

Dear friends, members and partners of The Mission,
Welcome to our August prayer / newsletter. I trust you remain upbeat about life in general and Jesus in particular, and I trust that you are not allowing the pandemic to rob you of the joy that the scriptures promise to us.

This is now week 20 of Lockdown and as a congregation we still have many things to be thankful for. We can join together to offer our praises to the Lord for his unfailing love and faithfulness towards us during our 'Immerse the Mission in Prayer' meeting for the month of August - which will be held via ZOOM at 7pm on Wednesday 5th August. During this time we will also remember the work of Scripture Union in our prayers. SU will be our Mission of the Month for August.

The SU office for the north east of Scotland and local staff are housed in the Mission premises and I'm confident that they will wish to return to their desks soon so that they can continue with their very important and education-enhancing mission. With the schools expected to return on Tuesday 11th August I would be grateful not only for prayer for SU but for all the outreaches to children which the Mission is involved with. These are SAMS, NESYFC and School Pastors.

When we ask ourselves the question 'What is the church?', we can think of many different answers. There are many biblical descriptions like the bride of Christ, a holy temple, the body of Christ, the people of God etc. - all of which are wonderful and true. There are also historical and doctrinal answers, which are helpful too. Back in AD 325 a Council in Nicea developed a statement about Church which was affirmed by another Council in Constantinople in AD 381. The statement says 'We believe in one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church.' For several reasons I have been reminded of, and challenged by, the second of these marks recently - the characteristic of holiness! I have been examining myself and reading about holiness both in the Bible and in a book entitled 'Holiness' by JC Ryle who was a 19th century Bishop of Liverpool. The book deals with the Roots, Nature, Difficulties and Hindrances of Holiness. I commend it to you!

Holiness is a very desirable mark of The Lord's people which can make us feel uneasy sometimes. In Leviticus 19 v 2 The Lord calls the community to 'be Holy because I, the Lord your God, am Holy.' In John 6 v 69 Peter calls Jesus, 'The Holy one of God'. We also refer to the Spirit of Jesus as the 'Holy Spirit' and the bible as the 'Holy Scriptures'. My prayer is that we would move from a sense of uneasiness about the term 'holiness' to embracing the term enthusiastically and becoming a holy, separate, distinctive, loyal and righteous people in our increasingly secular age. Then we will be enabled to stand apart and offer an attractive, different, consistent and winsome message in our witness to the world.

Snippets;

Following much soul-searching and prayer, and for very commendable reasons, Hugh Mackenzie has resigned as one of our Deacons. We wish to thank Hugh, Stephanie, Sarah, Emily and Peter for the blessing they have been to our congregation in so many ways and to wish them well with the future responsibilities they will assume in their local congregation in Alford. We will mark this with an appropriate presentation and prayer for them at a suitable time.

Operation World is an exceptional organisation and I have been privileged to have met and shared ministry with its founder Patrick Johnstone. I frequently encourage people to purchase and use their 'Pray for the World' daily guide. Recently they produced a fascinating and timely paper entitled 'Global Transmission, Global Mission: The impact and Implications of the Covid19 Pandemic for Mission'. I am looking forward to sharing the content of this report with any interested people soon.

Many of us enjoy the praise music of Keith and Kirsten Getty - known as the Getties. We have been invited to join them for the 'Sing! Global 2020' project, which will run from Sunday 30th August to Wednesday 2nd September. It promises to be a very special time and more information can be found on their website.

Matters for prayer carried over from June/July:

We have begun a new and exciting teaching series on Sunday mornings called 'Face to Face Encounters with Jesus from Mark's Gospel'. I trust that you are enjoying listening to our messages as much as we enjoy sharing them. Please pray for any visitors who may be dipping into our online services that they too would have a 'Facetime' with Jesus. During our Wednesday evening prayer times we will consolidate Sunday's teaching by considering a few related questions. This should help to deepen our appreciation of the message.

During the summer we prayed for and provided gifts for our Missions of the months of June and July - namely Dochas and MAF. We have personal connections with both of these organisations and one of my own responsibilities is to encourage prayer for Dochas. I have been involved with their work since its beginning and, after ten precious years, it seems to me that Dochas needs more prayer than ever. The present pandemic crisis creates many challenges and there is a need for much prayer and wisdom for Dochas' future plans - including the provision of an education hub in Malawi. Please continue to pray for Dochas!

We all enjoyed having Andy Martin the manager of MAF Scotland join us for one of our ZOOM prayer times. We were captivated by his presentation, and the work of MAF will continue to be part of our prayer and practical interest.

Dates for your diaries and prayers:

Tues 04 Aug 9 30 am Local pastors and church leaders meeting via ZOOM
7 00 pm Mission leaders meeting
Wed 05 Aug 7 00 pm 'Immerse the Mission in Prayer' meeting for the month of August via ZOOM
Sun 09 Aug 11 00 am Family online service via Facebook live followed by picnic in the garden at 1pm
Tues 11 Aug Schools return
Fri 21 Aug 7 30 pm City-wide prayer gathering, to be hosted by The Mission

During these difficult and demanding days, someone posed three questions to me, which are worthy of our attention and prayers, I hope that you will be as challenged by them as I was:

1. Is this season changing you inside - as you can only change the outer if you change the inner?
2. Is there anything that you are learning to do differently, especially in the way that you relate to others?
3. What do you need to do to follow Jesus more effectively at this time?

Anne and I read the following encouraging promise this morning as we read the Word together - 'Build up, Build up the road, remove any obstacles out of the way of my people. For this is what the high and lofty one says, he who lives forever, whose name is holy, I live in a high and holy place but also with him who is contrite and lowly in spirit, to revive the spirit of the lowly and to revive the heart of the contrite.' Isaiah 57 v 14 + 15.

With warmest blessings and best wishes,
Hector, on behalf of the Elders.

You're invited!

Join us every

Sunday at 11am on



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