

## **MINISTRY OF THE REV ROBERT W M JOHNSTON 1972 – 1999**

The Rev James A Simpson, Interim Moderator during the vacancy and later Moderator of the General Assembly in 1994, gave the congregation this advice before the new minister arrived: ‘I hope your prime aim will not be to make Anniesland Cross flourish as a church. I hope you will not measure success simply by the increase in size of Sunday congregations, or weekly offerings, or the number attending your organisations, important though these things may be. Your aim should be far bigger and deeper: to bring more love and depth, more humanity and joy into the life of your community – that extra something which Christian people can give.’

The induction of the Rev Robert W M Johnston MA, BD, STM took place on Wednesday 22 March 1972 and an induction social was held two evenings later. Asked at a later date how he had felt about stepping into Dr Thomson’s shoes, he replied he had no qualms ‘because so many people quoted to me the words Dr Thomson said on leaving – “Don’t expect the man following me to step into my shoes – he will bring his own”.’

Mr Johnston came to Anniesland from Hamilton Memorial Church, Clydebank, where he had served for eight years. His father and grandfather were ministers, and his mother’s side of the family had been producing ministers for several generations. His great uncle was James Moffatt, the eminent theologian responsible for *The Moffatt Translation* of the Bible, and Moffatt is one of his middle names.

During his years in Clydebank he witnessed the demise of the two big employers, John Brown’s and Singer’s. As an industrial chaplain he attended meetings with shop stewards, and at the time of the UCS work-in took part in a large march through the city centre, where he was captured on camera by the *Glasgow Herald*!

### **New manse**

The congregation had bought a new manse at 76 Victoria Park Drive North for Mr Johnston, his wife Fiona and young children Alison and Iain. The Ancaster Drive manse had been sold for £5,150 and the new manse purchased for £9,510. Prior to Mr Johnston’s arrival a thoroughly revised roll revealed the membership of Anniesland Cross to be 855.

At the Board meeting in June 1972 a Parish Development Programme was discussed and agreed. This was to be more than a stewardship campaign to raise much-needed funds – it would also involve asking members of the congregation to fill in pledge cards offering their time and talents to the church. The PDP took place over the next 18 months and the Treasurer was able to report in January 1974 that offerings had increased by 31% over the previous year.

Mr Johnston continued to hold the Vestry Hour on Thursday evenings between 7pm and 8pm. He requested that children of the Primary Sunday School be present at the service until after the children’s hymn. A family pew service was later introduced to encourage young people in the organisations to invite their parents.

## **Softer Seats!**

From time to time the question of obtaining cushions for the pews had been raised at the Stated Annual Meeting, to no avail. It was raised again in 1975 and this time a solution was found. It appeared that Dennistoun Central Parish Church, a union of the former Rutherford Church with Trinity Duke Street [where the present minister was baptised], had cushions for sale. The church magazine describes what happened:

‘Last week a gang of strong-armed Annieslanders, with a lorry lent to us for the purpose, transported cushions from Trinity to Rutherford and then the Rutherford cushions to Anniesland. An intrepid band, sometimes lost in dust clouds, then vacuumed and cleaned, and cut and fitted the cushions. An anonymous donation from two of our members has completely covered the cost.’

## **Future Trends**

In 1975 Glasgow Presbytery’s Union and Readjustments Committee asked Kirk Sessions to look at the needs of the church in their particular area with regard to planning for the future. At Anniesland Cross the Session recognised that in the Church, at local and national level, the growing trends of falling membership, fewer young people in organisations and increased costs in maintaining buildings would inevitably result in more unions. Later that year elders were asked to study a report by the Church of Scotland’s influential Committee of Forty, covering such topics as team ministries, community churches and greater lay participation.

Community Councils were being set up in 1975 and the Session saw this as an opportunity for more involvement in the local community. It was noted that Anniesland Cross Church actually stood at the meeting point of four different community areas! As the church was to be in the proposed Knightscliffe CC area, an elder was appointed to represent the congregation and report back. Some months later the Session discussed at length a report on urban deprivation as it affected the Temple area and how the local churches could become involved.

Although women had been admitted to the eldership of the Church of Scotland since 1966, it was not until September 1975 that the first woman was admitted to the eldership at Anniesland Cross. That was one trend which was to gain momentum over the years to come!

## **‘Rocking’ the Gospel**

In the mid-1970s there was a musical ‘explosion’ at Anniesland Cross Church when a group of young folk came together to make music and proclaim their faith in the noisiest way possible. In their first concert they gave a performance of *Joseph and His Amazing Technicolour Dreamcoat*, a rock version of the Genesis story. *Joseph* was such a success that Crossrock, as they became known, took the show on tour to other churches and clubs in the city and beyond. In 1976 they composed and added *Johnny Prodigal* to their repertoire, a rock version of the Prodigal Son parable, followed by *The Lone Samaritan*, an interpretation of the parable of the Good Samaritan in a Wild West setting. These two were combined into one programme called *Time Enough for Love*.

The group were greatly encouraged by a substantial grant from the Novum Trust in Edinburgh, set up to encourage and give financial help to new ventures in evangelism. The grant enabled them to buy the portable lighting equipment that created so much of the atmosphere of a rock show. In 1980 Crossrock gained what Mr Johnston called 'national recognition' when they were invited to play and sing at the General Assembly's Youth Night. Over the years, until they disbanded in 1983, they reached many young people with the Gospel through their performances and drama workshops.

The social life of the congregation was also enhanced by the occasional concerts of the Church Choir, which in addition to being musical treats were always great fun – and also by the play-nights of the Church Drama Group, usually of Scots comedies, which were always greatly enjoyed by their appreciative audiences.

### **Costly repairs**

In 1977 the installation of a Hearing Aid Loop System was discussed at length by the Board. This went ahead and the system was installed and functioning by the following Spring. A year later the congregation learned of 'The Troubles', as Mr Johnston described them – the central heating boiler had burst and the roof was leaking in several places. A Gift Day was organised, which raised £4,400.

Unhappily that was not the end of the story. When the minister returned from holiday that summer he found a reddish fungus on the vestry wall, later identified as dry rot. He wrote: 'In 1979, when we have finished paying for a new boiler, the roof repairs and the eradication of dry rot, we shall be lucky if we get much change out of £10,000!' He contrasted this with a report in the church magazine in 1958: *Last year was an extremely heavy year in the upkeep of the church buildings. During 1956 we spent £87.3/1 on repairs. But last year (1957) we spent £252.6/1.*

### **Three priorities**

A Reappraisal for Mission programme began in 1979 when the congregation was asked to clarify its vision for the year ahead. Three areas requiring further study and action were identified – worship, Christian education and the care of the elderly.

As a first step three committees were set up. The Worship Committee would consider the pattern of worship within the congregation and consider its relevance, consider ways in which the members could become more involved, and suggest new uses of music such as audio-visual aids. The Christian Education Committee's remit was to investigate the full range of Christian education within the congregation for all age groups, encourage Bible study and look at teaching materials.

Age Concern would coordinate the pastoral care of the elderly and housebound in the congregation. In recognition of the increasing number of housebound, an appeal was soon made for groups of visitors who would cover different areas of the parish. This work among the elderly would increase and become a much-appreciated service in the years to come. In 1990 it was renamed the Elderly Care Group, and since 1994 has held an annual

get-together when the housebound are brought to church on a Sunday afternoon for a short Communion service, choir concert and refreshments.

In November 1980 the congregation celebrated the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the laying of the foundation stone of the church building, when Dr Thomson was the guest preacher.

It was reported at the Stated Annual Meeting in 1981 that membership now stood at 710, with 132 on the Supplementary Roll. This was said to be in line with ‘the national trend in all the major denominations in the United Kingdom – that is ever decreasing membership rolls and a continuing decrease in the intake of new members’.

In spite of this perceived trend, however, the days of mass evangelism in Glasgow were not over – that summer evangelist Luis Palau led a four-week crusade at the Kelvin Hall at which some members sang in the choir or acted as counsellors. Mr Johnston, encouraging members to attend, wrote: ‘Already some of our people who attended the opening services have reported how moved they were – by the singing of the great choir of 750 voices, by the sense of being part of a great congregation of thousands of people... and, of course, by the preacher himself.’

By 1982 the church organ, now over 100 years old, was in need of another overhaul. In 1963 the cost of having it completely renovated and modernised was nearly £3,000 – this time the figure was expected to be up to £8,000. The congregation could take heart, though, from a report of one of the experts who examined the organ – ‘To build an organ of the same number of speaking stops as yours would cost in the region of £71,000 at today’s prices’!

An organ fund was set up and plans made for a flower festival in the church in August as a major fund-raising event. Although some flowers would be bought in, members were encouraged to get busy in their gardens over the summer to produce an abundance of blooms.

The two-day event was judged a great success, involving all the organisations, discovering hidden talent among those who arranged the flowers, and attracting many visitors. The organ fund benefited by over £2,000 and Mr Johnston highlighted another result – ‘the way in which for many people what began as simply a flower display turned into an occasion of worship’.

### **Union talks begin**

With the death of the Rev Ian MacDougall of Temple Parish Church in December 1982, talk of a possible union of the two churches was not unexpected. At the Stated Annual Meeting in 1983 Mr Johnston intimated that Glasgow Presbytery had already raised the question of a union.

In February 1984 he gave a full report on the situation in the church magazine, explaining that Temple had been vacant for over a year and the Presbytery had made it clear they could not expect to be given permission to call a minister.

He went on: ‘The main reason for this, I am sure, is the proximity of our two congregations. It is difficult to see justification for having two Church of Scotland congregations existing separately a few hundred yards apart and serving the same area; and if the two were to come together, surely the witness of the Church in the Anniesland area would be greatly strengthened.

‘Another reason concerns ministerial man-power. Ministers have to be sent where they are needed, and where two congregations exist cheek-by-jowl, this is obviously not a good use of resources. These, together with other reasons concerning fabric and finance, make it obvious that one stronger congregation will be to the future good of the Church in our area.’

Referring to ‘an abortive attempt to begin talking together last summer’, he went on to say that the Presbytery’s Union and Readjustments Committee had appointed a new team to guide the two congregations, and there was ‘a new openness and willingness to move toward union’.

Matters moved ahead swiftly. On Sunday 25 March 1984 both congregations voted overwhelmingly to accept the Plan and Basis of Union. At Anniesland 237 voted for union, six against and one abstention. At Temple 68 voted in favour, with no votes against and no abstentions.

As to which church buildings would be used by the united congregation, it was explained that this would be decided by a panel of arbiters appointed by Presbytery. If Anniesland Cross were chosen, the united charge would be known as Temple-Anniesland; if Temple, the new name would be Anniesland and Temple Parish Church. In the event, Anniesland Cross was chosen.

### **Union of Temple Parish Church and Anniesland Cross Parish Church**

The Service of Union on Wednesday 27 June 1984 was conducted by the Rev John Macnaughton of Hyndland, Acting Moderator of the Presbytery, assisted by the Rev John Speirs of Giffnock Orchardhill, who had headed the team from the Union and Readjustments Committee, and the Rev Alexander Cunningham, Clerk to the Presbytery.

As Mr Johnston stood to reaffirm his vows as minister, he was flanked by the two session clerks – Ralph McWilliams of Temple and Hugh Martin of Anniesland – who continued jointly in office for the next three years.

Records show that at the time of the union there were 669 members on the roll at Anniesland Cross and 153 at Temple, giving a combined total of 822.

Looking back to those days, Mr Johnston writes: ‘The success of the union was guaranteed by the wholehearted way in which the Temple members entered into it, and by the warmth of the welcome extended to them by the Annieslanders. The Temple folk had suffered the sadness of leaving a beautiful and much loved church building, and very few disjoined. And a sign of their commitment to the new union was seen in the fact that, in the following years, the Session Clerk, Treasurer, BB Captain, one of the Property Conveners and leader of the Friendship Club were all former Temple members.’

## **Larger parish**

As a result of the union, the parish of Temple-Anniesland was now considerably larger, stretching from the Bearsden boundary in the north to Whittinghame Drive in the south, and from the railway bridge at Anniesland to Knightswood Cross, an area then containing some 5,000 homes.

A team of 60 members undertook a visitation of this enlarged parish during three weeks in October. Their aim was two-fold – ‘to let folk know about their new parish church, its worship and activities, and to invite them to share in our congregational life’. As a follow-up, a welcome service for those contacted during the visitation was held the following February.

The question of the future of the Temple premises was discussed by the Board in November, and a decision taken to sell. The building was subsequently sold, used briefly as an indoor skateboard rink, and later demolished.

Since the union, Temple Church’s fine communion table has occupied a quiet corner in the sanctuary, as has its war memorial, while the unusual clock designed and built by the first minister of Temple Church, the Rev James Carswell, as a memorial to those who fell in World War I, keeps time to the left of the pulpit. The Temple chancel chairs found a new home in Menstrie Parish Church, Clackmannanshire some years later.

An attempt to start house groups had got off to rather a slow start in 1983. Now, after the union, house groups were seen as a way of helping members of the larger congregation to come together in smaller groups to create a sense of ‘belonging’, and the idea was re-launched.

## **The Living Stones**

It was the Christian fellowship experienced at a congregational weekend held at St Ninian’s, the Church of Scotland’s training and resource centre in Crieff, in November 1985 that led to the forming of the Living Stones. The vision of the organisers, a group of talented young folk, was to bridge the age gap and create a fellowship that had something for everyone.

The Living Stones met after the evening service. Hearing about this new group, a not-so-young church member who went along soon became ‘hooked’ – ‘I enjoyed it so much I have been back each week for more. The programme so far has included drama, folk-dancing and self-defence.’ Another member told how she had found friends there, ‘both young and old from various walks of life’.

Among the most memorable activities of the Living Stones was a weekend at Stroove, then the Church of Scotland’s conference centre at Skelmorlie, and a trip by 25 members to Iona in August 1987 to hand over a £90 donation for the building of the MacLeod Centre. Earlier that year they were invited to perform their Easter presentation at St Mark’s Church, Stirling.

Although the Living Stones existed for only a few years, as the young folk who provided the impetus moved on to study or work elsewhere, it demonstrated how the young and old in a congregation could enjoy fellowship together, and is still remembered with gratitude by those who shared the experience.

### **Year as Moderator**

Mr Johnston followed in his predecessor's footsteps when he was installed as Moderator of the Presbytery of Glasgow in June 1986. The year ahead was a very busy one, which included civic receptions, speaking at an anti-apartheid rally in George Square and greeting delegates from the Conference of European Churches.

'Perhaps the most momentous occasion,' he wrote, 'was the official opening by the Queen of the new Sheriff Court, at which I was asked to lead a short act of dedication. My wife and I were both presented to her, and afterwards had lunch with the royal party.'

'But I think the most moving experience for me was the service in the Cathedral when twelve men and women were commissioned as ministers and were "licensed to preach". As I presented each one with their Bibles, and charged them to be faithful to this great vocation .... I was very aware of the presence of God ....'

It must have been a welcome break from his duties as Moderator when Mr Johnston attended the Christmas lunch of the Anniesland Friendship Club in 1986 and performed an 'old favourite'! They reported: 'Our Christmas lunch wouldn't be complete without our minister. His rendering of "The Wee Sparra on the Barra" was superb. One of our members is Duncan Macrae's sister and she does love it when Mr Johnston recites it at our lunch.'

### **Letters from Mary Slessor**

In 1988 Glasgow held a very successful Garden Festival on the south bank of the river from April to September. The Church Garden within the Festival was the first time the various elements of the Christian Church in Glasgow had united to promote with one voice such a major project. The church pavilion and surrounding garden cost £100,000, more than half of which was raised by the congregations. A group from Temple-Anniesland presented worship in the pavilion on several occasions.

Temple-Anniesland decided to hold its own flower festival in September to mark the Year of the Bible. It was announced this would include a Bible exhibition and a bookstall featuring Bible-aids and devotional literature. As for the floral displays, each organisation was asked to depict a favourite text or Bible passage.

When organisers of a stall featuring 'congregational treasures' invited members to bring along old Bibles and other items of interest, they were astonished when Mrs Grace Black handed over six letters from the famous Scottish missionary Mary Slessor!

Written by Mary Slessor to missionary colleague Martha Peacock in the period between 1907 and 1914, the letters were among the papers of Mrs Black's late husband, Dr Robert Black, a cousin of Martha Peacock, to whom they were passed on her death in 1937. The

letters were a star attraction at the exhibition section of the ‘Year of the Bible – Our Witness in Flowers’ festival which attracted around 1,000 visitors over two days.

[Records show that Martha Peacock addressed the congregation of Anniesland Cross Church while on furlough in 1916. Mrs Black later donated the Slessor letters to the Slessor Centre in Dundee, attached to the Steeple Church. Copies were made and the originals passed to Dundee Museum.]

A computer was the gift chosen by Mr Johnston when the congregation, joined by members of his family and friends, celebrated his 25 years in the ministry on 30 November 1989. The Rev Alexander Cunningham, Presbytery Clerk, recalled how they were students together at Glasgow University and Trinity College and sang in ‘Dr Barclay’s famous choir’.

### **‘This is Our Life’**

The Kirk Session held a day conference in March 1989 on the topic Developing the Missionary Parish, led by the Rev John Campbell, the Church’s Organiser for Evangelism in the West of Scotland. This led to the Session’s decision to hold a Congregational Review, or ‘spiritual check-up’ as Mr Johnston described it.

What would be involved? The congregation were told that all aspects of the church’s life would be covered – finding out the facts about the congregation, organising questionnaires for members and organisations, making a video film and a photographic record of the congregation – and then presenting the results to all the members at a special exhibition.

Entitled ‘This is Our Life’, the two-day exhibition took place in March 1990. While surrounded by all the evidence of a busy ‘successful’ church, Mr Johnson warned against complacency. Citing the words of Jeremiah 12:2 ‘Lord, you are always on their lips, but far from their hearts’, he described this as a critical time for Temple-Anniesland. The choice was to move forward into the new things God was revealing – or become static, ‘apparently doing the right things, apparently reasonably successful, as we slump down deeper into our armchair’.

### **First Easter dawn service**

In 1991 32 members of the congregation were literally up at the crack of dawn to attend Temple-Anniesland’s first Easter dawn service at Dawsholm Park. Mr Johnston describes the scene as they gathered round the cross on the hillside at 7am: ‘We heard Mark’s account of the three women coming to the tomb early in the morning; we sang resurrection songs; the more youthful of us, with the children, rolled eggs down the hill, while others decorated the cross with daffodils. Then we walked through the still sleeping parish carrying the “living” cross – back to church where a delicious and very welcome hot breakfast awaited us.’

The dawn service was not a ‘one-off’ – it has been continued ever since, and those who gather on the hillside, looking east towards the dawn, over the sleeping city find it a moving experience and well worth the early rise.



Easter is also a time when for many years the congregations of Temple-Anniesland and Anniesland Methodist Church, which celebrated its centenary in 2003, have come together to share Lenten studies and Holy Week services. [In 2006 ministers from Knightswood UF Church, the Methodist Church, Elim Church and Knightswood St Margaret's participated in Holy Week lunchtime services at Temple-Anniesland.]

Shortly after Easter 1991 the Kirk Session organised a house-to-house visitation of 1,600 homes in the west of the parish. Preparation for this had begun in January, when the Rev John Campbell conducted a course on 'Basic Faith Sharing'. He returned on the eve of the visitation for a special briefing of visitors.

Listening afterwards to reports of visitors, Mr Johnston commented that there was still a great reservoir of goodwill towards the national church, 'and people don't feel threatened when you say you're from the local parish church'.

The visitation was undertaken as part of Mission Scotland 1991, a nation-wide effort which culminated in a series of rallies addressed by veteran American evangelist Dr Billy Graham in Edinburgh, Aberdeen and Glasgow. Temple-Anniesland ran buses to the Glasgow rally at Celtic Park from 4 to 8 June, and members were encouraged to invite friends and neighbours to join them.

### **Health and Healing**

An upsurge of interest in the subject of Christian healing led the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland to set up a committee on Health and Healing with the remit of encouraging congregations to share actively in what was seen as God's ministry of healing. The Kirk Session set up a group in 1992 to study what the Bible said about the ministry of healing and to explore ways in which the congregation could more meaningfully and effectively share in it.

The group, ranging in size from 8 to 30, met for nearly two years to study questions of health and healing from a Christian view-point, and also visited churches which held healing services. In 1994 Mr Johnston reported: 'We very soon realised the vital place of prayer, and have encouraged group and private intercession for the sick.'

The ongoing result of the work of this group is seen in the Health and Healing Service, held in the church on the last Sunday evening of each month. Those who ask for prayer through the Prayerlink request forms or personal contact are also remembered in the private prayers of the group's members.

### **Goodbye to an old neighbour**

'Here we have no continuing city' reminded Mr Johnston at the Stated Annual Meeting in 1993. He was referring to the demolition of the Barr & Stroud factory, which had surrounded the church for nearly a hundred years. The following June he wrote of the phoenix-like rise from the rubble of the new Safeway superstore [now Morrisons] and the effect these changes would be likely to have on the church.

‘From the church’s point of view, the most immediate effect of the redevelopment has been to make our building more visible than it has ever been; and it has made us strategically sited opposite the store, with the enormous car park of 680 spaces between. That’s going to mean a lot of people around!

‘At the moment, any casual passer-by looking at our church would see first the big solid doors, for six days of the week securely shut against any intruders. It looks as if nothing happens here except on a Sunday. You and I know that that is far from the truth. But it looks that way.’

The question that had been exercising the Kirk Session, he went on, was how to respond to this new challenge. Did we need to adapt our buildings? A group of office-bearers had been visiting various churches in Glasgow and beyond to see how they had carried through adaptations of their buildings to meet the challenge of mission. ‘Right now we have more questions than answers,’ he admitted. ‘Any thought of adapting our building must obviously be a long-term project.’

An immediate response to the opening of the new store, however, was the Session’s decision to open the Old Hall in June 1994 for tea and coffee from 10.30am to noon on Wednesdays, with a short service in the church at 11am. In October the Midweek Service, as it became known, was moved to Thursday morning and has become a regular weekly fixture on the church’s calendar. It has a steady attendance of around 30, and the 20-minute act of worship is led by a rota of church members.

### **Having a vision**

In the 1990s it became a popular practice for organisations and businesses to produce a Vision or Mission Statement of their aims and ambitions. Some churches, too, took up the idea, as having a vision seemed to be exactly what faith demanded!

The Kirk Session spent several months working on a Vision Statement in 1995. Mr Johnston explained: ‘The reason for undertaking this exercise was that, for some time previously, a committee has been looking at our buildings and trying to see how we may have to adapt them to meet the needs of the next millennium. Already several changes have been adopted – disabled access has been improved, the sound system upgraded and the old hall refurbished.

‘But as we looked at more long-term alterations that might be necessary, we realised that we needed to ask deeper questions. The Statement is an attempt to answer the basic question which we so seldom, if ever, ask ourselves: “Why is Temple-Anniesland here? What is it for?”’

The resulting Vision Statement, presented to the congregation in 1996, had four aims, recognising that commitment was called for in service of God, of each other, to the community, and to the world. Too long to reproduce here, it can be found on Page xx. Mr Johnston warned: ‘There is little point in formulating a Vision Statement like this, if it simply remains a piece of paper in the Kirk Session minutes! It will be of use only if every member of the congregation not only reads it but accepts it as their own.’

In 1996 it was decided to hold the Stated Annual Meeting after a Sunday morning service, instead of on a weeknight, in the hope that more members would take the opportunity to show an interest in the affairs of the church. This proved to be a wise move, as 105 members attended, compared with 67 the previous year.

The Session Clerk reported that membership now stood at 661, with 106 on the supplementary roll. The number who communicated at least once during the year was 411, or 62.3% of members – a figure which, he commented, had not only remained fairly consistent for the past nine years but was similar to the percentage for the Church of Scotland as a whole.

### **Mr Johnston's Semi-Jubilee at Anniesland**

In March 1997 Mr Johnston celebrated 25 years of ministry at Anniesland, when members of the congregation, family and friends joined in an evening of nostalgia, fun and music and saw him receive a gift of golf clubs. In his thank-you speech he disclosed: 'One of the highlights of my whole week is when I come into church on a Sunday morning, the Bible is taken up and there is a great sense of expectation, of excitement. I love that moment ....'

A few months earlier he was asked in an interview for the church magazine if the profile of the congregation had changed over the years. He replied that it remained much the same and added: 'What I have always liked about the congregation is the fact that it represents a cross-section of the population. Temple-Anniesland is very much a parish church, rather than a "gathered" congregation. It sees its mission to the parish and tries to respond to that.'

But the role of the minister had changed. Fifty years ago, he pointed out, a minister's main role was to preach on a Sunday and visit members in their homes. Today he or she was much more involved in the life of the whole community, in addition to membership of numerous Presbytery and Assembly committees and other duties.

As an example he listed his own commitments: 'Chaplain to Temple Primary School and Knightswood Secondary; convener of the Presbytery Council; a trustee of the Barr & Stroud Trust, the Ferguson Bequest and the Glasgow Society of Songs of the Clergy; and a member of Temple School Board. Until recently I was also a chaplain at Gartnavel General Hospital.'

### **Centenary of the congregation**

In December 1998 Mr Johnston announced plans for celebrating the centenary of the founding of the congregation the following year. He reminded members of the first services held in what is now the Old Hall in August 1899, and said a committee of the Kirk Session was making plans for a series of celebrations during the month of June.

He also drew attention to the fact that for a considerable time a committee of the Board had been looking for ways in which the church building could be developed so that from the outside it would be more attractive to passers-by and more indicative of the life within. Internal development would make it more user-friendly and provide

accommodation which would be flexible and appropriate to the changing needs of user groups. Phase 1 of a proposed development would involve the enlargement of the church vestibule and the installation of a glazed wall between vestibule and sanctuary. The Board, he reported, was confident that this was 'within our financial capability'.

It had been an open secret that Mr Johnston planned to retire in the summer of 1999, when he would have completed 27 years at Anniesland, and this he duly announced in February of that year. But first there was the centenary of the congregation to celebrate over the next few months. The climax was the Centenary Service on 13 June, at which the preacher was the Very Rev James A Simpson, an old friend of the congregation from his days as Interim Moderator during the vacancy in 1971-72.

Other centenary events included a Church Family Concert, and a joint service of praise with the choir of Broomhill Church. A Centenary Flower Festival on the theme of 'Love', an exhibition of photographs and other memorabilia from the archives, and a Family Day Out to Ayr all contributed to the celebrations.

### **Retiral of Mr Johnston**

After the celebrations came sadness at the retiral of a much-loved minister. A retirement social took place on 3 September 1999, followed by Mr Johnston's leave-taking service on 5 September. 'I have so much to be thankful for' he wrote afterwards to the congregation, thanking them for the hundreds of cards and the 'amazing generosity of your gifts to Fiona and myself'.

The Johnstons moved to Bearsden, and worshipped at Jordanhill Parish Church. The congregation were happy to see Mr Johnston back in the pulpit at Temple-Anniesland from time to time, and never more so than on Sunday 23 April 2006 when he preached as part of the celebrations to mark the centenary of the building of Anniesland Cross Church. He was accompanied by his wife, Fiona, who had for some time been in failing health. Sadly Fiona passed away two weeks later, and many members of the congregation attended her funeral in Jordanhill Church.

The minister of Jordanhill Church, the Rev Colin Renwick, was appointed Interim Moderator during the vacancy in 1999. Permission had been received from both the Presbytery and the General Assembly's Reappraisal Committee for the congregation to call a minister without restriction, and so a Vacancy Committee [now known as a Nominating Committee] comprising 19 members was elected to look for the man or woman of God's choice. That search led them to the Scottish Borders ....

