

Prepare for ascent

Julia McGuinness *reflects on* Psalm 125

Security is a big issue. Nations seek it by stockpiling weapons, patrolling borders and policing communities. At a personal level we might fear for our homes, our jobs, possessions and health. Anxiety for the future may keep us awake at night.

Contrast this with the assured tone of this psalm. This is one of a series of psalms known as the Songs of Ascent, or Pilgrim Songs. Here is a song for pilgrims making their way up to Jerusalem and Mount Zion. They are on the move but their spirits are settled. Their attention is not on their concerns, nor on strategies for safety, but on God alone. The way in which they traverse this territory is symbolic of their attitude towards life. A steady, focused trust in the Lord keeps them grounded as securely as holy Mount Zion, rising up before them. The geography completes the picture, with the hills surrounding Jerusalem symbolising the encircling presence of God.

Venturing outdoors, perhaps on a walk, we might reflect on how the very stones under our feet will be here beyond our lifetime. It's a humbling reminder of God's everlasting love. By contrast the psalmist reminds us that challenging situations, however crushing, are only temporary. Our challenge is to hold our nerve and keep our eyes fixed on God's ultimate sovereignty, even when it feels as though our troubles will never end. 🌄



Angels

part I – the Garden of Eden

by Trevor Dennis

Trevor Dennis is an Anglican priest, author, teacher and scripture scholar, who is passionate about opening up the world of biblical scholarship to a wider audience.

There are no angels in the Genesis story of the Garden of Eden. There is no need of any, for God puffs life into Adam and shapes

Eve through mysterious surgery; the divine footsteps can be heard, and prayer is as natural as conversation. This is the being-with-God that we dream of. We dream of it, but for the most part we do not experience it. God seems more remote, harder to hear, and prayer does not always come naturally. The Genesis story says so itself, for by the end Adam and Eve find themselves outside God's garden, and that is where we are, too. So we need go-betweens, angels ascending and descending, as they did for Jacob when he lay down to sleep at Bethel. Down-to-earth angels will do – people, music, animals or birds, that set us on a ladder leading to heaven. We all have our angels. Thank God for them! 🌄

“Prayer cannot be truly called commission, if the only voice heard be the voice of the pleader. Josephine Butler (1828-1906), English social reformer

Lord, help us learn to use those moments when anxieties rise to refocus on you. Remind us that there is nothing too big for you to handle, and nothing too small for you to care about. Amen.

Walking with Poppy

overcoming fear

by Gillian Cooper

In the park two large geese run towards us, necks forward, hissing. We take evasive action while I think about the actions of the geese. Clearly they are afraid of Poppy. She is far too small and too gentle to do them or their goslings any harm, but they seem

to be programmed to be afraid of dogs, and they mount a hostile pre-emptive strike, just in case.

We humans also have fear and distrust in our natures. Our most primitive instincts recoil from anything or anyone that we perceive as dangerous or different. But unlike the geese, we have the capacity to examine and critique our fears and hostilities. We can hold in our hand the feared spider, and become friends with the potential enemy, as we follow Jesus, who endured hostility and fear to show us that for God's children, even death is not as scary as we think. 🌄

Church of Scotland: Orphir & Stenness Parish

Interim Moderator: Rev June Freeth 721449

Locum Minister: Rev M Prentice 851139

Session Clerk: Nicol 811242 **Service Co-ordinator:** Elaine 811205

Kirk Information

There is a loop system. Adjust hearing aids to benefit.

Switch off phones. They cause interference with the organ.

A warm invitation is extended to everyone to meet in the hall, after the service, for a cup of tea or coffee.

Intimations

Thursday 10-12: Community Café

Community Festival of Christmas Trees: Once again it is time to plan our annual tree festival. The theme this year is **book titles**. The format is as previous years. Details on yellow Information sheets.

Survey – Completed Surveys should be put into the box in the hall. The consultation period is from 2nd – 23rd September (3 weeks). It is important that you have the opportunity to have your view on any possible changes or improvements to the kirk building – so please fill in the survey. Your thoughts and ideas (big or small) are important. Thank you.

Café transport- If you know anyone who needs transport to the Community Café please phone Anne Groundwater: 811394

Help: We need help at the café. Could you serve and chat to people for a couple of hours a week? Add your name to the rota in hall.

Readings James 2: 1-10 & 14-17 Mark 7: 24-37

Hymns 59 Oh come, and let us to the Lord
 198 Let us build a house
 710 I have a dream
 694 Brother Sister let me serve you
 JP78 He's got the whole world in his hands.

Doxology:

May God's blessing surround you each day,
As you trust Him and walk in his way,
May his presence within guard and keep you from sin,
Go in peace, go in joy, go in love.