all the seeds sown during this visit and pray that, in time, people's lives will be transformed by hearing and believing in the Gospel.**



# Prayer



It was Jesus himself who taught us how to pray with **The Lord's Prayer**. Prayer is our way of communicating with God—both listening and talking to Him—so it should be central to our Christian life. However, we often find it difficult to pray but if we think of prayer as just having a conversation with God, we might find it easier. Our prayers do not need to be eloquent or long-winded, God simply yearns to have a relationship with us. As we communicate with Him, we draw closer to Him and the relationship deepens. “Draw near to God and He will draw near to you.” (James 4 v 8)

God knows everything about us, our needs, our desires, our hopes - “Your Father knows what you need before you ask him” (Matthew 6:8) - but He wants us to humbly bring our prayers to him. God always hears our prayers and knows what is best for us and we must trust Him. Our prayers should encompass Adoration, Confession, Thanksgiving and Supplication (ACTS).

I asked a small cross-section of the congregation what their personal experience of prayer was. I hope you enjoy reading their replies.

## Stuart Urquhart

Personally I think it's sad when you see couples out for meals together, yet they are on their respective phones, no doubt checking their e-mails or social media status. Whilst a lack of communication can often be problematic within relationships, strong communication strengthens relationships. That has been the case for Alison and I early in our marriage.



For me, prayer is the very intimate relationship between the Lord of Creation and mankind, our communication channel made possible through the crucifixion and ascension of Jesus Christ. It should be how we worship, give thanks for his provision and how we raise concerns before our Father. However, all too frequently from my own perspective, it can become a list of things that I think that 'I need'. What I've learned over time, is that God knows best! I've been dejected previously when prayer requests didn't seem to be answered but I was missing the point, you don't just communicate with someone when you want to gain something. It's easy to fall into this selfish trap so we should not be discouraged when prayer requests are not met by the Almighty - for some, the answer is 'not yet' whilst in other cases it's not the answer we wish; however, it's ultimately for our benefit (this is when I re-read Jeremiah 29:11).

With hindsight, I praise God for the abundance of blessings provided for me in answer to prayer, not when and how I wanted it, but when and how I needed it.

## June Weeks

Prayer is a great privilege which I couldn't cope without. It's such a joy to praise God and to pray with others. The greatest joy for me is when God answers your prayer for someone you have been concerned about. The following is a good example!

I recently met the mother of a family we've known off and on for many years in Tesco. She was in great distress because one of her sons was seriously ill. I hugged her and prayed with her for him. Some time later she came up to me and said, “I REALLY NEEDED that hug and my son is much better”. We thanked God together.

It is also a great joy when fellow Christians make the time to attend a time of prayer together.



## John Harden

I initially thought, when I was asked about my experience of prayer, that it was something that I didn't do that much of. I didn't think that I spent that much time talking to God in my daily life. In my head, I felt that the only times I consciously made an effort to pray were in church or when meeting with Bruce.

But over the past couple of weeks, I've paid a bit more attention to what I actually do and I've realised that I talk with God way more than I imagined; most days in fact.

At work, I seek guidance in what I'm doing and ask for help when I'm having to do something sensitive or difficult. I sometimes even ask him for help for my work colleagues (which I didn't think I did).

At home, I talk to him about my family and personal things, and ask him to watch over my family or friends.

In general, my conversations with God are like speaking with a mentor, looking for support and guidance.

I now realise that, although I didn't think prayer played a part in my life, it does.



## Ken McClean

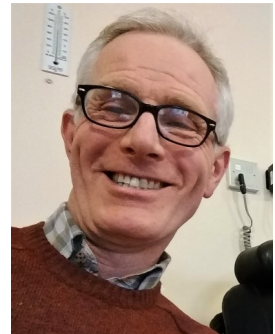
CS Lewis said that prayer does not change God, but the person who prays, and this has been my experience.

Once I was angry and asked him, in frustration, just what was going on, and that time I received an answer straightaway! Usually I wouldn't have the courage to speak to him like that, but Job shows us he wants to hear all our prayers.

I have sometimes asked him to change my behaviour or attitudes and, although I failed many times, he has never let me down, even when it takes me a long time to realise what he is saying.

I think that it is important when praying to be receptive and to be contrite and humble, i.e. willing to face one's faults, and that answers to prayer must pass the test of being consistent with Biblical truth. It certainly does no harm to discuss them with fellow Christians, or even the minister!

I don't believe in unanswered prayer. Even no answer can be an answer. God may be throwing the question back to you!



## Jessica Beecroft

God recently challenged me in the last way that I expected - in prayer.

Anyone who knows me well will tell you that I am a very cautious person and a bit (lot) of a worrier. In order to keep my anxieties in check, I need to pray. Not just pray, but pray expecting an answer. It turns out that when there is a possibility of there being an answer I won't like, I don't cope so well.

Nicholas was recently offered a job in Houston, Texas. I didn't want to go. As we usually do with big decisions, we both agreed to pray about it independently. There was one point where it really seemed like we were supposed to go. Any hurdles that had previously been in the way were being moved, one after the other. The company would pay for flights and visas - practical things like that. I suddenly found it difficult to pray. For a day or two I stopped praying altogether for fear of getting an answer I didn't want. When I did finally pray again, I was acting like a petulant child.

I cried and pleaded with God. I'd go wherever he was asking me but He had to know that I wasn't happy about it and it wasn't fair. It was very much a case of, "I'll go wherever you want me to, God, but please don't actually make me". Thankfully God didn't make me. He not only heard my prayer but answered it and taught me many lessons about myself through the whole experience. It's better to be praying than not at all. God already knows how we're feeling and what's on our hearts. We can be honest with Him.



# Come let us sing for joy to the Lord!



Whatever style of worship is used, most Christians would agree that corporate worship is important. It is encouraging to come together to express our love, devotion and celebration of God's love for us and, through that worship, to see and learn more of God's power, his greatness, his sovereignty, his love and his compassion. The word *worship* comes from the Latin, *worthship*, and through worship we express God's "worth to us". We are looking at two very different hymns this time; one a hymn born out of a very personal tragedy, and the other outlining the tenets of our faith. Both, however, bring glory to God.

## It is well with my Soul

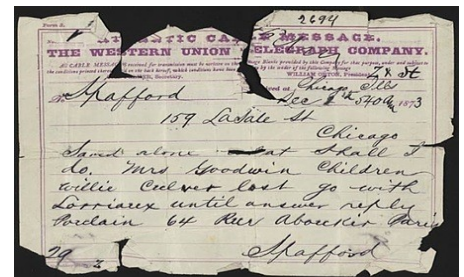
This hymn was written by Horatio G Spafford who was a successful lawyer and businessman in Chicago in the 19th century. He was also a devout Christian and was friends with the famous preacher, Dwight L. Moody. Horatio and his wife, Anna, had four daughters but tragedy had hit the family in 1871 when they lost their two-year-old son to pneumonia. In that same year, they lost most of their business in the Great Chicago Fire.



Mrs Spafford and their four young daughters boarded the French ocean liner, **SS Ville du Havre**, on November 21, 1872. The boat was sailing to Europe with 313 passengers on board. Mr Spafford had planned to join them on this voyage, but unexpected urgent business forced him to stay behind in the US. Four days into the journey, the Ville du Havre collided with an iron-hulled ship from Scotland called the Loch Earn. Mrs Spafford brought the four children, Annie, Margaret Lee, Bessie and Tanetta, onto the deck and prayed that God would spare them if that were His will, or enable them to endure whatever fate awaited them. The Ville du Havre sank within 12 minutes; 216 passengers perished, including the four children.

Mrs Spafford was rescued and landed in Wales nine days later. She sent a telegram to her husband which said, "Saved alone, what shall I do?" Another survivor, a Pastor Weiss, recalls Anna saying, "God gave me four daughters. Now they have been taken from me. Someday I will understand why".

Mr Spafford took the next available ship to be with his grieving wife. The captain showed him the spot where the Ville du Havre had gone down. It is on this voyage that Horatio Spafford wrote *It is well with my Soul*.



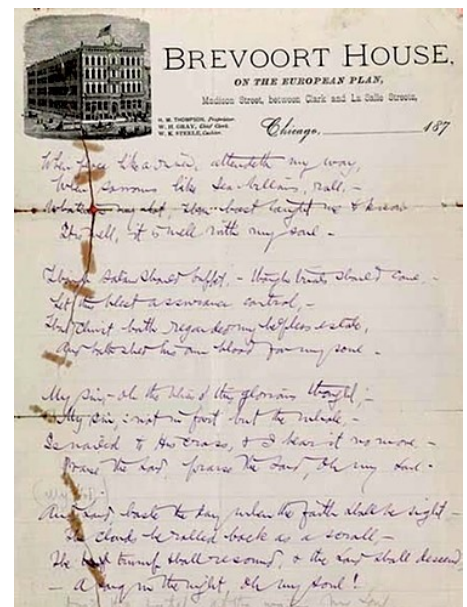
When peace like a river attendeth my way,  
When sorrows like sea billows roll,  
Whatever my lot, Thou hast taught me to say,  
It is well, it is well with my soul.

How wonderful to be able to write these words amidst such a personal tragedy!

Though Satan should buffet, though trials should come,  
Let this blest assurance control,  
That Christ has regarded my helpless estate,  
And hath shed His own blood for my soul.

And Lord, haste the day when my faith shall be sight,  
The clouds be rolled back as a scroll;  
The trump shall resound, and the Lord shall descend,  
A song in the night, oh my soul!

The Spaffords went on to have three more children, although tragically their son died of scarlet fever. They went to live in Jerusalem where they engaged in philanthropic work and gained the trust of Christians, Muslims and Jews. Their desire as ever was to show the love of Jesus.



If you would like to listen to the hymn, click on the link below:

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T8\\_EfDqF7YI](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T8_EfDqF7YI)



## O Church Arise

This song, written by Keith Getty and Stuart Townend, was written in 2005. It speaks of the fundamentals of the Christian faith and therefore appeals to young and old alike. This is a song that calls the church to action!

Keith Getty explains that in writing hymns two goals guide him.

- to write theological and Bible truth that speaks in everyday life, as Charles Wesley did.
- to write melodies that large groups of people can sing. That is my filter....can all ages sing this melody?

Stuart Townend explains that at the time of writing, "current worship practices have tended to focus so heavily on subjective experience and personal feelings, that the proclamation of objective, life-changing truths about God and our position in Christ is often ignored".

This hymn, therefore, was written to provide worship music that could be sung corporately by a congregation. Its lyrics set forth the great truths about God, are true to scripture and proclaim the gospel of grace.

**O Church Arise** reminds us of the old hymns of faith. Verse 1 reflects on the armour of God (Ephesians 6) that we need to put on every day so that we are ready to fight Satan and the trials and tribulations of this world. It reminds us that only God can give us the strength and protection we need.

O Church, arise, and put your armour on:  
Hear the call of Christ our captain.  
For now the weak can say that they are strong  
In the strength that God has given.  
With shield of faith and belt of truth,  
We'll stand against the devil's lies:  
An army bold whose battle cry is love,  
Reaching out to those in darkness.



Verse 2 reminds us that Christ has already won the war and focuses on the certain hope we have in Him.

When faced with trials on every side  
We know the outcome is secure,  
And Christ will have the prize for which he died,  
An inheritance of nations.

Verse 3 is central to our Christian faith, the death and resurrection of Christ. The image of the stone being rolled away and Christ emerging from the tomb is very powerful. Through his death and resurrection we are redeemed!

Come see the cross, where love and mercy meet,  
As the son of God is stricken:  
Then see his foes lie crushed beneath his feet,  
For the Conqueror has risen!  
And as the stone is rolled away,  
And Christ emerges from the grave,  
The victory march continues till the day  
Every eye and heart shall see him.



Paul writes, "I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus". (Philippians 3 v 14) These words are echoed here in verse 4. When we become despondent and weary, we are to take inspiration and courage from Christians who have gone before us. We can take heart knowing that God was faithful to His people then, and He is faithful to us now.

So Spirit, come, put strength in every stride  
Give grace for every hurdle,  
That we may run with faith to win the prize  
Of a servant good and faithful.  
As saints of old still line the way  
Retelling triumphs of his grace,  
We hear their calls and hunger for the day  
When with Christ we stand in glory.

To listen to this hymn, click on the link : <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x63cVewXAeg>

# SU Scotland Mission Trip to Open Bible, Ukraine



From 8 to 19 February Elizabeth McDowall visited Open Bible in Kiev, Ukraine, along with four young people serving SU Scotland on a gap year. Here she tells us about one aspect of Open Bible's ministry – delivering Samaritan's Purse shoeboxes.

A big thank you for your prayers. I felt very upheld as I journeyed to Ukraine for the first time, setting off into the unknown! Ukraine is 3000 km from Scotland—a very long way, not just physically, but culturally. Yet as we served alongside our brothers and sisters in **Open Bible**, we felt as one. We shared the same passion to tell children about Jesus, and we were united in Christ. The feeling of mutual partnership between us was strong; not just because I already knew Grigori, Tima and Oksana due to the existing bonds between Scripture Union Scotland and Scripture Union Ukraine, where mutual visits often take place and financial support for their ministry is ongoing, but because Grigori and Tima Stupak had visited Park Church one Wednesday last August. Knowing about our involvement at Park in Samaritan's Purse shoeboxes, Grigori and Tima had especially constructed a programme for our visit that would involve delivering shoeboxes to children so that I could be part of the other end of the process and report back to you the impact they have!



And so, thousands of miles away, I suddenly found myself printing and laminating a picture of Bruce and Gregor with our car full of shoeboxes, so that I could show children the start of the process and tell of the love and generosity that sent boxes on their way, sharing the love of God that causes strangers to want to give them a gift.



Normally Open Bible staff deliver shoeboxes in January (Christmas is on 6 January, and shoeboxes are delivered either side of this). Due to heavy snowfall, however, a huge consignment had been held up and dropped off at the Open Bible office in Kiev at the start of February—just in time for our visit! I really felt God's hand on this timing, allowing us the privilege of being involved in deliveries as well as taking part in a youth weekend and leading youth Bible studies. It's a huge ministry: do pray for its impact! I learned lots.

**Fact 1: Delivering Shoeboxes is very hard work!**

The logistics are huge. Schools and clubs have to be contacted; a timetable drawn up. Shoeboxes arrive tightly packed into brown cardboard boxes, which have to be humped out of the Open Bible offices into a van, ready for the next day's delivery. I tried—and failed—to lift one. They are seriously heavy! They are packed according to age and sex, so a consignment needs to include boxes for girls and boys of every age group. I was impressed by the Ukrainian team: they worked tirelessly, in and out of the van, undeterred by snowbound roads. They literally travel thousands of miles, delivering boxes to remote villages, across a country which is bigger than the UK.



One day we left early, drove 3 hours, then went straight to Ploske village kindergarten, primary school and secondary school. Only after the last shoebox had been delivered did we even stop to think about food—and it was 3pm. I was struck by the amount of miles covered in one day, and the cost of fuel. One van had a cracked windscreen. Tima (pictured right, on the left) told me he bought his car at 145,000 miles and it has now done 260,000! They show incredible grit, determination and enthusiasm. Tima's boys, Lev (8) and Simeon (6), were also on the team as their school was shut because of flu. Not once did I hear either of them complain or whine about the long journey, lack of food, or whatever. At one point they didn't even have seats of their own in the van! They were equal partners, helpfully handing out boxes and setting up the venue.



## Fact 2: One gift for life

I had never really thought about how shoeboxes were distributed, so the above was a real eye-opener. Another discovery was the fact that shoeboxes are never given out to the same children twice. Open Bible's Oksana Khimich (who acts as a Russian translator for Samaritan's Purse) explained that the vision is for one gift to one child for life: in other words, one opportunity for one child to receive a gift and hear the good news of Jesus.



This makes the shoeboxes more of an impact, as children have no idea they are going to receive a gift, and there is no expectation that they will receive one again. Open Bible staff constantly seek new opportunities to go into schools and clubs: this was their first visit to each of the schools we visited, and they are given out regardless of whether children are poor or better off—it is about spreading God's love. Tots to teenagers are excited to get them, and in fact one Christian teenager was so overwhelmed by the gift that she returned the day before we left and gave me three boxes in return, sent with love to us!

## Fact 3: It's about a gospel opportunity

The Samaritan's Purse video communicates the fact that shoeboxes are gifts of love; however, what struck me was the powerful opportunity they give for our ministry partners to speak to children about Jesus—the greatest gift of all. In Ukraine Christians aren't allowed into schools to share faith, however shoeboxes provide open doors for the gospel. Alongside the shoebox each child receives a Samaritan's Purse booklet called "The Greatest Gift"; in addition some younger children were given a children's Bible supplied by another missionary organisation. Follow-up materials are available for children who are interested in finding out more. Schools are delighted to have the opportunity to have English speakers come in and speak to their pupils, so we were treated like celebrities and given the floor! We presented 10 Facts about Scotland, did a Gay Gordons, played "Nessie says" (like Simon says) and taught the children "Our God is a Great Big God".

I was then invited on as the speaker, to introduce why we were here and explain our involvement with the shoeboxes in Scotland. This was a tremendous privilege, and something I didn't foresee before I left home! Normally the Open Bible team speak at this point. As it was the week of Valentine's Day, I was able to base my talk on God's love shown in the gift of Jesus, and share John 3:16, "For God loved the world so much he gave his one and only son, so that whoever believes in him may not die but have everlasting life". Children sat attentively. In the secondary school, Ronan, one of the gap year, shared his testimony. He told the pupils that he came from a good home and had everything he could ever need, but that he had faced loneliness and emptiness inside, and been a 'bad boy' at school. He had come to know the love of Jesus at an SU camp and come to put his trust in him. For these children who might aspire to the west and all that our life offers, this message was very powerful. The head teacher came up and warmly embraced us, thanking us not only for the gifts, but for speaking to them about real life.

*Pictured is the secondary school assembly, which included some young mums with their babies.*



## Fact 4: Shoeboxes touch lives



It was fantastic to witness first-hand the impact of the gift of a shoebox! The laughter and excitement go on long after they are handed out. They definitely touch lives, and so do the booklets. One wee schoolboy sat and read through it, more interested in that than the box. One evening we handed out shoeboxes to teenagers from needy backgrounds. We heard the next day that one girl, not yet a Christian, had gone home and opened her box to find money inside equivalent to about 200 hryvnas (Ukrainian currency, about £7.50). She had been saving up for shoes, and guess how much she needed to get a pair? 200 hryvnas! This was a miracle, since all money is taken out of the shoeboxes to pay for transportation costs; there should have been no money inside at all. Add to this the fact that this particular box was given to *her*, and not the girl next to her, and you catch a glimpse of the amazing God we serve. Her non-Christian mum responded: "It is a miracle. Give thanks to God, Christina!" **Give thanks too, and pray that this girl and her mum come to know Jesus as a result.** Keep up the good work, Park!

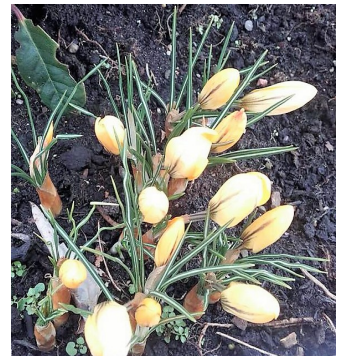
## Uddingston Pride Update



Last summer, we were approached by the parent of a disabled child to see if we could arrange the installation of a specially adapted swing in Crofthead Park, so that the little one could join in the fun with the other children. After some persuasion, the Council agreed and the swing will shortly be installed. The swing was funded by *Planning Gain* monies, held by the council for the benefit of the community, and this was accessed by us with the assistance of Councillor Maureen Devlin.

The Community Council and Uddingston Pride are working together to clear a derelict piece of ground at the David Milne Centre where flower containers and a seat will be established. The containers and seat are being made by the *Community Pay Back* team of SLC. This spot will also acknowledge the birthplace of John Wilkie who invented the Wilkie plough which revolutionised farming.

We have entered *Beautiful Scotland* again and hope to achieve Gold standard once more. The large black containers in the Main Street are needing some attention, as some of the little shrubs that were planted in them when they were first installed, are looking past their best. We plan to remove them and replace them with new plants in the Spring.



Crocuses at Powburn

We have been gifted some two hundred little trees by the Woodland Trust, and discussions will take place with the Council as to where we can plant them.

We are getting geared up for another busy year, and are looking forward to brightening up the village once again. We hope you will enjoy the results of our efforts.



### Dates for your Diary



- Our annual craft fayre will take place in Park Church from 6-9 June. All local crafters are encouraged to take a table at this event, to showcase their work and sell their wares. The tea room will be open as usual!
- Viewpark Allotment Gardens have been invited to join Scotland's Garden Scheme and will be open to the public on 5 August when we will be there supporting them. Afternoon teas will be available.

If you have any suggestions on how we might improve the village, or are interested in becoming involved with our group, give us a call on 01698 813539.

## Glasgow City Mission

We have received the following information from our friends at Glasgow City Mission, inviting us to take part in their annual **Big Arran Challenge** which will take place on Saturday 12 May 2018!



**Hike Goatfell, cycle round the island or do both! A great day out! It's ideal for individuals, groups of friends and church small groups with money raised used to provide practical Christian care for people experiencing homelessness and poverty here in Glasgow. Now in its 5th year, the event has grown from strength to strength, and has raised thousands of pounds for Glasgow's most needy! Ferry ticket, refreshments, hot showers and bike support crew provided. Sign up at [www.glasgowcitymission.com](http://www.glasgowcitymission.com) or call 0141 221 2630.**

**It would be fantastic to have a team from Park Church taking part this year — it's a great day out of fellowship for all involved!**



# Dates for the Diary

<p><b>4 March</b> <b>Communion Sunday</b></p>	<p><b>10.30am James Fisher from Release International</b> <b>6.30pm Bield Housing Service</b></p>	
<p><b>Thursday 8 March</b></p>	<p><b>7.30pm Safeguarding Training</b></p>	
<p><b>Palm Sunday 25 March</b></p>	<p><b>10.30am Welcome to the King</b> <b>6.30pm United Palm Praise</b> <b>St Andrew's Episcopal Church</b></p>	
<p><b>Wednesday 28 March</b></p>	<p><b>7.30pm Old Parish Church</b></p>	
<p><b>Maundy Thursday 29 March</b></p>	<p><b>Communion Service</b> <b>Park Church 7.30pm</b></p>	
<p><b>Good Friday 30 March</b></p>	<p><b>Park Church will be open for prayer and quiet reflection from 12 noon—3pm</b> <b>7.30pm Nazarene Church</b></p>	
<p><b>Easter Saturday</b></p>	<p><b>8.00am Open to God prayer time</b></p>	
	<p><b>10.30am All age Celebration</b> <b>A Celebration of Life with the Celebration Choir in Glasgow City Halls at 7.30pm</b></p>	
<p><b>Wednesday 11-Friday 13 April</b></p>	<p><b>Park Church Holiday Club</b></p>	



*There will be a coffee morning one Saturday in May in aid of the Easter Appeal for the UF Church which is supporting Scripture Union Camps.*

*On another Saturday in May we will host a seminar led by the Rev Douglas Nichol on the Ministry of Healing.*

*Dates to be confirmed!*





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