

TEMPLE PARISH CHURCH 1892 – 1984

In the 1870s the tiny village of Temple was part of the large parish of New Kilpatrick Church in Bearsden, which encompassed not only Bearsden and Milngavie, but also Drumchapel, Knightswood and Netherton. During the ministry of the Rev James W King, who was appointed to New Kilpatrick in 1870, the population of the parish increased considerably and the Session decided to appoint an extra missionary for ‘the mining districts of the parish’. In order to serve those parishioners living in Knightswood and Temple, a mission was begun in 1873. A school was built at Netherton, which was also used for Sunday services conducted by assistant ministers of New Kilpatrick.

Gradually a congregation was formed, a building fund begun and a site at Temple provided free of charge by Lady Campbell of Garscube. The cost of the building was to be £3,740. The New Kilpatrick ladies organised a bazaar in the Art Institute, Glasgow, and another fund-raising event was a ‘grand concert’ at New Kilpatrick by the orchestra of the Gordon Highlanders. Dr King’s assistants gave the pulpit and the Netherton Sunday School children the baptismal font.

When Temple Church was opened on 8 May 1892, admission was by ticket only – a necessary restriction because the service was conducted by the Very Rev Principal John Caird DD, one of the most famous and popular preachers of the day. The last in the series of assistant ministers who served the Netherton mission was the **Rev James Carswell BD**, and he it was who became the first minister of Temple, serving there for 44 years.

Concern for the poor

The new congregation enjoyed a steady growth. At the opening in 1892 there were 120 members. By 1894 the roll stood at 252 and ten years later had risen to 455. During the first decade it was decided to distribute coal to the poor at Christmas – approximately 25 tons were bought every year, delivered to Great Western [Annie’sland] Station. Special collections were taken in November and December for the Poor Fund and the ‘ladies of the church’, through a charitable organisation called Dorcas, also organised clothing for the poor.

By April 1899 a hall had been added, only three short years since the church had been declared independent of New Kilpatrick. Applications soon came in for use of the hall from Jordanhill Music Society and the county tax collector. New Kilpatrick School Board also sought permission to use the hall as the infant department of Netherton School – this marked the start of Mr Carswell’s long association with the school board, of which he was chairman for many years. Letting out the hall also brought in much-needed income for the church.

Mr Carswell became a chaplain at Gartnavel Royal Hospital and held Communion services there, assisted by his elders. As early as 1902 the Kirk Session were discussing the possibility of having a district nurse for the parish. The church was interested and formed a committee to investigate the matter. Although nothing happened at that time the issue was raised on many occasions and finally in March 1914 a district nurse was appointed.

The Session minutes in 1902 mention a train crash in which a number of people from the Temple area were injured. *The Glasgow Herald* of 2 September 1902 reported: ‘On the 30th August 1902 at 8.52am at Charing Cross Station there was a train crash involving the Kilsyth to Charing Cross train and the Helensburgh to Glasgow train. Fourteen people were taken to the Royal Infirmary while fourteen injured were treated at home. Of the number treated in hospital three men and one woman lived in Temple Gardens and one of the injured was a Temple Church manager who was visited in hospital by an elder, William Lithgow.’

In these early years the outreach of the congregation was expanding through the introduction of several organisations. The 116th Boys’ Brigade Company was formed in 1904, and began having church parades. The Band of Hope attracted 200 children to its first meeting, and in 1907 the Woman’s Guild met for the first time, with a speaker from Guild headquarters. [When the Guild celebrated their Golden Jubilee in 1957, the staff and boys of the BB presented them with a large Bible ‘as a token of friendship’.]

In 1908 a new manse site at Helensburgh Drive was gifted by Mrs Smith of Jordanhill to replace the manse at Ancaster Drive, which may have been Mr Carswell’s own house.

A remarkable character is mentioned several times in the church minutes in these early years – Mrs Pepper, the church cleaner. This redoubtable lady managed to find enough from her meagre remuneration to gift the church a coal vase [scuttle] for the vestry. On her retiral in 1913 she received a watch and a small wardrobe as gifts from a grateful congregation. She repaid these gifts many years later when she left £7.12/- to the church Poor Fund.

1914 to 1921

During World War I Temple’s church hall was used by Barr & Stroud for drill purposes in connection with the Civil Guard formed by their employees, and also as a dining room for their female workers. By 1916 the dark state of the roads around the church led to the evening service being discontinued. In 1917 Mr Carswell was awaiting instructions from the War Office about serving in France. A joint meeting of the Session and Managers was called ‘to consider Mr Carswell’s visit to France, and to provide funds for him to use at his own discretion for the benefit of the boys while he was in charge of the Presbytery Hut there’. The congregation were asked to contribute ‘even a shilling’, and £40 was raised. Mr Carswell spent almost six months in France.

On Sunday 18 December 1921 a bronze memorial tablet was unveiled in Temple Church to the 27 young men who had laid down their lives in the Great War. The memorial was unveiled by Mr James Parker Smith of Jordanhill estate, who had been a church member since the beginning and was MP for the district. For him this would have been a poignant moment – his son’s name was on the memorial.

A second memorial was also unveiled – the work of the minister. Mr Carswell, renowned as a clever carpenter and engineer, designed and built an unusual pendulum clock. It is said that he begged, borrowed and otherwise acquired various parts from his neighbours,

Barr & Stroud! [The memorial tablet and clock were moved to Temple-Anniesland at the union in 1984.]

The 1920s & 1930s

Throughout the 1920s the church roll continued to grow; the Girl Guides were started; electric lighting was installed in 1924 at a cost of £100 for the church, £50 for the manse and £70 for the hall. Also in this decade there was a move away from seat rents to Freewill Offering. By January 1924 the 'Poor Coal' was still being distributed, but now to only 30 families. However there was still felt to be a need to help 'poor women and children connected with the church'.

Temple Church campaigned vigorously against licensed premises being opened in the district, as drink was blamed for much of the poverty of the time. The Church of Scotland Temperance Society, the Young Abstainers Union and the Whiteinch No Licence Committee were all supported. However, lest it be said that Temple Church set its face against enjoyment, annual congregational socials were being held.

In the 1930s other issues were mentioned in Session and Board Minutes – the Great National Petition to Parliament against the opening of Sunday cinemas and theatres; petitions in favour of the Geneva Convention; a large Temperance Rally in St Andrew's Halls, at which the ladies of the church helped at the tea tables; a public meeting in the church hall in connection with a proposed slum clearance of houses. Temple was also opposed to Sunday games in public parks in order to 'safeguard the Lord's Day'.

By 1933 the need for a new hall was becoming apparent, and a Hall Fund was set up. The organisations at that time were listed as: Boys' Brigade, Lifeboys, Girls' Guild, Girl Guides, Brownies, Woman's Guild and Literary Society. In the same year the question of parking cars within the church grounds was raised, but turned down because it was not permitted under the terms of the church insurance.

Mr Carswell retired in 1937, after serving at Temple for 44 years. A faithful and greatly-loved parish minister, he was described many years later by the Rev S Gillies MacNab, his successor:

He was a unique man in some respects. He was an expert in the construction and maintenance of clocks, one of which hung in the church. He was skilled in woodwork, and made his own bookcases, which I still possess. He also had his own printing press in the manse, and provided the church's own literature. He used to tell me that when he first began making clocks he relied for their accuracy upon the bells of Gilmorehill when the wind was coming from the east! He had been one of Lord Kelvin's students. It was not easy to have to follow a man of that calibre!

Mr Carswell died in 1940. True to his caring nature he bequeathed £100 to the church for the New Hall building, and 'a book or any small item to elders, managers, Sunday School teachers or leaders in any of the agencies connected with Temple Church as a memento of their minister'.

1939 to 1952

The **Rev Samuel Gillies MacNab BD**, from Cupar, Fife was called to Temple Church in December 1938. The congregation were heartened in their choice of this new young minister at his first Communion service in January 1939 when he was assisted by his father, the Rev Samuel MacNab. He intimated he would be taking over the Senior Bible Class during the next winter and began organising visits to the parish with the elders. He was seen as an energetic minister who had a clear vision of how his ministry and the church might develop.

However, later that year, on the outbreak of war, the main concern was to ensure the safety of the congregation during church services and an appeal was made for members who had received First Aid and anti-gas training. As in World War I, the hall was used by Barr & Stroud for their Home Guard unit. The Post Office requested use of the hall over the busy Christmas rush period – an arrangement which was to be repeated for at least the next 12 years. Channel Island refugees were also provided with temporary accommodation in the hall.

In 1941 a club was started for young people of 14 years and upwards on Saturday evenings. Members had to be connected with one of the other church activities, but they were given the right to bring along one friend. The youth club turned out to be a great success and became known by its motto Each for All (EFA).

At a Session meeting in 1943 Mr MacNab warned of his impending departure to serve as a chaplain to the Forces, a tour of duty which was to last until the end of 1946. [There is evidence that he served in Palestine, as on his return he brought back water from the River Jordan to baptise Temple children.] During his absence the Rev F J McLauchlin acted as interim minister.

Among those from Temple Church who served in the war was BB member Donald Muir who was awarded the DFC (Distinguished Flying Cross) and was mentioned in dispatches.

One of the happiest outcomes of the end of the war was the number of weddings taking place in the church as couples celebrated the return of loved ones and hopefully a more secure future.

At the Stated Annual Meeting in 1947 Mr MacNab thanked members for their devotion to duty during his absence. Now ‘a new awakening was required, and we must find some way of stimulating the spiritual life and finances of the congregation’. Answering his call, throughout the summer of 1947 the Board enthusiastically undertook refurbishment of the church and hall: red plush forms for the choir room, a new oak table, new heaters for the church, new cushions for the pews which could be bought by the congregation for 15 shillings [75p] large or 10 shillings [50p] small, a new piano, new seating in the hall, new curtains – and four large teapots.

At the Stated Annual Meeting in 1949 the church roll was 760. By this time the need for a new hall was becoming even more acute. On at least one occasion the BB annual inspection had to be held in Collars Laundry canteen because it could not be accommodated in the hall. Strenuous efforts and appeals were made to raise the estimated

cost of £2,300 and work began in 1950. The new hall – named the Carswell Memorial Hall – was opened on 12 January 1951 by the Very Rev Dr John Whyte, Moderator of Glasgow Presbytery. Just over a year later, Mr MacNab intimated that he had been called to another charge.

1953 to 1967

The next minister of Temple Church was the **Rev James Wright Wilson MA**, who had previously served in India and at Braco in Perthshire. His induction and social evening in March 1953 took place in Barr & Stroud's Hall as the halls of the church could not accommodate all who wanted to attend. During Mr Wilson's ministry many new ventures were started. The Work Party was set up initially to do cleaning, repairs and general tidying up in the manse and then continued to do almost anything required in church, halls, manse and grounds. The first Gift Day was held as a way of financing the reconditioning of pews, and this, a few years later, became the Garden Fete. A Young Worshippers' League attracted 125 members. All the youth organisations saw an increase in numbers, evidence of the 'baby boom' after World War II.

Mrs Wilson played a very active role in the life of the church. It was probably partly due to her influence that the Woman's Guild gave such strong financial support to projects such as the redecoration of the church and halls. On many occasions the Treasurer recorded his thanks for these donations, which helped to balance the books. By 1958 Mr Wilson was able to report at the Stated Annual Meeting that Temple Church was 'in quite good financial position'.

However expensive repairs were soon needed for the old hall, which involved more fund-raising. The manse in Helensburgh Drive was a constant drain on the finances – it needed a great many repairs and with 10 rooms was considered too large. It was finally sold in 1965 and a new manse purchased in Henderland Road.

At the same time as the church was fighting to keep its financial head above water, the organisations and social life of the church was going from strength to strength. Pantomimes and garden fetes were popular and profitable, and a Sunday evening youth meeting was described as only 'moderately successful' when it was attended by between 40 and 45 young people.

Sadly Mr Wilson died in 1967 and his loss was keenly felt by the whole congregation. On 13 June 1971 a memorial service for Mr Wilson was held at Temple Church, attended by his wife and daughter Helen. Four pulpit falls were dedicated in his memory.

1968 to 1984

The induction service of the **Rev Iain MacDougall MA** took place on Thursday 24 October 1968, at which the officiating ministers were the Rev Hamish MacKenzie of Orchardhill Church, Giffnock; the Rev A D C Greer of Kelvingrove Church and the Rev Ironside Simpson of Merrylee Church. At the Congregational Welcome the following evening Dr Harry Thomson of Anniesland Cross Church welcomed Mr MacDougall on behalf of the local churches.

Mr MacDougall almost immediately solved one of the Board's financial problems – he had his own home and did not wish to use the manse at Henderland Road. It was sold, and the sum raised was invested. As the new minister settled in, the organisations, when visited by the elders, were reported to be 'very sound in numbers and enthusiasm'. Early in his ministry Mr MacDougall suggested the holding of a congregational party on Christmas Eve, prior to the watch-night service, which proved popular and became an annual event. He also introduced a Sunday evening meeting where matters of faith were discussed.

The annual garden fete, which became known as the Temple Fayre, was a popular event in the whole neighbourhood and is remembered for its fun and the fact that all age groups could join in. The Work Party became even more important in these cash-strapped days as they gave their time and talents so unstintingly to decorate and repair wear and tear to the buildings. The young people became involved in clean-up operations, too, with some of the Guides, as part of their badge work, polishing the church brass. In 1980 a Summer Play Scheme was organised for the children of the area.

In the early 1980s the general trend of decreasing church membership was also true at Temple. While the congregation were struggling to meet their regular financial commitments, they also faced additional expense due to vandalism and the discovery of dry rot in the church. By 1982 the elders were being warned of 'a dire financial position' and another Gift Day was planned towards the end of the year. Mr MacDougall was not well enough to accept the Gift envelopes, however, and to the congregation's sorrow he died on 7 December 1982.

The church's financial situation improved in the year ahead and all debts were cleared. However, with a membership of 176 and an ageing congregation, Temple was not permitted to call another minister. On 25 March 1984 the congregation voted to unite with Anniesland Cross Church.

The last service in Temple Church took place on Sunday 24 June 1984 when the Rev J Stanley Pritchard took as his text Deuteronomy 3:23: 'Great God, you have begun to show your servant your greatness.' He concluded: 'The way has always been forward The challenges have always been present And now, an open door is set before you through which you must enter if you would be faithful to your promises and to your God.'

