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Paisley Abbey History

by Margaret Cowie

Paisley Abbey is a parish church of the Church of Scotland located on the east bank of the White Cart river in the centre of the town of Paisley, about 12 miles (19 kilometres) west of Glasgow. The name Paisley may derive from the Brynothoonic (old Welsh) *Passeleg*, 'basilica' (derived from the Greek i.e. 'major church') recalling an early, though undocumented, ecclesiastical importance.

In 1163, Walter FitzAlan, the first High Steward of Scotland issued a charter for a priory to be set up on land owned by him in Paisley. The Office became hereditary and later became a surname (Stewart).

It was dedicated to Saints Mary, James, Milburga and Mirin. St Mirin was an Irish monk who had travelled to the West of Scotland, arriving in the area here Paisley now stands. There is a chapel within the Abbey dedicated to him continuing a frieze depicting his life. The local football club St. Mirren F.C. is named after him.

Around 13 monks came from the Cluniac priory at Much Wenlock in Shropshire to found the community. Paisley grew so rapidly that it was raised to the status of abbey in 1245. Monks from Paisley founded Crossraguel Abbey in Carrick, Ayrshire in 1244.

In 1307, Edward 1st of England had the abbey burned down. However, it was rebuilt later in the 14th century. William Wallace, born in nearby Elderslie, is

widely believed to have been educated for some time when he was a boy in the abbey.

In 1316, Marjorie Bruce, daughter of Robert 1st of Scotland and wife of Walter Stewart the 6th High Steward of Scotland, was out riding near the abbey. During the ride, she fell from her horse and as she was heavily pregnant at the time. She was taken to Paisley Abbey for medical care. There, King Robert 2nd was born by caesarean section, in a time when anaesthesia wouldn't have been available.

For that reason, the Abbey claims to be the “cradle of the Royal House of Stewart”. Our present Queen is descended from him. In fact, the Abbey is the final resting place of six High Stewards of Scotland, Princess Marjory Bruce, the wives of King Robert 2nd and King Robert 3rd for whose tomb, Queen Victoria provided a canopy in 1888.

In the 16th century, the central tower collapsed, destroying the choir and transepts beneath. A stone wall was built across the nave, truncating the original structure. The ruins were not fully restored until the early 20th century. The abbey was disbanded at the Reformation, and the nave of the abbey church became the parish church for the citizens of Paisley. Much of the current abbey building dates to the 15th-century restoration, but a very fine 12th-century processional doorway has survived from the early medieval building, as well as the 13th-century west doorway.



Living with Change

by Michael Clubb

There are lots of things in our lives that we take for granted and it is only when, we are suddenly deprived of one of them that we come to appreciate just how much we value them and miss them. (or the opposite of course!)

Because of Covid-19 none of us are able to go to a church. This has resulted in me for instance, considering how much I, as an octogenarian, actually value 'going to church'. To start with I quite enjoyed being released from the requirement of having to go to church because of certain responsibilities. Would it then be a disaster if the church was permanently no longer there? Would I be able to get what I was missing some other way? If I was missing anything at all that is!

It is not possible to consider all this without defining what 'church' is. We are taught that "a church is where the Lord is worshipped". So is it the bricks and mortar of a building with all the admin that goes with it that we miss, or is it the concept of being part of a spiritual 'movement', of being one with others in truth and faith from the Lord? Being part of the body of Christ as Paul chose to call it. Or is it an amalgam of these and other things. The Teachings of the New Church state: "the Lord's Church exists with each individual person in a state in which charity and faith received from the Lord are present. For an individual person is the Church, and the many with whom the Church exists compose the Church collectively." (AC8938) In today's world, we are being deprived of an aspect of our church life. Is it important and should we act positively and take advantage of what could be an opportunity to take stock? Over forty years ago the Rev. Brian Kingslake wrote a book called Out of this World, and he wrote this.

"There has been a healthy movement in recent years to get back to true Christianity stripped of all accessories, away from what is called 'ecclesiasticism', away from professionalism in the ministry and all the paraphernalia of organized religion. Christianity is essentially a layman's movement, a people's movement. Jesus himself was a layman, in contrast to the professional Scribes and Pharisees; so were the early disciples and apostles. The present drift away from the churches - loss of members, empty theological colleges - is largely a reaction against a religion tied to an Establishment, with elaborate church buildings, an ordained clergy, a choir, and so on - all utterly irrelevant, it would seem, to everyday 20th century life."

He goes on: *"What are we to do then? Scrap all our churches, abolish the ministry, and go back to the Book of Acts, concentrating on lay-led meetings in one another's homes? This could be good, and we may come to this when the world is more spiritually advanced than it is today. I can foresee that this will be what Christianity*

will look like in say, a hundred years time. Every vital spiritual movement in the world today seems to be working in that direction, towards a New Jerusalem with no temple therein, but with the Lord's Divine Humanity as the tabernacle of God with man."

Pretty radical stuff for the 1970s, yet forty years on into Brian's hundred, what he wrote is not out of kilter with what is becoming reality in our church today. For some people, this trend may go a little against the grain when they see what has been loved and worked for, for many years, having a doubtful future? But if we remain in what is called the externals of the church, that is focussing solely on keeping buildings open and in good condition, we are missing the point and risk not being part of the wonderful new church that the Lord is growing. We should still value the external, but only for the internal it can bring. So don't go scrapping our churches yet! As we come up of against change, some of which seems to be being forced upon us, one way or another, our personal concept of what constitutes a church becomes all important. In Ephesians 4, Paul writes "I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received. Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love." We need the humility to accept that our ways are not necessarily the Lord's ways, and that our comfort zones could be barriers to the growth of the real church. We need to have the confidence to follow His lead and value it. Jesus said: "Put your trust in the light while you have it, so that you may become sons of light".

Suggestions For The First Sunday After Easter

by Revd John Elliott

Passages from the Word

Psalm 95

and/or Micah 6:6-8

Matthew 28:16-20

John 20:19-29

The Teachings of the New Church

The Lord said to Thomas,

Because you have seen Me, Thomas, you have believed. Blessed are those who do not see, yet believe. John 20:29.

By these words is not meant faith separate from an inward acceptance of truth; their meaning is, rather, that they are blessed who do not see the Lord with their eyes as Thomas did, and yet they believe that He exists, for they see this to be so in the light of truth that flows from the Word.

Paragraph 10 of **Teaching concerning Faith** pub 2019 tr John Elliott

See also **Arcana Coelestia** 5508, 8078, 10083

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Hymns

136 Good Christians all, rejoice and sing tune *Vulpinus* metre 8 8 8 6

211 Jesus shall reign tune *Truro* LM

Prayers

We praise You, O Lord, and magnify Your holy name, because You took upon Yourself a body of flesh and blood, to manifest Your power and to redeem and save the lost; and we pray, O Lord, that you confirm and establish Your work in people's hearts that Your kingdom may prevail on earth and endure for ever.

O Lord, our Redeemer and Saviour, who in Your infinite mercy did overcome death and hell for us, we beseech You to lead us to fulfil Your redemption in our lives by taking up our cross daily and following You in a life of repentance; strengthen our purpose to put away everything that defiles, or works abomination, or makes a lie; lead us to renounce the lusts of self and the world that we may become worthy of Your kingdom, and give glory to You in a life of eternal use,

O Jesus Christ our Lord, help us to love one another as You have loved us, to be merciful as You are merciful, to forgive as You have forgiven, that we may follow You all the days of our life.

Liturgy for the use of the General Church of the New Jerusalem

(revised edition 1995)