

13.9.20 pm Stuart and Joyce King Testimony

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Preacher: Stuart and Joyce King

[0 : 00] Good evening and a warm welcome to the service this evening, especially to any who might be tuning in for the first time or tuning in particularly to hear the testimony of Stuart and Joyce. It's good to have you on the screen or on the telephone or however it is you're connecting.

It's good for us to be able to listen to how God is working in the lives of people and to come together in worship. And we're going to begin this time of worship by singing to God's praise in Psalm 91. Both praises have been chosen by Stuart and Joyce. So Psalm 91 verses 1 to verse 5.

He that doth in the secret place of the Most High reside under the shade of him that is the Almighty shall abide. I of the Lord my God will say he is my refuge still. He's my fortress and my God and in him trust I will. We'll sing to verse 5 of this psalm.

He that doth in the secret place of the Most High reside under the shade of him that is the Almighty shall abide. He is my refuge still. He is my refuge still. He is my refuge still. He is my my fortress and my God and in him trust I will. Assuredly he shall be safe and give delight.

from the noise some pestilence. His feathers shall be high.

[3 : 14] Thy trust under His wings shall be. His faithfulness shall be a shield and buckler unto Thee.

Thou shalt not need to be afraid for terrors of the night, nor for the arrow that doth fly by day, while it is light.

And just before I hand over to Stuart and Joyce, I want to read just a short passage from Acts chapter 16. And in that passage we find Paul, the apostle, and Timothy and a few others, and they're heading out to sea.

So Acts chapter 16 and verse 11. From Troas we put out to sea and sailed straight for Samothrass, and the next day on to Neapolis. From there we travelled to Philippi, a Roman colony, and the leading city of that district of Macedonia.

And we stayed there several days. On the Sabbath we went outside the city gate to the river where we expected to find a place of prayer. We sat down and began to speak to the woman who had gathered there.

[5 : 06] One of those listening was a woman named Lydia, a dealer in purple cloth from the city of Thyatira, who was a worshipper of God. The Lord opened her heart to respond to Paul's message.

Now in that passage, just a few verses, we are taken into a small prayer meeting. And it's a prayer meeting that's down by a river.

We see Paul, the apostle. We see Timothy. He's identified in verse 1 of chapter 16 as being part of the company that was with Paul. And we see, particularly in this passage, a woman called Lydia.

Now think first of all about Paul. How was Paul converted? How did he become a Christian? Well, it was all very sudden. And it was all very supernatural.

You can read about it in Acts chapter 9. I'm not going to go there just now. But we see in Paul's conversion that there's bright lights. There's a thundering voice from heaven.

[6 : 21] It's a point of high drama. Paul's conversion is a remarkable, it's an exceptional kind of conversion experience when he comes to trust in the Lord Jesus.

What about Timothy? We thought about Paul. What about Timothy? Well, for Timothy, we're not actually sure exactly how or when he was converted, how or when he came to believe in Jesus.

We know from Paul's second letter to Timothy that Timothy's grandmother, whose name was Lois, she was a believer. We know that Timothy's mother, who was called Eunice, she was a believer too.

And they taught Timothy the Bible. We learn that in Paul's second letter to Timothy. Likely they prayed with Timothy as a wee boy. They prayed with him.

They prayed for him. And at some point, and we have to assume it was much less dramatic than Paul, Timothy too, he was converted, probably as a young man.

[7 : 29] We don't know when exactly, we don't know exactly how, but we know that he came to believe in Jesus. He was pointed to Jesus, and he came in God's time to believe in Jesus.

And then there was Lydia, who is focused on, particularly in these verses that we read. She was a worshipper of God, it says, which was biblical language for someone who knew about God, who was respectful towards God and the things of God, but didn't know God, had no relationship with God.

She wasn't born again. She wasn't saved. And then on that day, down at a prayer meeting, down by a river, the gospel was being preached by Paul, and the Lord opened her heart, very gently, and she responded in faith to Paul's message about Jesus.

And she believed. And she was converted. And the point I want to make, the only point I want to make this evening, is that it doesn't matter where you are, and it doesn't matter how much drama or how little drama there is in the story of how you met Jesus.

It doesn't matter whether you're knocked flat on your back, as Paul was. It doesn't matter whether you heard about Jesus on your mother's knee or your granny's knee or in a Sunday school lesson, as Timothy did, or whether you're seeking God at a prayer meeting or a first century church service, as Lydia was.

[9 : 16] What matters is that when you and I hear the truth that we are great sinners and that Christ Jesus is the great saviour, what matters is that we believe.

It doesn't matter where. It doesn't matter particularly when. Whether there's lots of drama or there's no apparent drama. What matters is when we hear about Jesus and we realise our need of him, we believe.

For God so loved the world that he gave us one and only Son that whoever believes in him shall not perish but shall have eternal life.

Now let's pray before Stuart and Joyce speak. Our Heavenly Father, we thank you for your word and we thank you for these characters that we're pointed to even in that short passage.

We thank you for the way that you work and the lives of people. For Paul, who was so much against Jesus, we thank you for that encounter on the Damascus Road that was so remarkable and so dramatic that brought him to recognise Jesus and to believe in Jesus.

[10 : 40] And for Timothy, these pictures that we have of him as a young child being taught the scriptures from his grandmother, perhaps from his mother, and coming in your time to believe.

And Lydia, down by the river at the prayer meeting as one who was being drawn to God and who had respect for the things of God but did not yet know God until that moment when her heart was opened and she came to believe.

We thank you that you are the God who knows us. You are the God who deals with us. Each of us in a different way. And we thank you that you are the same God who's still working.

And as we heard from Hugh last Sunday evening of your work and his life, we thank you for Joyce and for Stuart and for their willingness to speak about how you have worked and how you are working in their lives.

We pray that you would bless them as they share their testimony. And Lord, that you would speak to us as we listen to what they have to say. Enable us, we pray, to hear the truth about Jesus that he is the great saviour.

[11 : 57] And we ask that each one of us would know our great sense of need that we are sinners who need to be saved. So help us, we pray, to hear, to be given faith and to believe.

And we pray all these things in Jesus' name. Amen. Well, good evening. And I just want to say how much of a privilege it is to be able to share with you our testimony, myself and Joyce.

And as Hugh said last week, we need to be in a position to be able to share the hope that we have. And it's an honour to be able to do that with you this evening. What we're hoping to do is we'll transition between both of ourselves and start from our early life and into our upbringing.

And we'll, as I say, rotate. Each one of us will speak. But before we do, I think it's worthwhile that we start with God's Word. And if we look at the words within Isaiah chapter 64 and verse 8, it says, We are the clay, you are the potter, we are all the work of your hand.

And it's something that will very much be a theme throughout our testimony this evening. But I'll hand over to Joyce gladly and let her begin with her own upbringing and early life. Okay, well, thank you.

[13 : 12] As daunting as it is to do this, and particularly in front of a camera, it is a privilege to be able to speak of what the Lord has done in my life and in our life as a family as well.

I think, going right back to the beginning, we've got very, very different stories. But I think, as Hugh said, yes, in the last week's testimony, that the glory is not ours, it's God's.

And everything that we speak of tonight is not to bring any glory to ourselves, it's to bring the glory to God because he's the one who's worked us.

And that's why we've chosen that verse at the beginning. He's the potter and we are the clay and he's shaping us and he's moulding us to be more like himself. And hopefully, we're able to get that across as to how he's done that in our lives so far.

I'm sure most people will know who I am. I'm Joyce. I am a district nurse in Harris here. And I am originally from Harris, born and brought up here in a very happy home with my two sisters and my parents.

[14 : 38] And we were, what I would say, a church-going family. We were at church every week, Sunday school, and we were encouraged to do that and also encouraged to pray.

And we were taught from an early age to pray every night before bed, which has been something that's stood us in good stead. And although my parents aren't Christians as yet, I'm very thankful to them for the upbringing I had and for their encouragement and their love and care to us in bringing us to church and to Sunday school.

During my younger years, I, as I said, we went to church, went to Sunday school. And really, it was, that's just the pattern that we had.

I would say at that point, my relationship with God was that I knew about him, but I didn't know him. And that's probably how I would describe that part of my life.

And that went on probably till early secondary years. And I enjoyed going to church. I enjoyed all the activities that involved. I respected those in the church.

[15 : 52] We had great examples of the Christian life in our church. And Hugh spoke of that last week as well. And I'll probably speak a bit more of them later.

But we had very great influences in our lives, Christian influences, who drew us to them. And we saw something in them that for me personally, I wanted.

But probably at that age, I thought, it's something that I'll think about in later years. So bringing me up to the early secondary years, probably between the ages of 14 and 16, I, probably, something changed then.

And I was, I was always brought up to be respectful of those in the church. church. And the attraction that I spoke about a wee bit earlier, I think, just grew and grew as to I wanted what they had.

And probably without really recognising it myself, I became more interested in going to church and being with Christians. And to be honest, I probably, if you asked me then, I probably would have just said that's normal.

[17 : 05] I didn't really know there was anything going on. But I, a couple of, in the church, Angus and Kirsty Mackellar moved in down the road from us and I became their babysitter for their children.

And at that time, they were heavily involved in the youth work of our church, as they still are. And they were very inviting and kind of led me to come to more youth events in the church, including YF and youth clubs and things like that as well.

And that was something I was very grateful for. And I can see how God was using them to direct me in a path that was leading me to himself. Also, others in the church too, from our, you know, Hugh mentioned them again last week, our Sunday school teachers, they had a great influence on us.

And, again, I'm so thankful for them and the influence they had on us. Also, my Uncle Dan and my Aunt Joan in Marig had a massive influence in my life as well.

And I saw, I could just see Christ in them. At every meeting with them, at every time I visited their home, you could always see Christ radiating from both of them.

[18 : 32] And again, all these things were just attracting me to want what they had. And I probably didn't realise at the time what it was, but God dealt with me gently and took me in very gently to believing in him and asking for forgiveness of my sins.

So it was through all these, all these things work together between the witness of many in our church and in our community, from our Sunday school teachers to our elders to members in the congregation to those in the community and other congregations to, I must say, I was brought very quietly and very gently to know the Lord.

And it probably all, so much so that I probably actually didn't realise. It just happened. And I think the first time I realised was at communion weekend in the Church of Scotland in Tarbert in March 2004 where we had the Reverend Tommy MacNeill preaching and he spoke on Mark chapter 5 about the woman with the issue of blood and he spoke about how this woman was healed but then retreated back into the crowd and he was likening that to somebody who had been healed of their sin or had become converted and then had retreated back and not told anybody and I could have been the only person sitting in that church that night because I thought he is, you know, this is a message for me and I left that church that night knowing that

I had to tell people that indeed God had changed my life and it was that weekend that I became a member of the church in Tarbert and it was a lovely weekend and it was a lot of good memories of communion weekends over that time and up until now too but going back to that night that I did join the church I remember my uncle Dan actually telling me the story afterwards that on the night that I went to tell that I told people that I was a Christian and I wanted to become a member of the church the minister actually minister of Reverend McKeever actually wanted to come and speak to me that night but Angus Alec a elder much love elder said no leave her just now leave her with the Lord and it was wise words because the Lord had it all sorted and he'd already worked through his servants already to bring me to that place just before

I let Stuart speak I will let you speak I'm used to it actually I think I'm probably linking you'll probably see there's a bit of a trend in both our stories is in work amongst youth and it's got a particular place in my heart because I saw what people did for us as youth here in Harris and I always quote it and I always talk about it about a Gaelic prayer meeting I attended when I was first converted and there was many faithful elders and their wives and men and women in the church that went to that prayer meeting and they all every single one of them had a heart for the youth in the community and that was that had such an impact on me that I hope that I too personally have that love and that earnestness to pray for these young people in their own community because there was certainly a movement of the spirit during the time when I was in school and probably up until what Hugh was talking to about last week and that was a spread of about 10 years where there's been young people coming to know the Lord in their youth and it was a wonderful time and it was amazing to hear these men pray for us and I could just see their earnestness that they were just so fervent in their prayers that they wanted the youth to believe in the God that they believed in and my prayer is that we do the same so I'm going to let you speak so in terms of my own upbringing in early life it's somewhat similar to Joyce's although we may be head off in slightly different trajectories as I get slightly older

[23 : 45] I was born and brought up in Glasgow in a non-Christian home similar to Joyce albeit a church going home with my mother and my brother my father left when I was about 10 months old he left the house and it was really just my mum and my brother beyond then so we went to the Free Presbyterian Church in Glasgow in St Jude's and I would say honestly from a relatively early age I didn't really enjoy going to church it's more of a reflection on me than anything else but I did everything I could particularly within school to maybe suppress the fact that I was actually going to church and I think a lot of that was that outward influence of nobody else around me was going along to church so I did everything I could to suppress that which when I look back is something I wish I hadn't done but that was the situation that I was in however one of the real positives in looking back is I'm able to see some of the really valuable lessons that I learned in my time going to church in St Jude's in Glasgow from learning our catechism to our memory verses so that Sunday school influence albeit at the time

I maybe wasn't receptive to it in later years it's come to be very useful and something I do look back upon with great fondness now I would say I never felt at any point throughout school that I didn't believe in God I suppose my grandfather's influence he was an elder in the Free Presbyterian Church his influence did have a clear impact on me and at no point throughout my school years did I ever have a time where I didn't believe that there was a God I was however completely drifting away from that God at the time just based on the influences and that possibly peer pressure that I was having within school so as I maybe move through into secondary years as I'm drifting further and further away from God it results in me beginning to go down a completely different trajectory similar than to what Joyce was going down so I was then hanging about with friends from the ages of about 13 14 15 as young as that we would be going out at the weekends we would be drinking so I was quite clearly drifting away from where God would have intended for me and that results in me ultimately refusing to go to church looking back

I had quite a bit of a torrid time with my mother I gave her a bit of a hard time with going to church and it came to the point where I just refused and was somewhat stubborn in my approach and refused to stop just start going to church and that was around the ages of about 14 or 15 and I would come not to return for another 10 years or so so that was a point where I really did indeed drift quite far away and then maybe fast forward to the later years in secondary so maybe about fifth year I was continued to do what I did each weekend we would go out with our friends and we would have a great time together but it then culminated in a point where at the age of 15 I was assaulted seriously assaulted whilst going out one night where I ended up in an altercation where somebody had put a glass bottle over my face and then tried to stab me with the rest of the bottle and for me that was a real moment of surprise and shock obviously for that to have happened but it really made me take stock of my life and where I was at one of the examples

I've heard in somebody else's testimony is that of a bungee rope one that you would see in like a show one of the shows that you go to where the bungee rope lets you go so far but then you do indeed ping back to the beginning and I felt at that point when I look back now that that was the Lord he'd let me go so far and thought no you need to refocus and re-centre where your priorities lie here so that then resulted in me leaving I decided to leave school I thought this isn't worth it I'm living a life that was not intended for me I was not brought up to live a life like this and I thought maybe if I take control again I'll be able to refocus things and move in a way that will hopefully steer me away from the troubles that I had encountered but again that was part of the problem I was focusing on self rather than focusing on God so I chose to leave school I chose to refocus and then decided that I would go to college beyond that or maybe let Joyce go to post school years

I know you've given me a few minutes but I can give you some back maybe if you go into post school years that will then lead into myself and how I then came to the Lord so after I left school I went to Glasgow in 2005 and studied nursing there for three years and then stayed on after I got a job in the Beatesen after that my uni days were great I enjoyed being in uni I enjoyed Glasgow I was very very blessed to have a great group of friends who all supported one another and I was very very fortunate to find a church that I was comfortable in and a church that nourished us as young Christians and helped us to grow and to learn more about the Bible and to learn more about God and about being close to God and those days

[29 : 36] I look back on and they were great in terms of my nursing and training and things there was that had its ups and downs as well just every placement was different I was 17 going into Glasgow and just off the croft and it was a big learning curve going to Glasgow but definitely wouldn't have changed any of it and certainly God was before me in that and there was many a day that I remember walking along Hindland Road on Tiber Road to the Old Western Infirmary and being quite anxious about starting a new placement and it was always like starting again it was always introducing yourself and then you would introduce that you were a Christian and it was always quite an anxious time when you went to a new place and because you were a student it happened all the time because you were always on placement in different places but I remember going along and it was a lovely morning and nice 12 air shifts and starting at 7 o'clock in the morning but the best bit was you were there for the sun coming up and it was just looking around at the trees and the sun and praying that God would be with me that day and he certainly was so although there was times of anxiety missing home he certainly was there with me and I'm so thankful for the people that he put in my path as well because so many of them had an influence on me as well and too many to name but it's amazing to have that to find somewhere where you feel settled in a church and a family the church family that supports you and nourishes you in your faith so for that

I was very thankful the Christian life can come with some surprises as well and some exciting and challenging things in your life I think a lot of people and maybe somebody watching would think that we're all quite boring and we just we don't do very much but if you'd asked me when I was younger if a girl from Kailas would end up in Lahore in Pakistan or Kampala in Uganda I would have said where is that I wouldn't have known where that was but God had a plan and he sent me there for short term mission trips during my holidays when I was a student and then again when I was qualified and it was amazing to see God's work in another country as well because I think so often we can become quite insular and look at our own situations and not see God's mission as a world mission and having those opportunities was certainly had an influence on my life and the work that's been done in both these places as in other countries and cities in the world where God's people have been placed to help others and to bring others to the Lord and it was wonderful for a little person like me from Paris to go on and be able to see that and that was really what brought me up until around about what

Stuart Simon is leaving us so yeah so shortly after leaving school as I decided I was going to sort things out myself and I was going to refocus my life foolishly I felt that I was the one that was going to be the one that would dictate what that would look like shortly after leaving school and I was in college my mum actually was diagnosed with bowel cancer and was very much seriously ill with that and with my brother still at university through a number of conversations we had together I decided that I would then go into full time work so I left the further education that I was doing and decided to go and be employed and give back to the community so I started working for Scottish Power at that point and much with a lot of things employment and the working life brings itself a lot of temptations and there's a there's a quote I was reading in recent months and it speaks a lot to these temptations that many of you will be feeling just now whether you're in the workplace whether you're at university wherever you find yourselves it was

Thomas Watson and he said Satan never sets a dish before men that they do not love and that was speaking now as I look back really into my life at that point so I was trying to dictate what was going to happen in my life and I chose that I would go into work but then with that there all becomes a whole load of temptations once you're getting a good pay into your into your bank every month these things tend to to start to create a number of temptations in your life and the reality is we are weak and we will succumb to those as that quote says Satan will never put something before you that you don't love and that you don't want so it's about trying to focus on Christ in order to help us to suppress these temptations but I suppose at that point as my mum recovered and thankful to God for that she's doing very well just now as well I tended to just roll on through the working life parallel to this two of my cousins

Marion and Andrew who were both Christians in Glasgow at the time where at the time I would were pestering me to come to church I know looking back it's not pestering at all but at the time they were very adamant that they wanted me to come back to church they were encouraging me to come along to Downvale in Glasgow and I was always saying no, no absolutely not and it eventually came to the point where rather rudely I think I responded to my cousin Andrew and said listen I'm not going to church stop asking me I will decide when I go back to church so please just stop asking foolishly I thought that was true and it was up to me as to when I would return back to church but I suppose that would maybe be a word of encouragement for anyone in that situation if you're encouraging friends and family or if you're encouraging somebody else to come to church or to at least engage with some sort of Bible study or engage in the word don't be discouraged when they say no when they say no because again it's not in your hands there will come a point where hopefully in God's province their hearts will become like flesh and they will become receptive to that so persevere don't give up at the time

[36 : 36] I thought it was pestering but now very much not and I'm very grateful for them so shortly after that very shortly a couple of months after I sent that rather rude text to my cousin to say leave me alone I was on a bus journey back from Inverness to Glasgow and I was reading a book at the time and I remember it wasn't an audible voice but I do remember in my head answering a question and I said no problem at all I'll go back to church tomorrow this was a Saturday afternoon now I didn't hear a voice or anything like that but I consciously remember answering that question would you go to church and I thought yep no problem at all I'll go to church so I said to my mum said to my mum that evening make sure I get up in the morning on Sunday morning because I'm going to go to church and I don't think she believed it for one second but sure enough the next day I thought I woke up and I decided to get my Sunday best on and I got dressed and I went off to Downvale in Glasgow and I started going to church at that point and that's where I obviously met Joyce who was going along to Downvale as well and that's the point

I got to know not just Joyce but as I started to get to know Christians and as Joyce was referring to earlier someone may look at Christians and used to think they were boring and that was me I used to think oh I don't know if I want to get in with a Christian crowd doesn't seem really exciting doesn't seem fun but the absolute opposite and being in amongst Christians I felt like I was in amongst friends and people that I really wanted to be around so that influence was excellent over the preceding months as I started to listen to the word and started to understand the word a lot more Joyce was very much she'll not like me hearing this and you'll probably see a change of colour on the screen in a wee minute but she was immensely supportive of me in coming to my faith she would encourage me enormously she introduced me to Bible studies introduced me to how to not how to pray properly but how to pray with confidence and how important that prayer is and how having that continual communion with God will help to see us grow in our faith so prayer is indeed so important

I don't know probably on screen but we see there 1 Thessalonians 5 rejoice always pray without ceasing give thanks in all circumstances for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you so throughout these months the Holy Spirit was very much starting to work within my life and I ended up going to Christianity Explored a very worthwhile course it's one we've run here ourselves and wherever you are if there's an opportunity to engage in a Christianity Explored course I would very much encourage you to and the more I understood what he had done for me the more I was convinced of my own helplessness and I'll always remember one of the the final sessions of Christianity Explored Reverend Mark McLeod who's in Leverborough I remember him asking just generally to me where I was spiritually it was just a very simple question where are you and I proceeded to go down the route of well I do believe in a God but I don't read the Bible enough I don't know enough about the Bible there was all these excuses I was putting in place as to why

I was not a Christian and he responded with one of the that's one of the most important things I think I've heard through my testimony where he said you've very much got the spotlight on you you need to turn that spotlight and point it to Christ because it's not anything to do with you and he's absolutely right our eternal destination doesn't depend on us it depends on him and that's something that we need to be mindful of many of you here will be sitting thinking I don't deserve to be saved or I'm not good enough and I'll be honest you're absolutely right neither was I neither was Joyce none of us were neither was Hugh last week but if you come to Jesus and if you place your trust in him you're made alive in him he has dealt with your sins the sins don't disappear but when God looks on you he sees his son who bore that overwhelming debt for you and it's something that we need to continually remember so I will pass on to Joyce if you've got any more to say on that you probably want to gloss over the influence you were on me but well when we were actually thinking about giving our testimonies tonight we thought back to actually the last time we did this was actually two years ago almost to the day at our own communion here in Tarbert and it was a wonderful communion weekend that left us on a spiritual high and it was it was a wonderful weekend and as these weekends are they build us up and we leave with a heavy heart on a Sunday evening wanting to stay listening to God's word with their church family but we have to go back into the world and as Stuart said a lot of people's hurdles for becoming

Christians is either they think they're not good enough or we as Christians are sometimes a bit of a disappointment and I remember hearing what's it that I said I don't like your Christianity but I like your Christ was that Dalai Lama yeah and sometimes we fail but I'm saying this as an encouragement because we're not perfect and you know if we were perfect we wouldn't need a saviour but we we fail and we do come across trials you know the Christian life isn't perfect it's not an easy road by any means but what we these trials and any sadness and griefs that we have in the world are only for a short time compared with everlasting life or eternity with Christ in heaven when we die and the reason

[42 : 57] I was talking about the last testimony that we gave was like that we were on a spiritual high and it was a week or so later that a trial came our way and without going into too much detail it knocked us for six came out to the blue but again the reason I'm saying this is because not because it was to put anybody off but it's to say that we do face trials we again the potters they are working us moulding us to make us more like himself and I think you could have been mistaken to look at Stuart and I at that night when we gave our testimonies and thought there's nothing wrong with them they've got everything they've got it all sorted but it only took a couple of weeks later for us to have a testing of our faith I would say and the reason I say that is because as it says in 1 Peter 1 it says in all this you greatly rejoice though now for a little while you have to suffer grief in all kinds of trials these have come so that you have proven genuineness of your faith of greater worth than gold which perishes even though refined by fire that it may result in praise glory and honour when Jesus

Christ is revealed so it's these things that bring us nearer to Christ and I don't want to bring down what we've said already of the goodness of God in our lives but it's just to reinforce that even when we do go through difficulties and trials that he's the one that takes us back out of them just as a word of encouragement many would have maybe looked at us as a couple as a family and thought it was maybe a really easy transition because the reality is when we look back from our time in Glasgow and our time actually moving up to Harris it was made easy for us there were Joyce was working in nursing I was working in an HR role currently doing my postgraduate studies and if I left employment I would have to pay back all of my studies but when I spoke to my employers and I explained to them this was a family decision all those concerns around fees were removed there were roles that became available in the

NHS Western Isles three particular posts in HR which are enormously rare all fell into place and we probably complacently thought this was being laid before us and that the Lord was leading us here which I think he ultimately did but it would be remiss of us to think that there would be no trials in our lives and soon eventually they would indeed come but even looking in recent months when we look at this global pandemic that we're going through they've certainly shaken up many of us as well and from our own perspective I think we had a lot of routine in our lives and we felt we were doing a lot of busyness particularly within the church as well and that period of lockdown helps you to refocus and remember the things that are important and you start to look back and say was I having time private prayer on my own with the Lord and you start to refocus on where your time was going your 24 hours in the day and I think

I speak for myself but there was very little time that I gave to the Lord and that certainly helps to refocus and there's a book that Gordon actually gave me the trellis and the vine and although the trellis focuses primarily on the church and the structures within the church it's very applicable to the individual and to the family the trellis very much relates to structures that we have in our lives and making sure that we do things correctly and we do them in the correct form and the vine the picture of that is life and fruit that is established on the trellis if we focus too much on the trellis then the vine won't take hold and bring life and it's true of our own lives if we focus on structure we focus on routine if we just go to church for the sake of going or if we engage with other activities within the church just for the sake of that or to tick a box then what growth is there and what life is there in that church or in yourself as an individual we spend vital energy on maintaining the trellis not that these things are bad not that these things we shouldn't be doing but imagine if we spent that time on the vine we would see much growth and much vitality both in our own lives our spiritual lives with

God and that was something I think lockdown certainly helped achieve with us regularly we would be coming home at 6 7 o'clock at night tired we would just be throwing food down our throats and we wouldn't really have time to spend as a family but working partly from home partly from Tarbert these things were softened for us and it did allow us to refocus on family and being able to realise that the Lord is the one that's sovereign in this situation and we need to be reminded of that but as Joyce was alluding to there I'll maybe just want to leave you with one passage from James chapter 1 and it's about that the walk that we have and that we should have joy in our suffering so James chapter 1 verses 2 to 4 says count it all joy my brothers when you meet trials of various kinds for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness and let steadfastness have its full effect that you may be perfect and complete lacking in nothing so like the example at the beginning of the clay and the potter we are going to be refined we're going to be reworked there may be times where we even have to start from scratch again but we need to be reminded that the Lord is the one that's sovereign and he's the one that's looking after us and if we are in him and we place our trust in him then we have an eternity and a hope to look forward to and it's something that we do as a family and we're grateful to the congregation here and for the building up that Emily has as well in the congregation we've not spoken much about Emily but talking of trials no but in all seriousness

[49 : 20] Emily's had a wonderful few years that we've spent here and we're so grateful for everything that everyone does for us and we just continue to pray for our own youth we work with the youth fellowship as well and we continue to pray for them and that they would know the Lord early and that they would have lives that are clearly pointed towards Christ there'll be bumps there'll be veers off the road but we know that we have an eternal saviour and a saviour that is gracious and merciful and one that we should trust in all situations I don't know if you've got anything else you want to add we probably should have taken Emily she would have been a much better evangelist than us but I suppose just to finish up I'll maybe just say a wee word of prayer to close us off this evening dear heavenly father Lord we indeed thank you for all that you've given to us Lord all you've given to myself and Joyce and to Emily as a family Lord and we are so grateful for opportunities such as this where we're able to share the hope that we have

Lord that we have a God that is near to us we don't have a distant God that is hard to connect with Lord we are able to pray to you each and every day as we see in the words on the wall here we pray without ceasing we have continual fellowship with you Lord and we are so thankful that we can indeed use this medium although nobody is with us here that we're not able to share this testimony in front of people we're able to share it and it will go online Lord and we pray that those who listen will be encouraged by it and that they'll not be discouraged Lord knowing that none of us are perfect none of us are deserving of entry into heaven Lord without your saviour Lord we thank you for him for sending your only son him who knew no sin who became sin for us Lord we are so thankful for all that you did Lord and that you sent him for us and he died on the cross for our sins Lord so we ask that you'll go before us just now Lord forgive us for all of our sins in Christ's name we pray Amen great is thy faithfulness

O God my father there is no shadow turning with me thou changest not thy compassion say fail not.

As thou hast been, thou forever wilt be. Great is thy faithfulness, great is thy faithfulness.

Morning by morning, new mercies I see. All I have needed, thy hand hath provided.

[52 : 29] Great is thy faithfulness, Lord, unto me. Summer and winter and springtime and harvest, sun, moon, and stars in their courses above, join in all nature in valuable witness, to thy great faithfulness, mercy and love.

great is thy great is thy faithfulness, great is thy faithfulness. Morning by morning, new mercies I see.

All I have needed, thy hand hath provided. provider, great is thy faithfulness, Lord, unto me.

Great is thy faithfulness, Lord, unto me. Great is thy faithfulness, Lord, unto me. God, for you, Lord, unto me. Amen. Amen. Amen. Pardon for sin and the peace that endure, and the peace that endure, and the peace that endure, and the peace that endure, Thine only presence to cheer and to guide, strength for today and bright hope for tomorrow.

blessed is all mine, blessed is all mine, with ten thousand beside. Great is thy faithfulness, great is thy faithfulness, morning by morning, new mercies I see.

[54 : 30] All I have needed, my hand hath provided. great is thy faithfulness, Lord, unto me.

Amen. The final prayer from the end of Jude.

And now to him who is able to keep you from falling, and to present you before his glorious presence without fault, and with great joy to the one and only God our Saviour, be glory, majesty, power, and authority through Jesus Christ our Lord, before all ages, now, and forevermore.

Amen.