

**ST. ANDREWS UNITED REFORMED CHURCH**

**Upper Hanover Street, Sheffield, S3 7RQ**

# **MESSENGER**

Price £1.25

September 2020



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## **PROVIDENCE - A FURTHER PANDEMIC REFLECTION**

*Many thanks to Revd Dr Walter Houston for this reflection which he wrote for our website service.*

Readings drawn on: Genesis 45:1–15; Romans 11:1–2a, 29–33; Matthew 15:21–28.

We start with the story of Joseph. Joseph was his father's favourite son, and made his brothers jealous. They almost killed him but finally sold him into slavery in Egypt. There, because of his amazing ability to interpret dreams, he attracted the favour of the Pharaoh, rose to a high position, and saved the country from famine. When his brothers come to beg food, they don't recognise him but he knows them and, after stringing them along, he makes himself known to them and is reconciled.

He obviously needs to reassure them that they are not going to suffer any further for that ancient crime against him. And so he says {verse 8}: 'It was not you who sent me here, but God, and he has made me father to Pharaoh, master of his whole household, and ruler of all Egypt.'

He goes on to explain that the famine is going to continue for another five years, and it is only because he is in Egypt and has reached this high position that he is able to keep his own family alive. So this is what God intended all along. 'It was not you who sent me here, but God.' Into those ten words (seven in Hebrew), Joseph condenses the heart of our faith in *providence*. This is the faith that God rules and overrules all that we do, guiding events so that they may in the end turn out for the best.

Now let's be clear about what Joseph is saying, and about what he is not saying. He is not saying that his brothers have just been puppets on a string, not responsible for their actions. This is clear from what he says later, after Jacob's death, when his brothers get into a tizz and plead with him not to take revenge now their father is dead. He reassures them again, and says (Gen 50:20), 'You meant to do me harm, but God meant it for good.' The brothers *were* responsible for what they did: they decided first to kill Joseph, then to put him in a pit, and eventually they sold him. They knew what they were doing; God didn't make them do it. But at the same time, in and through what the brothers were doing, God was working out his own purpose, to save the family to become his people (and saving millions of Egyptians at the same time).

And he is not saying that if you decide to do something, God can stop you doing it. What he is saying is that if human beings decide to do something bad, God may work through that to bring good out of it. God's providence works through the decisions of human beings. God's wisdom works through our folly. God's love works through our hate.

This is not an easy faith to have, since there is so much that goes on in the world that appears to contradict it. We could ask, 'If there is providence, why have 736,000 people in the world died of Covid-19 (as of Tuesday 11<sup>th</sup> August)?'

The question here is not 'Could God have stopped these people dying?' or even 'Should God have stopped these people dying?' And let's not forget that although the virus is a natural agent that works blindly and automatically, the vast majority of these deaths could have been prevented if certain human beings—I'm naming no names!—had acted differently, and even the original emergence of the virus was the result of foolish and dangerous human actions. The question is rather, 'Has God all along been intending some good to come out of this evil?' and '*Has* (or will) some good come out of this evil?'

Now, I want to answer yes to that question. But I must check my privilege. I am comfortably protected and in little danger of contracting a disease which is often fatal for people of my age. But I am aware that for every one of those 736,000 people and counting, not to mention millions who have recovered but have been left with permanently damaged health, the pandemic has been a disaster. And uncounted millions more are losing their jobs and cannot tell what to look forward to, and who may well lose their homes as well. Schoolchildren have lost a term's education, and during the lockdown many younger people have suffered from loneliness or boredom. And everybody has been missing their families, some miserably. So it may seem insulting to say 'Out of this evil good may come'—insulting certainly to those 736,000 who are never again going to see any good in this world.

But I do believe simply this: that from the pandemic and the lockdown, particularly the lockdown, we, by which I suppose I mean comfortable people in this western world, may learn something that God has been longing to teach us for decades: that most of what we spend our money on, and our time chasing, just isn't important. We may have missed our exciting overseas holidays, or our evenings out, or the excitement of shopping in real shops, or had to put back the purchase of a new car, or missed the matches of our favourite football or cricket team, or been desperate for a visit to our hairdresser—but we haven't died or even been ill because of *that*. These things are not essential, and we have found how to distinguish between what is essential and what is not. We are still here, God be praised, we have found out how we can live without many things we thought we needed. We may even have discovered how much more valuable and important the life of the spirit is than material things. Certainly, churches have reported that more people have logged on to their online services than were coming a few months ago to services in church.

If we have been paying attention, we may have learnt to live life more simply, greener. The air in April and May was cleaner because of the lack of pollution; people began to value an hour's exercise in the open air rather than in a stuffy gym; people have begun to talk about 'building back better', 'building back greener'. Can we *really* do this? Will the pandemic finally prod us into making those changes in our material lives, that radical stripping down and simplification that we should have started working on twenty years ago?

In thinking about providence, we have looked at human evil or foolishness: Joseph's brothers selling him into slavery, government actions or inactions which failed to stop the virus in its tracks; and we have looked at God's wise intention working through that, to save Jacob and his family, to bring us to think of a greener world. But there is a third aspect, and that is how we *respond* to God's providence. God still doesn't *make* us do anything.

Will Joseph's brothers accept their forgiveness, bring their father to Egypt and settle in the land? They do, but we must read further on in the story to find out: it is not a given.

Will we do what God is prodding us to do? Will we organise things fairly and equally so that the effects of losing some aspects of life for a time are evenly spread and everyone still has work to do or money to support them, and then those who have lost the jobs that have ceased to exist can move into the massive project of creating a totally non-carbon-based economy?

Our Gospel reading introduces us to another providential situation. Here is this desperate woman with her mentally ill daughter – 'tormented by a demon' is the way she and the people of her time look at it. She needs someone, anyone, who is willing and capable of healing. It seems at first that Jesus doesn't want to know.

And this makes this whole story puzzling, embarrassing even, for Christians. We don't want to think of our dear Lord being exclusive and xenophobic and actually offensive. Has Matthew got it wrong? – and Mark before him, who wrote the story first (Mark 7:24–30)? This is one of the hardest texts in the Bible. Before going back to the doctrine of providence, I need to try to explain this passage as honestly as I can.

First, Jesus has a clear conception of his mission, which will apply until his resurrection, in fact up to Pentecost. 'I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.' His mission is to bring Israel back to God's great project of the kingdom. After that, if he is successful, there will be time for the project to be opened out to all the world. Paul in our Epistle reading, writing after Pentecost and after the relative failure of the mission to the Jews, has a different idea of the Christian mission: the Gentiles will be converted first, and then the Jews in envy of the Gentiles.

That answer won't satisfy you much, and rightly so. Doesn't this woman need (if she doesn't deserve) his compassion as much as any Jew, whatever theory of mission you take up? But Jesus was in Canaanite territory only because he needed a break! After all, he was human, and a life of constant preaching and healing was exhausting. Jesus was human, and here we get to the theological heart of it. A strong tradition holds that Jesus as the Son of God always knew everything and behaved perfectly. If so, then the only sense one can make of Jesus' answer is that he was testing the strength of the woman's faith, and that is how many people solve the problem. But that doesn't make his words any less offensive.

There is another approach which I think makes more sense of the Gospels, that being human Jesus was capable of learning, he moved on from one position to another. But being the Son of God, he was capable of finally embracing the full meaning of his mission on the Cross. So, he begins with this seemingly terribly offensive brush-off, which was in line with his idea of his mission and with the way Jews saw Gentiles. 'It is not good to take the children's bread and throw it to the dogs.' But the woman was able to give as good as she got. And at that point Jesus learns something: that a Canaanite woman can have faith, can share the children's bread. He is so taken with the woman's sharp wit that he yields, and the girl is delivered from her agony.

So God's intention was fulfilled, that healing should take place and the area prepared for the Christian mission that was to take place in a few years' time: because both the woman and Jesus responded to the providential situation.

So, will we respond to the terrible blow of the pandemic with faith and hope, or just look backward to what we call normal? We have yet to see. There is time yet, but there is a lot to make us wonder and be concerned. But because we believe in the promises of God, we can be hopeful, though we can never know how his providence works.

'O the depth of the wealth and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments, and how untraceable his paths!' (Romans 11:33).

## FAMILY NEWS

**New arrival! Sarah and Tom Collins** (nee Cousley) had a baby boy on 6 September, Owen, 8lbs 8oz, a brother for Rory. Congratulations, blessings and all good wishes.

**Ann Cathels** is doing remarkably well at home now and says she had a very good experience in the Northern General. She celebrates her 96<sup>th</sup> birthday on 20 September. **Dorothy Adam** had her 93rd birthday on 1<sup>st</sup> September, and **Jean Dickson** celebrated her 86<sup>th</sup> in a family gathering at Loch Melfort.

Congratulations to **Iain Millington** who has gained a first-class degree in Engineering at the University of Sheffield. We greatly enjoyed his presence with us during his student years and send him all good wishes in his career. See his article on page 10.

**Stuart Haxton** is one of the few members who is still at work, and really enjoys his job as concierge at a student hostel. New students are arriving now - all change! **Suzanne Westran's** spare room is stacked with the paper flowers and other decorations she hand-made for her son's wedding; the happy couple did get married but the big wedding reception had to be cancelled. They send greetings to everyone. **Barbara Macmillan**, who loves being active, has bought a wonderful folding electric bike! **Bill Smyllie**, like many of us, is beginning to venture out a little more. We are a resilient lot and most members, albeit frustrated, are coping well with the restrictions.

Unfortunately, not all our members are doing so well. **Sadie Jones** had a night in the Northern General for fluid around the heart and felt the better of that, although she still suffers a variety of pains. **Wilma Love** does not have full use of her right arm, which is frustrating as well as painful. She will not be allowed to drive before next May so she and Alistair do not get out but have help and are coping.

**Fraser McVittie** is home now with carers four times a day; the physiotherapy at Northfield House was some help with his mobility. Sadly, **Anita** has moved into St Luke's where she is very comfortable and receiving excellent care. She can have one visitor per day but it is so sad that she and Fraser cannot be together at this time. We keep them in our prayers.

We can think and pray for each other although distanced, and we ask for patience, comfort and support through these strange and difficult times. We send greetings and good wishes to all our members and friends. We remember and long to see you again.

## NEWS OF FORMER MEMBERS

**Robert Beard** sends love and best wishes to everyone.

Greetings and good wishes from **Peter Gray** and family in Melbourne, Australia. See page 13.

**Small world: Pat Thomas** now lives in Tilehurst, Reading, near her daughter Margaret and family. Pat attends a nearby Methodist church where the minister is the Revd Andy Moffoot - who used to be minister at Nether Edge Methodist in Sheffield.

**Isabel Winning** moved to a care home near her daughter Rhoda and granddaughters in Nottingham. Ray and Kathleen Smyth keep in touch with Isabel's sister Kathy in Oban (age 98), and can report that Isabel is well and "firing on all cylinders"!

**Margaret and Ian Strachan**, who now live in Blargowrie, celebrated their Diamond Wedding on September 10th. Congratulations and all good wishes! They were married in St Columba Presbyterian Church in Worthing, Sussex. It will not be the celebration they had originally planned but they are going to have a family party at home, which all the grandchildren are planning to attend. They are keeping well, apart from Ian's heart problems, and send their best wishes.

**Message from Indonesia: Billy Aryanto**, who sang in the choir while he was studying here, was due to come back to Sheffield in September to take a PhD in Psychology - a 4-year programme. Now he writes: "Due to the pandemic, I will start my study remotely this October. If conditions are conducive, I will arrive at Sheffield early next year. The university asked me to arrive before March 2021.

"I understand it is hard for the church to open because of COVID-19. Here in Indonesia, we are doing online worship every Sunday. I hope the condition in the UK will be better so that the church can be opened with all health protocol and preventive measures. I will be happy to join the choir if the church is opened and I am at Sheffield.

Say hi from me to everyone in St. Andrew's Church. God bless you."

## RE-OPENING

A simple survey was sent to all members to ascertain their feelings about resuming our worship in the church. On the basis of the replies, very few members feel confident to return yet. Age and health conditions give a high risk level, and the progress of the coronavirus is uncertain but still significant. All the advice from government, Synod and other sources emphasises caution, and the requirements for maintaining the safety of the building would be quite onerous. So we shall not be resuming our services for the foreseeable future.

In the meantime, we are finding other sources of worship - not the same but offering support in their own way. We can tune in to the Sheffield Team Zoom services at 10.30am every Sunday, or to the URC online service, or to the splendid musical service that Douglas compiles for our own website, or to other churches with friends.

## **SYNOD / URC NEWS**

All Synod events will be online until the end of this year.

On 5 September the Rev Jamie Kissack was inducted as Yorkshire Synod Moderator. It was a very nice service on Zoom, conducted by the Revd Clare Downing, recently installed as co-Moderator of the URC General Assembly. St Andrew's remembers Jamie and Fran well from their student days and sends them blessings and all good wishes.

On **September 12th** Synod hosted a "Yorkshire Synod Café", where everyone was invited to join in to discuss issues that affect us, and these issues will then be fed into the Autumn Synod on **October 10<sup>th</sup>**. Synod will gather online to meet in fellowship, to do the business of Synod and most importantly to worship together.

On **September 13th**, the Revd John Bradbury, General Secretary of the URC, and Steve Tomkins, Editor of *Reform* featured on ***Songs of Praise on BBC One at 1.15pm***. The episode focussed on the journey of the Mayflower, the English ship which took Puritans, known as the Pilgrim Fathers, from Europe to the New World, 400 years ago. Stephen Tomkins is the author of *Journey to the Mayflower: God's Outlaws and the Invention of Freedom*.

## **P C N**

The Progressive Christianity Network (PCN Britain) has commissioned 5 short films with big challenges for religious faith. Adrian Alker is the Chair of the PCN and the quarterly newsletter can be recommended as a stimulating read.

You can view the films here: <https://madeofstories.uk>

## **STARTER PACKS**

Earlier this year I took over the Starter Pack scheme from Judith Adam who had worked tirelessly with the scheme for many years.

I have spoken to St Vincent's who receive the majority of the packs and they would like some more. They usually get 7 out of the 10 that are made up each time. We keep 3 in the church in case of any requests.

As we have not had a communion service at Easter or July when we make a charitable donation, I am asking if anyone would like to contribute to the fund so that I can go ahead and order the packs. They are £75 each and I would like to make up ten. Thanks to your generosity at Christmas I have £439 in the bank at present so any contribution would be gratefully received. Cheques should be made payable to The Starter Pack, and sent to me as I have a Pay-in book for the account. I will put in a bid to the Church Burgesses for a grant in October.



## WHAT WE DID IN THE SUMMER HOLIDAYS

Here's what Connor Fall did - helping Uncle Dan replace faulty blocks in the Church floor.



## SAVE PONDS FORGE

On Friday 21 August many young people across the city took part in a campaign aiming to raise awareness of the detrimental effect of keeping Ponds Forge closed. Ponds Forge will be closed for an indefinite period due to its high running costs and reliance on hosting events. However, this leaves the city's swimmers, divers and water polo players without a proper facility to train in, after already nearly 6 months out of the water. Water polo is played in a 'double deep' pool, meaning that training usually takes place in the diving pit. It is hoped by publicising the impact that this has on Sheffield Sport, more focus will be placed on how Sheffield City Trust can work with the local swimming, diving and water polo clubs to keep the diving pit open for training, until such time as the centre can be fully reopened.



Zach and Theo Wheat are members of the City of Sheffield Water Polo Club's children's section and took part in the Facebook campaign. A very active public campaign is currently being waged on all fronts to save this vital part of Sheffield's 'City of Sport' facilities.

## MY EXPERIENCE OF LOCKDOWN

In January, I was looking forward to an exciting year, including graduating, possibly line umpiring at Wimbledon for the first time and starting work. However, lockdown seriously changed the summer I had hoped for.

I started lockdown in the fortunate position of having a dissertation to focus on. Additionally, there was no need to change the topic or methodology as it could be completed on my laptop. By producing a database of rock avalanches on 9 different extra-terrestrial bodies, I showed that the strength of gravity has no influence on the distance landslides travel. In contrast, course mates had to adapt their projects to overcome a lack of access to laboratory equipment.

The lockdown also prevented university societies from meeting and the Scouts and Guides society had to postpone the ball we had been planning for our national organisation. Originally, it would have taken place in early April at the Kelham Island Museum but we are looking forward to the new date in January. Instead I spent more time with my housemates and got to know them a lot better. Following our dissertation submissions, we celebrated completing our degrees and my housemate's birthday with a "party" of four.

Upon returning home, I have taken up running again, played tennis and read a lot. On 22<sup>nd</sup> July, the day I was supposed to have my graduation ceremony, I received my results, a first-class degree. I am extremely pleased to have seen my hard work over four years pay off.

Due to the coronavirus I have started working earlier than originally planned for Taylor Woodrow on HS2. I am again fortunate as most students have graduated without a job and many who do have a position have had their start delayed to the new year.

I am leaving Sheffield in the most unusual circumstances but will always remember St Andrew's. I would like to thank everyone for the welcoming atmosphere and the support I have received over the past four years.

*Iain Millington*

## VULTURE UPDATE

Since I saw her passing over Sheffield in early July, I have been fascinated by the appearances of this rare bird, never before seen in these parts. It is in her nature to wander, so it is all the more surprising that she has stayed here so long and survived so long. Bird enthusiasts were fearful that she might become a target for farmers or gamekeepers even though she does not prey on their birds or animals.

The experts seem divided on whether she originated in the Alps or the Pyrenees but seem to agree that our bearded vulture is a 2-year-old female. This year her travels stretched right across a huge swathe of western Europe, and just before arriving in UK, she had been seen in the Channel Islands and in Holland and Belgium. She is also a very attractive bird and not at all like the long necked hungry looking vultures we see on television nature programmes.

Her northern stay started in the Peak District, where she drew crowds of admirers to Howden Reservoir. There is some wonderful footage on various birding sites of her flying around Derbyshire, which she seems to do with the minimum of effort. A mere twitch of her wings and she is changing direction, swooping down, then rising or appearing to float sideways on currents of air.

A couple of weeks ago, she decided on a change of scene and has been roosting near Crowden Reservoir on the Woodhead Road, information that I find online using Bird Guides site. Yesterday I decided to go across in the hope of seeing her again. At the first car park, I found a couple of birders, binoculars at the ready, so I parked nearby and studied the horizon. Not a sign of her. Losing concentration for a moment, I started to study the map to see where I might get a better view when one of the watchers came tapping urgently on the car window. 'Did you see it? It was over on that hilltop.' Of course, I didn't and I had missed her. I waited for a while longer but it was getting dark and starting to rain, so I reckoned that any sensible bird would find shelter. I'll find her another day.

*Monica Hanna*



## WORDSWORTH FOR PENSIONERS

I wandered lonely as a cloud  
Two metres from the madding crowd  
When all at once my name was called  
To enter Waitrose hallowed hall.

This was the pensioners' special hour.  
I'd gone to get a bag of flour.  
But I forgot, when through the door,  
What I had gone to Waitrose for.

The Waitrose staff are extra kind.  
I told them it had slipped my mind.  
They asked what else I had forgot;  
They clearly thought I'd lost the plot.

I phoned my wife again to ask.  
She reminded me of this special task:  
"I need some flour to bake a cake  
With all that cream you made me take."

"Ah yes, I recall," I had to lie.  
I dared not ask what flower to buy  
But then I saw them next the tills -  
A bunch of golden daffodils!

## FOODHALL

*As of 1<sup>st</sup> August when we shifted emphasis back to bringing people together, since the start of our COVID-19 response **we have fed 13,701 people, prepared 22,436 meals, and delivered 2,757 food parcels** from S1 to S62. We've distributed enough food to feed a single person 3 meals a day for 121.5 years.*

Foodhall is (usually) a community centre/cafe/venue/workshop space that tackles food insecurity, food waste, social inequality, and social isolation by bringing everyone together to share. We do this primarily by serving communal meals on a contribute-what-you-can basis, so anyone can access food, company, and community, and everyone can give something back. We believe that everyone has a universal right to good food. Once people are brought together through food, we build platforms for community members to develop their own projects at Foodhall, and so host a range of activities and events alongside our cafe, including film screenings, live music and DJ nights, a community garden, bike repair classes, pottery studio, and more.

Obviously this is tremendously difficult right now. We suspended all usual activity at the start of the coronavirus outbreak, and shifted our focus to the provision of emergency food parcels across the city. We set up a telephone helpline where anyone could call and request a food parcel; we bulk cooked, portioned and froze tasty meals, distributing them alongside long-life goods and other store-cupboard essentials, and delivered them city-wide with a fleet of volunteer cyclists and drivers. We also continued to offer food parcels for collection from our space for members of our community who don't have access to a phone, or didn't have an address to deliver to. As of 31st July we've fed over 13,000 people city-wide.

We have our own premises on Eyre Street with a kitchen that was used to cooking for up to 40 people on a cafe day or maybe 100+ at a popular event, so we were not meeting demand. When St Andrews very kindly stepped in with an offer for us to use their kitchen 3 days a week. we were able to ramp up our output. At St Andrews we cooked nearly 5,000 meals that we wouldn't otherwise have been able to source and distribute, for which we are truly thankful.

These efforts are being replicated around the country through the National Food Service. The NFS (founded in 2018) is a nation-wide network of social eating spaces and alternative food projects. We are not asking the state to one day build a national food service, we are building one now and showing that it's possible. We now have community-led organisations from Falmouth to Glasgow. We share advice and resources so that groups have support from the start. During this crisis 3 million people are going hungry, and it has largely fallen to community-led organisations such as the ones in the NFS to feed them.

As infection has fallen back and society opens up again, we have transitioned back to social eating by purchasing a gazebo and inviting people to eat a socially distanced hot meal in our car park at Eyre Street. We have moved to making deliveries twice a week instead of 6 days and we are focussing more on prepared meals. We are also distributing the surplus food that even in these times still is produced in abundance by our industrial food system.

We have an open crowdfunder which is the easiest way of donating to the project at the moment.

<https://www.crowdfunder.co.uk/foodhall-project-covid-19-emergency-food-support>

Foodhall's premises are at 121 Eyre Street, though the entrance is a short way down Matilda Street. We are currently open from 11am to 2pm Tuesday to Friday, serving hot drinks, snacks and a hot meal on a contribute what you can basis.

*Bevan Lal*

## AN INVESTIGATION IN OUR ARCHIVES

St Andrew's Sheffield has been remarkably good at keeping records of our history and these are slowly growing into a large and somewhat organised archival collection housed on the balcony of the Church. After almost 170 years they are quite extensive and all need to be housed and catalogued. Some have been faithfully kept together over the years, like Messengers, while others arrive in paper bags and bundles as houses are cleared out and attics searched.

Victor Li during his time with us set up a system which allows each document or file to be catalogued, and to date there are 21 sections with just under 800 documents or files. In addition all Church Messengers are stored in boxes spanning 10 years. An important collection is the Peoples File where anything I find about an individual or family is stored together. So if you think you would like your family to be remembered please send me something ... how you came to Sheffield, or St Andrews, or events that occurred in your family. As an example I have put in the baptism service conducted by Rev Sarah Hall for my grandson Connor. I also file all funeral service details.

Every so often the Church receives an enquiry about someone and I enjoy searching for their past details. One such came recently from PETER GRAY who is the Principal at Caulfield Primary School, Melbourne, Australia, and whose grandfather was one of our early ministers. I set to and here is an abbreviated piece from the document about his grandfather which I sent to Peter. An immediate response from Peter informed us that we had his name wrong...in the small history of the Church his middle name is LYON and it should be LYONS. In the following piece, direct extracts from the Messenger are in quotes.

The Rev Samuel Lyons McKenzie was our third Minister following on from a 28-year long ministry by the Rev W Harcus, MA. On 19th July 1914 Rev S.L.McKenzie, BA. College Park, London, preached as Pulpit supply and a meeting with the Selection Committee followed immediately.



It is recorded: "In its wisdom the committee consider that the hearing of candidates should cease, being of the opinion that the right man has come amongst us...and has resolved to recommend to the congregation the name of the Rev S.McKenzie... as our future minister. Mr McKenzie has apparently completely captivated all who heard him. Such was the enthusiasm of the committee that every member voted for him...and the unanimity of the vote was recognised by a hearty round of applause."

Mr McKenzie came from County Down, Northern Ireland. He studied at Queen's and Assembly's College, Belfast, where he received a number of scholarships and other distinctions. His B.A. degree was obtained in the Royal University of Ireland. In Bangor the Christian Workers' Society attracted him. He was a musician and vocalist of considerable ability and succeeded a still more talented brother as precentor in the church of which he was then a member, Hamilton Road Presbyterian. His life's work commenced as an assistant to the Rev William Corkey M.A. in Townhead Street Presbyterian Church, Belfast; then he came to London as an assistant to the Rev W.S. Hertbert Wylie M.A., St Andrew's, Ealing. He was ordained in 1911.

Detailed planning went into his induction ceremony in St Andrew's with his first service planned for Sunday Nov 15<sup>th</sup> 1914. However, the induction did not go as planned . . . He arrived late "through the exigencies of war". The programme was rearranged and "started at 7pm with a full church..... Mrs Watson presented the pulpit robes and hood ... and Mrs Bessie Harcus – of the third generation- presented a pulpit copy of Church Praise, which act brought its own well merited reward, the first ministerial kiss – in Sheffield."

So his ministry started while living at 33 Endcliffe Rise Road. He was well liked in the church. "His sermons, ever full of evangelical fervour, always left a ray of hope and comfort which the weary and soul-hungry could carry home, and . . they lifted and upheld many who deeply felt . . his departure. In the mid-week service, Mr Mackenzie was always at his best. . . He was conspicuously a young people's man, and his homely weekly portions for the little ones were indeed a rich treat - alike enjoyed by those of mature age. . . He left for his successor a rich legacy of young people who, under war age, more especially female, had grown up during his five years' ministry." He started a children's page in the Messenger and then became the Editor. Also "During his ministry here . . (he) was instrumental in very largely reducing our church debt".

But his ministry was dominated by the Great War . . "a time of severe trial . . Unprecedented in its magnitude and its call on the young manhood of the nations, it was reflected in many unlooked for ways in the life of our churches." In May 2015 Rev S.L. McKenzie was appointed chaplain to the Presbyterian Troops in Sheffield. He was required to visit the barracks and wounded soldiers in various hospitals. Provision was made in Sheffield for 5,000 military beds. Clearly the soldiers were welcomed into the church and

a social was held for 80 of those about to leave and the minister reminded them “we would not forget them in their days of strenuous uncertainty which lay before them...”

By September he was writing “War- sentiment is never far away from any one of us just now. We think war, we talk war, we see on every hand evidences of war.” By 1916 war reports and accounts of injuries and deaths mount up. More soldiers to be visited in hospitals, leaving the minister conscious that his church visiting was falling behind. Each November we still remember the fallen in WW1 so the names are familiar to us. The monthly accounts of missing, injured and dead from Church families make grim reading: alongside are accounts of promotions of some of our young men.

By April 1917 war is still raging, but there is a hope growing of a better future. At home the social side of the church is changing with plans for more activities for everyone to join in with and new faces are being seen in services. Every month is still reporting deaths of young men from the congregation. By November the minister records that three years has passed with high hopes for his ministry but goes on to say “ these hopes have not been realised and, today as one writes, it is necessary to confess a measure of defeat.” He ponders that the war must be partly the reason with diminished numbers but also that all churches are reporting decreasing attendances at public worship. He hopes in his 4<sup>th</sup> year St Andrew will thrive and become a force to be reckoned with in the community.

In August 1918 he registers the 4<sup>th</sup> anniversary “of a war such as the world has never known”. It must have been a dreadful time to have been a religious leader. Every month has deaths, injuries, church debts to be resolved, and the diminishing attendances at public worship. In October he records that in Edinburgh Church bells will be rung each day at noon for a few moments of silent prayer for the victory of the allies. Christmas comes with acknowledgement that times are hard to celebrate the Christmas spirit, remembering “those we have loved and lost” but we can now be “grateful beyond measure that the sounds of battle have fallen on silence”. He exhorts the church to recall afresh the song which never dies: “Glory to God in the highest, on earth peace, Goodwill towards men”.

By 1919 “And he rejoices that the sunshine is with us once again.” However, “failing health and the call of friends in Australia prevailed” and in the November editorial “When I remember how closely I have been associated with you in your joys and griefs, it makes the parting more painful...as I fix my eyes on the ‘Down- under’ country, and bid adieu to friends and acquaintances who meant so much to me.” His last day is arranged for January 12<sup>th</sup> 1920. He closes with the old Irish wish ‘May the best of your past be the worst of your future’”.

The Congregational News reported: “After five years of the most strenuous effort the Church as a whole has ever experienced, our esteemed pastor

has been compelled to relinquish his post, consequent on the critical condition of his health, and at a time when the tide had made a decided turn for the better with the return of so many of the young men who had gone forth at the call of their country to share in the great world struggle for right and justice”.

Under the grip of sore sickness, Mr McKenzie was unable to conduct his closing services; his delayed final sermons were preached on Jan 25<sup>th</sup>. During the farewell meeting on the 19<sup>th</sup> during the evening Mr McKenzie accepted at the hands of the chairman a wallet containing treasury notes to the value of £100, the gift of the congregation. Mr J. Kemp also presented a unique autograph album (a personal gift) containing the photographs of all office bearers, with 27 local views in watercolours including exterior and interior views of the church.

The May Messenger reports that “All will be glad to learn of Mr Mckenzie’s safe arrival at Sydney on April 6<sup>th</sup> 1920. On March 18<sup>th</sup> ‘in the Indian Ocean’ he was eating well, sleeping well, and quite a new man - with the thermometer at 100 degrees. The voyage (then 23 days) had quite set him up.” The family have no idea of what sickness he was suffering from. Very soon after his arrival he accepted a call from the Presbyterian Church in Balmain, Sydney. In his first three years there “he has added over 200 members to the Communion Roll and other things have increased accordingly.”

Peter Gray tells us his grandfather was married on Dec 20<sup>th</sup> 1920 to Miss Marjory Matthews who was the daughter of the Rev John Francis Mathews from Glossop Road Baptist Church (now the Drama Studio) and that she travelled out alone and arrived on 19<sup>th</sup> December and they were married the next day. Peter is the son of Moira, their third child. Rev McKenzie died in 1948.

Peter Gray writes: It would be lovely, if appropriate, for you to convey our family’s greetings to the congregation at St Andrew’s – a church which played such a big part in my grandparents’ lives and journey, especially seeing it’s 100 years ago this year that they left there for these shores!

*Margaret Fall*

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#### **LECTIONARY READINGS for September 2020**

13 Sept	Genesis <b>50</b> : 15-21; Psalm <b>103</b> : (1-7), 8-13; Romans <b>14</b> : 1-12; Matthew <b>18</b> : 21-35
20 Sept	Jonah <b>3</b> :10 – 4, 11; Psalm <b>145</b> :1-8; Philippians <b>1</b> : 21-30; Matthew <b>20</b> : 1-16
27 Sept	Ezekiel <b>18</b> : 1-4, 25-32; Psalm <b>25</b> : 1-9; Philippians <b>2</b> : 1-13; Matthew <b>21</b> : 23-32
4 October	Isaiah <b>5</b> : 1-7; Psalm <b>80</b> : 7-15; Philippians <b>3</b> : 4b-14; Matthew <b>21</b> : 33-46