

Pathhead Parish
Church
200th Anniversary



As you will already have read in previous Newsletters, here at Pathhead, we are celebrating our 200th Anniversary.

We have a number of events planned throughout the rest of 2023 and into 2024 to mark our 200th year and we hope that many of you will be able to come along and join us in some or even all of these events. There is information available on our website about the calendar of events. Just go to **pathheadparishchurch.co.uk**

We kicked things off last weekend by taking part in the Doors Open Days and this saw just over 60 people coming to look around the church. They were able to find out about the significance of certain things within the church and read about the history. Two quizzes were available for children and for those still young at heart!

Overleaf are dates for upcoming events. Some are still in the planning stages and more details will be given in the Newsletter and online as soon as possible.

Saturday 23rd September

Ceilidh - stovies and oatcakes supper. Music by Nackytoosh Ceilidh Band.
Tickets Adults £10 Under 16's £5 on sale now available at church office.

Sunday 1st October

Harvest Thanksgiving Service 11 am

Sunday 5th November

Special Thanksgiving Service 11 am followed by Congregational Meal with invited guests, including previous ministers. Tickets on sale soon – Adults £20 ~ 2 course lunch and celebration anniversary cake

Saturday 2nd December

60th Annual Christmas Fair 2 pm

Sunday 10th December

Kingdom Brass Concert 3 pm

Sunday 28th January 2024

Moderator Rev Sally Foster-Fulton preaching 11 am

Friday 2nd February 2024

Scottish Night with entertainment

Thursday 21st March 2024

Alastair McDonald Concert

As your minister, I wish to share the following reflection by the Revd. James Laurence, Albemarle, North Carolina, because I believe that it speaks to us as members within the Church of Scotland. It certainly spoke to me, as minister at Pathhead Parish Church, looking back over its 200 years of history...

Jesus said, "On this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not prevail against it." Matthew 16:18

The church's one foundation | Bonnie Thurston

Unable to see verdant forests
for mangled, ecclesial trees,
most of my companions
have abandoned the church,
not rats, but certainly escapees
from a rusty old ship,
with a treasure in her hold
undiminished by its often ugly,
always precarious, commanders.

Appreciating mature beauty
long faithful seaworthiness,
old sailors, like astrolabes,
still chart direction by the stars.
Their night watches taught them
the sun will rise from the sea.
They show their shipmates how
to be held in a crumbling conveyance
by the foundling Love in her hold.

To the sailors who remain,
not confident, but at least
hopeful she isn't going down,
who still stoke old boilers,
and swab slimy decks,
St. Benedict offers counsel:
Be prudent in your cleaning.
In scraping off the rust,
don't break the fragile vessel.

I have been thinking about this poem quite a lot since I came across it in the July 13th edition of "Christian Century."

Perhaps I have been pondering this poem because I see myself as one of the "old sailors" that she mentions, serving on this "rusty old ship" called the church. She describes her companions leaving the church as "escapees,"

which sounds a bit harsh. And she describes those who pilot the ship in pretty harsh terms, too. This is not an easy poem. It is even a little angry in tone. But also faithful. Because this poet is clearly not leaving the church. She loves it too much to leave it. Criticize it? Yes. Abandon it? Never.

And for those who remain with her, the poet goes on to encourage them (us) not to be too hasty in “scraping off the rust.” Don’t make changes to the church too hastily, or in desperation. Don’t “break the fragile vessel,” as she puts it, while trying to save her. After all, there is a priceless treasure on board this ship, undiminished in beauty, the “foundling Love in her hold.” And all my fellow Christians who still feel called to be this ship’s sailors are entrusted with this treasure. We are now, as always, stewards of the great and mysterious gospel – the good news of God’s saving love in Jesus. And as long as we remain faithful to this vocation, the world will go on being reminded of this mysterious, wondrous, essential treasure.

As I have been pondering this poem, a recent conversation that I had has been cross-pollinating with it. Not long ago, I happened to run into a church member who has not been active for a couple of years now. He apologized for that, and confessed that he didn’t really have a good reason. But then he looked at our church, visible in the distance from where we stood, and said, “You know, Pastor, I may not be coming to church right now. That may change, of course. But in the meantime, I know that the church is there. I know that you are there. And that brings me great comfort.”

Yes, my friend, we are here. I am here. Praying for you and for all this world. Still worshipping our living God, even while more and more doubt this truth. Still serving all people following the example of Jesus.

This rusty old ship that we call the church is still, and always will be, a tangible and visible reminder to all that there are people in this world who still believe – not just that there is a God who created this world, but that there is a God who loves it still. This is the priceless treasure, hidden in the hold of this rusty ship, that I will care for all of my given days.

Your friend and minister

Andrew Donald