

St. Luke's Gazette

December 2020



Editor's message

It is an absolute pleasure to be able to present to you this collection of articles. None of this would have been possible without the support of the community and, in particular, the contributors who sacrificed valuable time to produce such great articles. Fr. Markos has written about the times we live in and the hope we can derive from our Christian faith. This is followed by an interview with Giorgos Stakias, who has served as a cantor for many years at St. Luke. Prof. John Huntley discusses, in an eminently readable article, the history of our church building and the special place it has in Glasgow history. Finally, Magdalene Alatzoglou shares her personal journey to the Orthodox faith. A special thank you to Petros Lardas for taking pictures of the church building and Giorgos Stakias.

There is a line in T. S. Eliot's poem *The Waste Land* that resonates with me deeply: 'I will show you fear in a handful of dust'. These are truly frightening words. What becomes of a world so afraid of corporeal death because there is only dust and nothingness in the end? It may well be that we are finding out right now. We may not currently have the freedoms we are accustomed to, but we do have the freedom that matters and that which cannot be easily denied or taken away. It is, of course, spiritual freedom. A Christian is a Christian by choice and not by diktat or birth. Let us not wear our faith like we wear the labels on our clothes. Our Orthodox faith is a lived faith, and certainly not one of academic discourse. Our community will prosper as long as we remain true to that which unites us as one body!

Dr. Costy Kodosi

Faith in times of COVID-19

Fr. Markos Mitchell

As Christmas approaches after an unusual year, somehow it does not seem the best thing to add any more to the wearying load of words which have bombarded us already from the 'media'. And one thing has been certain as we sank under the volume of 'information', 'facts and figures', interpretations, and explanations, most of it conveyed through the distorting medium of journalism or opinion - that all our advanced scientific technology and all socio-political systems have proved to be inadequate in the face of a serious epidemic, because, being human constructs, they are as subject to failure and corruption as is all of our fallen human nature, which is itself subject to disease and death as a symptom of our collective ambition to take the place of the omnipotent God.

The whole world has this year been given challenging opportunities for humility and repentance, as it battled with something beyond its powers, and as its 'solutions' to control it produced more problems than they solved. It has been a nightmare scenario, with uncertainty, fear, confusion and much ignorance, despite many claims from those who claim to know better than

others. Measures to protect us and keep us safe resulted in what felt like a kind of tyranny, as so often happens when human plans to save the world or to stamp out injustice and suffering are applied with force (since they generally don't work very well) and become something like dangerous ideologies, as we know happened with Communism. The result has been a pitiful tragedy for the whole of humanity, where none of us should feel we are in a position to criticise those who battle bravely to take control; for what would we do if put in their position?

For people of faith, too, it has been especially challenging, in that we have come to see the stark reality of living in a world which runs on secular ideas; where places of worship are classified simply as enclosed spaces where a lot of people gather together, classifiable in the same category as pubs and bingo-halls, in the same way that the world looked upon the person of Christ and saw only His human nature. The grace of God, His healing power and His protection are not part of the reckoning for science. Yet, at the same time, lest we should assume that our faith makes us better than our rulers or indeed than non-believers, we

have seen that devout Orthodox Christians, indeed some of them hierarchs, can become infected and die, showing us that we certainly need to beg for God's protection, but should not simply assume that our faith will guarantee us immunity, and that we can therefore ignore scientific advice, which is a very arrogant kind of faith indeed. As humans, we need to do what we can, with humility, and pray to God for what is beyond our powers.

It has been difficult, too, for us to find ourselves in an emergency situation swamped with a single-minded preoccupation with bodily health, and where hardly any thought is given to our need for spiritual or psychological health, largely because that is a deeply complex area where 'science' as we know it is largely out of its depth. The orthodox Christian view of illness and suffering is likewise complex; we do not need to read far in the Gospels to see the connection Christ makes between illness and sin (sin, not in the moral sense so much as in its true meaning of being disconnected from God), although a pandemic shows how the whole of society is affected, since our every individual sin does have a negative effect on the whole world around us, just as individual or isolated examples of holiness have a sanctifying effect from which we all benefit. And we know that the corruption of sin begins in the thoughts, in the interior life of each person, before it extends to bodily states or action. But illness, paradoxically, can also be a source of healing from a spiritual perspective if one approaches it with the faith of one taking up the cross, and because of our weakness before such suffering, it can lead us towards humility, patience, endurance, and the cutting off of our own will, while for those who have little or no faith, it can be a cause of repentance and awakening. We are reminded in times of epidemic that we will all have to face the experience of bodily death, perhaps much sooner than we think, and that the purpose and meaning of this temporary life is to prepare ourselves for what is to come. Suffering of some kind will always be with us in this world, because otherwise humanity would come to believe that we have paradise on earth. We as Christians have learned to put our hope in the Cross and to accept suffering as the narrow and thorny path to resurrection, but the secular world - and we too at times, when our passions dominate us - will do anything to eliminate or avoid suffering in order to seek our own, godless version of 'salvation'. Of

course it is right and good to strive to relieve the suffering of others, but the ultimate problem of death remains.

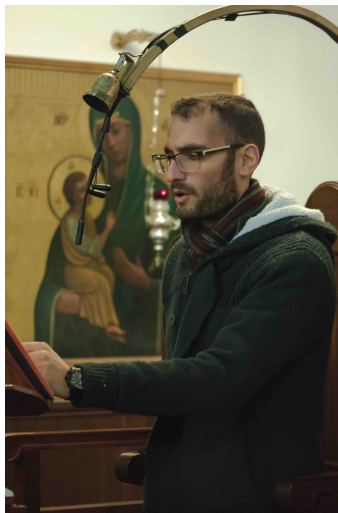
We have heard much about how many lives can be saved by lockdowns or vaccines, which may indeed be true, but the world seems to forget that this kind of salvation simply gives us a few more years perhaps before the eventual and inevitable reality of death; it does not save us from death in any true sense - only Christ can do that. People have been made dependent on reading the news every day, but we are distracted by endless pieces of contradictory information, disputes, fake news and conspiracy theories, so that people no longer know what or whom to believe. And so we see how for all our science and channels of information, there is no certainty, but only doubt, because no human has the full truth. The full Truth is not information or facts, but it is Christ Himself, who said, 'I am the way, the life and the truth'. And we all too easily forget, even as we prepare for Christmas, that the only real piece of news since the creation of the world is the Incarnation of our Saviour, the only true Saviour from death.

So let us give our wearied minds and souls some rest from panic, fear and uncertainty, theories, opinions, statistics and arguments by contemplating the great mystery of the birth of Christ, who came into the darkness of this very world agonised by the shadow of death, in order to take that agony on Himself upon the Cross and turn it into the light of the resurrection. It is fitting that Christ's birth is celebrated at the darkest time of the year, the winter death, a tiny beacon of light like the Star which led the Magi, a burgeoning glimmer of hope in a cold world where the threat of death, through Herod's plans to kill the infant, was there from the start. For the eternal, infinite and deathless God to enter into the narrow confines of human flesh was like a death rather than a birth, just as His death on the Cross became the birth of eternal life for fallen mankind. The cave in which Christ was born is an image of the human heart where the humble Lord seeks to be sheltered, just as our heart, crucified to this world, can also be the Lord's tomb from which the glory of the resurrection can shine forth. One of the apocryphal Gospels, the Protevangelium of James, describes how at the moment of Christ's birth in Bethlehem, Joseph saw the flowing waters of rivers and the birds in the air come to a complete stand-

still, as time stopped at the entry of the timeless One into time. It is a moment of deep stillness and awed silence, an incomprehensible mystery which can only be contemplated in deep wonder, away from the frantic, busy thoughts of the world and our head. In such contemplation, we too are moved to echo the hymn of the angels as heard by the humble shepherds at the Nativity: ‘Glory to God in the Highest and on earth peace, good will among men’ (Luke 2.14). We are reminded of previous generations of Orthodox faithful, who lived through many hard times of persecution, famine

disease and war, but whose faith taught them to say even in the midst of such suffering, ‘Glory be to God’. Christ is our peace, and nothing can separate us from the love of God, except our own forgetfulness or the weakness of our faith. Christian faith gives us hope in the most hopeless situation, light in the darkest times, peace in the most fearful turmoil, life in the midst of death and the gift of salvation such as the world can never offer. I wish you a very peaceful and blessed Christmas.

Interview with cantor Giorgos Stakias



Can you tell me a little about where you come from in Greece?

I come from Chios, an island at the eastern part of the Aegean. It’s the fifth largest island in Greece, even though not as popular as others given its small population (c. 30-35,000) and that it belongs to the precinct of the North Aegean, a not so rich area of Greece.

Growing-up, was you family religious?

Yes, I come from a family with a very strong religious outlook. I remember going to church since I was a little kid. My grandmother Maria, God rest her soul, took me with her to attend services at my neighbourhood’s church, Saint Isidoros (who happens to be the patron saint of Chios). My parents are religious too, so having grown up in such a family, I was taught about Orthodoxy since I was very young.

Of course, the family can get you into the church but in order to stay you need to have someone to keep you there. In my case, the then priest of the church, Fr. Ioannis Bogis, played a crucial role in teaching me how to behave in the sacred sanctuary and gave me the incentive to wake up early on Sundays to go and help him. I will always be grateful to him for that.

Did you know you wanted to be a cantor from a young age?

Short answer: no! Even though I liked listening to the hymns and liked music in general (not Byzantine only), I could never imagine myself as a cantor when I was young. That came later on.

When did you really get interested in chanting?

As I said, I was going to the church since a young age. Helping there was one thing, however when

I grew up, I realised that I wanted to do more to contribute to the liturgy. With age, I gained a better understanding of the hymns, the psalms and what the whole concept of Byzantine music was about, however there is a huge gap between thinking of something and doing it.

At that point, the cantors of my church and especially Mr. Ioannis Karastamatis, God rest his soul, asked if I would be interested to join them during the services, as they were growing old and wanted someone to follow them. I really felt I wanted to do that, but then again, I was lacking the education to do it. Therefore, even though my parents were trying to convince me to go to the school of Byzantine music for a long time, it was not until I was 20 that I started the lessons in the school of our Archdiocese in Chios. This was parallel to my undergraduate studies, which was at Chios too. My decision to start the courses that late turned out to be wrong, as I didn't get the education that I really wanted. However, everything happens for a reason.

When I started the courses, I thought it would be a piece of cake — similar to when we listen to someone singing a song. The reality proved to be very different. People might think that from day one that they are going to step on the analogion (stand) and start chanting. The reality is that the first lesson to learn is discipline. The analogion is a place of fragile balance and temptation, which might not show, but exists. Therefore, it is difficult but very important for someone to understand their own limits. That was the advantage of starting the classes later on — I was more mature than childhood and hence a bit easier to discipline. Of course, this doesn't mean that it was easy — I remember receiving strict remarks from my teacher, especially during the Holy Week. At times, it felt frustrating, but one understands how important this is when they step up and manage an analogion themselves.

With regards to chanting itself, it is of vital importance to the liturgy. It thus carries an amount of responsibility and as I said before, balances. When people are looking at the altar, everything is fine. If they are looking at the cantor, something is wrong!

Were you able to practice much during your military service?

Not really, from the perspective that I didn't have the mental capacity to study and learn new things. However, the military camp I served

in was lacking a cantor, the military priest, Fr. Dimitrios Pittakis asked if I could join him in services. That helped me to keep in touch with chanting during my time in the military and I also got to visit many different military camps around the island because of this.

Why did you move to Glasgow and what stood out the most for you on arrival?

Well, that is an interesting story. During the last year of my bachelor's degree, I realised that I wanted to continue my education in Finance and when it comes to that discipline, the United Kingdom is one of the best places. So I knew the country but not the university.

Initially, I was leaning towards two universities in England, Leeds and Nottingham, where I did apply. However, during a random trip in Athens, I met a friend of my best friend, who recommended the University of Strathclyde. I'll be honest, initially, I had no idea that the University of Strathclyde even existed. However, after receiving some information from them and researching the matter on my own, I decided to submit an application there too. My final decision was the University of Strathclyde because they were the quickest to respond to my application — it only took them 48 hours, whilst it took the other universities three months to get back to me!

Regarding the second part of your question, I will never forget this day for the rest of my life. I travelled to Scotland just three weeks after I finished my military service, without even having the time to get my head around what moving and living abroad would be like. I remember having butterflies in my stomach when travelling towards the United Kingdom but all of a sudden this disappeared when I looked out from my window in the plane and saw all those green valleys and hills. There was a peacefulness and serenity that I felt, and I was not so worried anymore. Whatever doubt I had left disappeared following a friendly conversation with the taxi driver who took me to my university accommodation. I felt welcome from day one and that was the most important thing to me.

How did you find out about St. Luke and what were your first impressions?

I had done my research while in Greece, so I knew about the church. Back at the time, my phone did not have Google maps, so I had to write down all the streets and the turns that I had to take in

order to get there.

The first time I went to the liturgy was on the 16th September of 2012, just one day after I arrived in Glasgow. I had no idea about means of transport etc., which is why I walked all the way from the city centre. It took me about an hour, but was well worth it.

For someone being used to the traditional Byzantine temples in Greece, St Luke's was quite a change. The gothic style of the building and the size of the church were the things that stood out the most. The community here is different than those in Greece. Here, as well as in the other Orthodox churches abroad, the church has an extra role: it acts as a focal point for people of the same religion and from the same nation. In Greece, we take this for granted.

You have been here for quite a number of years now. Is it fair to say that you have settled into community living?

It's been almost eight years since I first came to Glasgow. I feel part of the community and believe that we can definitely do more to keep things going — first thing being getting younger people involved. As Fr. Markos says, the church is first and foremost our church. We are the newer generation, we need to take on that mantle and make the church more extrovert so that people feel it closer. Once this happens and we return to normal following COVID-19, we can be much more optimistic about the future of St Luke's as a community.

Have you been able to continue your cantor education?

Nice and timely question, as I recently started Byzantine music classes once again — better late than never!

With regards to practicing, one thing is for sure — you need to do it every day, otherwise, as we say in Greece, it will leave you. It doesn't necessarily need much time, but it needs some time.

What has been your proudest moment as a cantor?

Some people might say that the words 'cantor' and 'proud' should not normally go together. Saying this, I have to say, I felt extremely honoured to chant in a liturgy with the former Archbishop Grigorios, God rest his soul.

If someone is interested in becoming a cantor, how would they go about doing this?

To start chanting in Glasgow can be challenging, given that there is not a Byzantine music school. However, due to the circumstances, the technology has developed so that people can start their classes online with a teacher. If anyone is interested, they can let me know as I know people in Greece willing to teach Byzantine music (even though their English might not be the best)!

Thank you so much for your time.

My pleasure. I will repeat what I said before — support the community so that we become the change that we want to see!

A Glasgow heritage

Prof. John Huntley

Introduction

Our Church building is truly remarkable. Its category B listing with Historic Environment Scotland confirms it. Through the generosity of our benefactor, Sir Reo Stakis, it has been a place of Orthodox worship since 1960. The purpose of this little article is to explore some of the history of the building, and to foster our commitment to it. Much has been written about the building and its history, and an extensive as well as excellent account is provided by Nondas Pitticas on the church website. My purpose is more limited: to

explore certain aspects that throw some light on our understanding of this building today. Understanding the history behind our church building should help us appreciate it better. This should not detract from our understanding and appreciation of the building as the Orthodox Cathedral that it is.

The location

Bartholomew's map of 1869 shows Victoria Circus and the Glasgow Observatory (on the site of the present Notre Dame High School) at the top

of Dowanhill. The entire district beyond that was then open farmland.



Figure: The Dowanhill Observatory c. 1850 (<http://www.astro.gla.ac.uk/observatory/history/obs-hist.shtml>).

Horslethill Road was but a country lane, and divided the estate of Dowanhill from that of Kelvinside. Why, then, was this grand church building erected in such a location?

Imagine Glasgow in 1875. It was at the height of its powers; the second city of the British empire. There was great wealth here, even if it was very unequally distributed. This was reflected in a construction boom, which saw the green pastures of Dowanhill and Kelvinside covered over by villas and terraces to house the burgeoning middle class of the great city. Maps of the area around 1860 show that nothing had yet been built on that land; and even on the Great Western Road, only Kew Terrace as far as Huntly Road had been built; nothing but fields beyond Horslethill Road. By 1875, the area had been transformed by new housing more or less as it stands today. A new community had been created within a decade. More particularly, Belhaven Terrace had been constructed. The decision was taken to build a church. This is how the decision was reported in *History of the congregations of the United Presbyterian Church from 1793 to 1900*, Rev. R. Small (Edinburgh 1904):

On 12th January 1875 it was notified to Glasgow Presbytery by parties residing about the Great Western Road that they were proceeding to erect a place of worship at Belhaven Terrace, a part of the town where better-class families were settling down. As the site chosen was nearly a mile farther west than Lansdowne Place no harm would be done to other churches, and the proposal was sanctioned at next meeting.

A sum of £2,000 had already been promised towards the erection, and on 10th August 23 members were formed into a congregation. Early in the following year a moderation was applied for, the stipend promised being £75.

By then, little land was left over for a church building within easy access, especially a large and impressive church that might meet the spiritual needs of a burgeoning congregation. The wealthy and pious residents of Belhaven Terrace and its environs settled on that small triangle of land on the north-eastern end of what is now Dundonald Road. There was a problem: that road was not connected to Horslethill Road and the Belhaven properties. The Dowanhill estate was not connected by road to the Kelvinside estate. Belhaven residents would have to cross pastureland (assuming they had permission) if they wished to avoid a very long detour to get to church. The trustees of the new congregation had bought the site on the understanding that the owners of the land where a new connecting road could be constructed would allow the construction of a connecting road between Victoria Circus/Dundonald Road and Horslethill Road. Those landowners, presumably in the hope of extracting further sums from the new church trustees, refused permission, forcing those trustees to bring an action that eventually went on appeal to the Inner House of the Court of Session – the highest civil court in Scotland. The new road was not built until after 1881. (For those interested, the case was reported as *Moore and Others (Belhaven United Presbyterian Church Trustees) v. Paterson and Another* [1881] SLR 19.236 (16 December 1881).)

What kind of congregation was this, and did that have an impact on the architecture? The church came to be known as the Belhaven church, so we can assume that the 23 members were predominantly residents of those impressive homes in Belhaven Terrace, built by James Thomson (Nos 1-16, 1866-7; Nos 17-28, 1870-4). The next terrace along, Great Western Terrace, was built by his more famous namesake, Alexander ‘Greek’ Thomson, between 1867 and 1877. (Whereas Belhaven Terrace is B listed, Great Western Terrace is A listed.) The denizens of these properties were not simply the beneficiaries of Glasgow’s prosperity; they were people who religiously went to church. A new church building to meet their specific spiritual needs was essential, and no money was spared in meet-

ing those needs. The extreme high quality of their homes is reflected in the outstanding quality of the construction and decoration of the new church, making it such an important contribution to the architecture of Glasgow and of Scotland. The spiritual needs the new church building was to meet were those of the United Presbyterian Church.

The United Presbyterian Church

The National Records of Scotland refer to documents in The Glasgow City Archives relating to the Belhaven church, which is described as:

A secession church parish. It began as a United Presbyterian congregation in 1876. It passed to the United Free Church in 1900, and to the Church of Scotland in 1929. It united with Glasgow-Westbourne as Glasgow-Belhaven Westbourne in 1960.

A series of splits, secessions and amalgamations in the Presbyterian Church of Scotland, some as early as 1732, led eventually to the creation, in 1847, of the United Presbyterian Church. The above extract shows that the process of amalgamation continued to the time when the Belhaven buildings became the Greek Orthodox church of Saint Luke in 1960. The combined congregation located to the Westbourne Church at 52 Westbourne Gardens, a neo-classical building designed by John Honeyman 1880-81. The building is now the Baptist Struthers Memorial Church. At the time when it was built, however, the church on Dundonald Road belonged to the United Presbyterian Church.

Described (in Wikipedia, no less) as ‘on the liberal wing of Scots Presbyterianism,’ the United Presbyterian Church had a preference for neo-classical/renaissance style buildings, usually with a classical Greek portico. The best example of the United Presbyterian style in Glasgow is the Wellington Church on University Avenue (designed and built by Thomas Lennox Watson, who also built the Adelaide church on Bath Street in a similar style). Surprisingly, this was not built by Alexander ‘Greek’ Thomson who, like many prominent members of Glasgow society was a member of the United Presbyterian Church (indeed he was a member of the Belhaven Church); although he did build three remarkable churches for them, of which only one survives: Saint

Vincent Street Church. Belhaven’s neighbouring United Presbyterian Church, the Westbourne Church, built in 1880-81 by John Honeyman, is in the same neo-classical style.



Figure: Wellington Church, University Avenue (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wellington_Church).

James Sellars and the design

Designing the Belhaven building was assigned to one of Glasgow’s foremost architects, James Sellars, a partner in the firm of Campbell Douglas and Sellars. At the height of the building boom of the 1870s, Sellars was a rising star still in his 30s. Like Mackintosh after him, he was a tragic figure, a brilliant, but short-lived shooting star. Unlike Mackintosh, his career was literally short-lived, as he died young (note that Sellars, like ‘Greek’ Thomson, became a member of the Belhaven church). Like several brilliant Glasgow architects of that highly creative period, he remains in Mackintosh’s shadow.

A historical digression

Five years from now, our church building will be celebrating its 150th anniversary. To understand the story of this building, we must go back well beyond 1875. If we go much further back, the Great Schism of 1054 (when the western church broke away) also set in motion a divergence in church architecture. In the east, the Roman basilica remained the common form of church architecture. In the west, the use of the arch came to be understood and adopted as an architectural device. The difference is that, rather than using the arch as a means for enclosing as large a space as possible under a dome (they never got the hang of building a dome, a feature not understood by western masons until much later), they used it to build skywards; to develop the very perpendicular, sky-scraping forms we know generally as ‘Romanesque’ and ‘Gothic’. It is ironic that the Normans, invaders of the Eastern Christian Roman empire, inherited the arch, used it to great

effect during their occupation of Sicily, and eventually brought it with them to Britain when they invaded in 1066. We still refer to the rounded arch form as the ‘Norman’ arch.

The Normans were great builders of churches. In our own city we have a fine example of the Norman gothic style, Glasgow’s Cathedral of Saint Mungo/Kentigern, which dates back to the 12th century. The Gothic style, with its spires and towers, lancet arches and windows, and its flying buttresses became standard church architecture throughout western Europe for centuries.

A ‘gothic’ design?

For many members of the prospective congregation, no doubt expecting columns and porticos, it must have been a shock when James Sellars’ design for this prime site half way up Downhill was this:

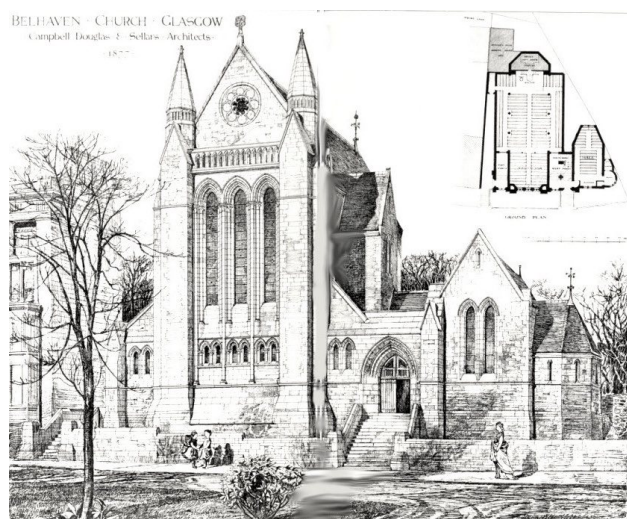


Figure: Belhaven Church design (<https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=uiuo.ark:/13960/t9c57gm79&view=2up&seq=694>).

Whatever it is, it is certainly not ‘neo-classical’ or ‘renaissance’ and therefore not the usual United Presbyterian design. *The Building News and Engineering journal*, Vol.35 2 (1878) reported:

The walls are built from freestone from the Netherwood Quarry. It is somewhat rough in texture, but has excellent weather qualities. For the nave pillars and arches, and other interior work, a finer grained stone from the Overwood quarry was employed. The walls are plastered internally, and the ceiling, which is a semi-decagon in form, is lined with wood, and richly decorated in colour. The

walls are also elaborately decorated from designs by the architects. The west (sic) gable is filled with stained glass, having figure subjects illustrating the parables; the smaller windows are also filled with stained glass, with figure subjects illustrating the Acts of Mercy. Accommodation is provided for about 950, and the cost was about £12,000. There is a fine organ in the church, built at a cost of over £1,100, by Messrs. T.C. Lewis & Co., of London. Mr. Andrew Wells, of Glasgow, executed the decorations, and the stained glass is by Messrs. Adam & Small, also of Glasgow. Messrs. Campbell, Douglas, and Sellars are the architects.

No mention here of ‘Gothic’ style. This, however, is how *Historic Environment Scotland* describes it in their listing (see <http://portal.historicenvironment.scot/designation/LB32508>):

James Sellars, architect; 1876-77. Apsidal church in Normandy Gothic style, orientated North/South. Stugged coursed ashlar with polished margins and dressings. Main N facade with 90ft high heavily buttressed gable.

At ground level, 3 pairs of pointed-arch windows with colonnette mullions; above 3 tall lancets with 2 orders of nook shafts, blind arcade links buttresses below gable head, latter flanked by octagonal pinnacles and enclosing a rose window. To the right, steps to simply decorated pointed arch portal with band of foliate carving. Above rises transept-like tower containing gallery stair. Aisles with four 3-light clerestory windows. Slate roofs.

Interior: some recent minor modifications in accordance with Greek Orthodox worship, but with many original features. 4 arch arcade supported on octagonal columns. Gallery to N supported on brackets with panelled front. Apse to S containing organ; modern Byzantine screen of 5 pendant arches with icons incorporating part of the original screen as

balustrading. Carved octagonal timber pulpit. Stained glass by Stephen Adam, 1877. Timber lined collar-beam roof. Hall and vestry to east.

Basically, it's a tall building in an early Gothic style, with windows, some tall and pointed and some with stained glass, built with dressed stone and a slate roof, and internally a semi-circular apse at one end, pillars and arched arcades, and a gallery. So why was this seemingly old-fashioned design adopted?

Design style

The restricted site and the demands for internal space placed severe limitations on design and might have meant grand Doric porticos were out of the question, but it does not explain this departure from neo-classicism in the 'Greek' Thomson style. After all, Sellars was heavily influenced by Thomson (best evidenced by his own neo-classical design of Kelvinside Academy in 1877).

It may be that Sellars wanted to avoid copying the 'Greek' Thomson style. Sellars was the architect of the moment; but he was certainly his own man. Still in his thirties, his work shows remarkable versatility of style. He was not a man to be pigeon-holed.

Perhaps the greater influence was that a very Scottish Gothic revival was again fashionable. The building has been described as 'Gothic Revival' and several references suggest that it was influenced and inspired by Dunblane Cathedral (and there are striking similarities). The Gothic revival of the late nineteenth century, however, was quite an ornate version of the Gothic style, with much tracery, buttresses and turrets. Contemporaneous buildings, like Sir George Gilbert Scott's Glasgow University campus on Gilmore Hill, are notable examples of the style in Glasgow.

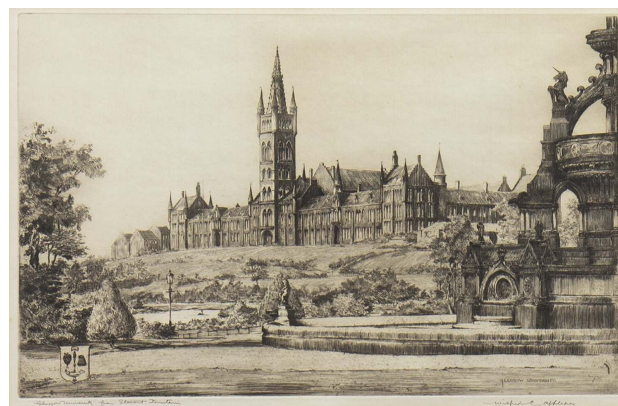


Figure: Etching by Appleby (note James Sellars' Stewart Memorial Fountain in Kelvingrove Park).

The same influences can be seen in the style chosen for the Belhaven United Presbyterian Church. At first sight, the three lancet windows in the '90ft. high heavily buttressed gable', the slightly pointed arches, the octagonal pinnacles all seem to confirm this; but there are important differences: there is no tracery in the windows, and the added rose window is also relatively plain. Considered together with the overall simplicity of the design, the conical roof at the western extension and the overall façade, it can at least be argued that the style is also reminiscent of Scottish Baronial, a style still very much in vogue at that time. It all makes for a very unusual building.

The key features

The artist's impression provided by the architects beautifully highlights all these features; but even more interesting is the little ground floor plan of the building in the top right-hand corner of the Belhaven Church design figure. (An additional important source is the survey carried out as part of the Mackintosh Building Survey).

The Nave. The first thing to note on the plan is the north-south orientation. This is probably a consequence of the configuration of the site, rather than an intended departure for the traditional east-west orientation. The nave extends the whole length of the building, the pews extending into what is now the main School room. This is confirmed by the fact that on the plan there are no doors in the side walls of what is now the School room, and by the fact that the gallery is 'supported on brackets' according to the Listed Building description. There is no partition between the nave and what is now the School room. The existing two sets of doors to the School room, and the modern partition separating the School

room from the nave, are later additions. The diagram confirms that the nave, together with the gallery, was intended to hold between 900 and 1,000 people. The membership of the church in 1900 stood at over 600. If one adds their children, 1,000 might on occasion have felt rather cramped.

The Pews. The rows of fixed seating — the ‘pews’ — have been largely retained. Growing up in Greece in the 1950s, church for me was an up-standing experience – literally. Seats were scarce, and certainly not for children. The elderly might prop themselves against the ‘stasidia’ scattered along the walls of the church; but everybody else, young and not-so-young, stood. That is still the norm throughout the Orthodox Christian world. It was also the norm throughout Christendom before the Great Schism (1054) and remained a common practice until the reformation. The expectation then became that the congregation would sit throughout most of the service, standing for the singing of psalms or hymns. The expectation in a Scottish Presbyterian church is that the congregation, whether standing or seated, will always face the front. This explains the narrowness of the pews, but it does make for difficult manoeuvring when the Gospel or the Gifts are processed. One noticeable feature of the pews that needs some explanation is the regular small holes in the shelves. The shelf is there for the hymn books and bibles that would be used during the service; the holes are for placing the small glasses in which the communion wine had been distributed.

The decoration. One would not expect to see wall decorations or iconography in a Presbyterian church. Scotland went through an iconoclastic reformation that was generally iconophobic; yet the report in the *Building News and Engineering Journal* (see above) specifically states: ‘The ceiling . . . is lined with wood, and richly decorated in colour. The walls are also elaborately decorated from designs by the architects’. The Mackintosh Building Survey also states that ‘much of the 19th century detail from the original construction is still in position including the painted ceiling, the Gothic trusses in the roof and gazed partitions’. The listing of the Greek Orthodox Cathedral of St. Luke, Glasgow on the Scotland’s Churches Trust’s [website](#) specifically refers to the ‘richly stencilled roof timbers and original light fittings and furniture’. The stencilling on the ceiling

is still visible and must have been magnificent when new. Whether it can, or should be restored is another matter. There is no evidence that elaborately decorated designs on the walls have survived. It is unclear what those designs might have been, and there would certainly be no frescoes, depicting saints or scenes from the gospel, such as might have been painted before the reformation. Only two small fragments of ‘Doom day’ examples survive in Scotland. These recently uncovered frescoes in England date back to Anglo-Saxon times, before the Great Schism and the Norman invasion (1066).



Figure: Detail from a medieval Doom wall-painting; St Andrew’s Church, Chesterton, Cambridge, 15th century (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Doom_paintings).

The organ. The Mackintosh Building Survey suggests that the church has ‘an exceptionally altar-focused or Anglican pattern for Presbyterian worship with an apse to the south and a tester [canopy] above’. The semi-circular apse at the south end of the building where our church’s sanctuary now stands, would have housed a communion table; but it also housed the church organ. The congregational singing of hymns is a major feature of Protestant worship. Increasingly, in Scotland, following the practice in north European Protestant churches, the singing was accompanied by an organ. The larger the church, the larger the organ. Behind the cross on the red velvet curtains above the iconostasis, can be seen traces of the pipes of the church organ. This would have been an expensive item that was moved to the Westbourne Gardens Church when the Belhaven congregation relocated there after the sale in 1960. The apse was of course perfect for the creation of our sanctuary and iconostasis.



Figure: The organ in the Baptist Struthers Memorial Church, formerly Westbourne United Presbyterian Church.

Stephen Adam's glass

The nineteenth century saw a revival of the ancient ecclesiastical art of stained and painted glass. It was so popular that it became a de rigueur feature of domestic architecture. Nowhere was this more true than in Glasgow, where several workshops devoted themselves to this resuscitated art. Glasgow was the centre of an important glass industry — for example, the Clutha art glass and the vast quantities that came out of the kilns around Murano street, Caithness Street, Vasart Place and Monart Place — now, like much of Glasgow's industry, long gone.

Perhaps the greatest exponent of this craft was Stephen Adam. A protégé of that other great artist and designer, Daniel Cottier (whom Cottiers Theatre is named after; see <https://cottiers.com/>), Adam was probably the most influential exponent of the art at this time, influencing the work of even Lewis Comfort Tiffany in the United States. Our church contains some of his most important work, of which the three panels in the north window are the best known. (The significance of his work is explained in *A Stained Glass Masterpiece in Victorian Glasgow: Stephen Adam's Celebration of Industrial Labor*, Lionel Gossman with Ian R. Mitchell and Iain B. Galbraith, and especially Appendix II, *Always happy in his designs: the legacy of Stephen Adam* by Iain B. Galbraith, which makes extensive reference to our Cathedral and acknowledges the help of Dr. Nonda Pitticas. The work is available online at <https://www.princeton.edu/~lgossman/Adam.pdf>).



Figure: Stephen Adam's panels in St. Luke (<http://www.victorianweb.org/art/stainedglass/adam/56.html>).

Charles Rennie Mackintosh's alterations

Sellars' chief draughtsman at the time was the youthful John Keppie. When Sellars tragically died in 1888, his senior partner, Campbell Douglas took Keppie into partnership. Keppie then went into partnership with John Honeyman, and in 1889 the firm took on the newly-qualified Charles Rennie Mackintosh as a junior draughtsman. When Honeyman retired from active partnership in 1901, Mackintosh became a partner in Honeyman, Keppie and Mackintosh (the firm still exists today as [Keppie Design](#)). For those interested in the Mackintosh story, the best introduction is John Cairney's *The Quest for Charles Rennie Mackintosh*, Luath Press, Edinburgh (2018)).

There is, therefore, a continuous link from James Sellars to C. R. Mackintosh, probably the most internationally famous architect Glasgow has produced. Throughout the 1890s, Honeyman and Keppie carried out work on the church, most notably in 1898, when electricity was installed and redecorations and repairs were carried out; most importantly, new woodwork was introduced. C. R. Mackintosh designed that woodwork, and evidence of it can be seen throughout the building (see the *Mackintosh Building Survey*, *op. cit.* above and on Glasgow University's

Mackintosh Architecture [website](#)).

This makes our church the custodian of an important part of Glasgow's Mackintosh heritage. Whether we ought to make it more accessible (for example through the 'Open Days' scheme) to those with more than a casual interest in Mackintosh might be open to discussion; but our responsibility to preserve the Mackintosh heritage is not.

Conclusion

Our church is an important part of the flourishing of the arts in late Victorian Glasgow and there-

fore of this city's heritage. Three names in particular stand out: Sellars, Adam and Mackintosh. The contribution of each is immense. We are indeed fortunate that that heritage is part of our Orthodox heritage too. It has placed a heavy burden on the trustees of our church, who have unstintingly devoted resources, human and financial, over sixty years to the stones and mortar, to the church building. We owe it to them, and to the memory of our benefactor, Sir Reo Stakis, to do what we can to ensure that it continues for years to come.

My story

Magdalene Alatzoglou



Most people know me as 'Magdalini' or 'Magda', but did you know my birth name is, in fact, Roelien? It is Dutch in origin. I grew up in the Netherlands, in a town called Genemuiden. It has around 16,000 citizens and located in the north-east of the Netherlands, about an hour away from the German border and 1.5 hours away from Amsterdam. Genemuiden is one of the towns belonging to what is known as the 'Bible belt'. The 'Bible belt' is a region of Christian conservative/Bible-oriented towns that spans an area from the north-east of the Netherlands to the south-west, ending in the province of Zeeland. These towns typically have large churches, large families (e.g. could be up to 16 children) and people dress conservatively (often in black).

I grew up in a family of nine children. First, my parents had five boys, then two girls and an-

other two boys. It was always busy at home, and there were always people visiting as well. I look back on my childhood with great fondness. Even though I had friends from the neighbourhood and school, my real friends were my brothers and sister.

We were raised quite conservatively. We had no television, we knew nothing about Disney characters or fantasy stories. My sister and I wore skirts, and were not allowed to cut our hair or use make-up. We would pray before and after every meal, read the Bible and also sing a psalm or hymn after every meal. At night, we would all gather in a room and my father would read to us a spiritual text and we would kneel and pray together. On Sunday, we attended the Dutch Reformed Church twice, services would last one and a half hours. You could say the Scottish equiva-

lent is the Free Presbyterian Church. On Sunday evening, my father would read to us a few chapters from a good novel, and after that we would sing hymns. This might seem a bit strenuous to some people but for us it was normal, and apart from a few times that I remember, it was something that I enjoyed. It was the company of my family that I enjoyed the most, my parents loved us and loved God and they wanted to know Him and for us to know Him too.

I can, honestly, say that we had a good time at home. Looking back on my upbringing, what I cherish very much is that my parents, even in the difficult times and no matter the mistakes they made, always asked each other and us for forgiveness in order to heal. My school education was also Christian. I went to a primary school and high school both belonging to the Dutch Reformed Church. Every day started with prayer and Bible reading.

After high school, I had two years of secular education, then I began my nursing study at a Christian university for four years. Imagine the culture shock when I finished my studies and started working! After my studies, I worked in Amsterdam for six months. I quickly realised that the world outside my family home was not Christian. I felt like a stranger and the world was a harsh place, so I moved back in with my parents. This was in 2013. I stayed with my parents and worked close to home. That was until I moved to England in January 2015.

In the summer of 2014, I decided to apply for a job as nurse in the U.K., I had an interview and was subsequently accepted. Before I made the move to the U.K. in January 2015, I met Kostas Alatzoglou (now my husband) on a Christian dating website. Following our initial introduction, conversation quickly jumped to matters of faith. He was Orthodox and I was Protestant. Hearing the word 'Orthodox' my mind conjured images of churches full of gold and priests wearing these luxurious looking garments. That was all I knew about Orthodoxy. I knew a lot about my own faith, what I believed and why I believed it. Years of childhood catechism both at home and in church, had paid off. In fact, I felt so blessed to be in a particular branch of Protestantism, namely 'Calvinism', that I thought that this is what Christ meant by speaking about the Truth. Kostas clearly had the gift of explaining things and conveying a message with persuasion. I was shocked that he claimed that the Eastern Ortho-

dox Church was the Church that Jesus Christ had established and was still the same today. At the same time I was wondering on what basis he could make such a bold claim. A long period of research and reflection started.

In January of 2015, I moved to Northampton to start my job as a nurse in the hospital there. Kostas and I still spoke several times per week on the phone. Even though we had never met, I think I had made up my mind already. I really liked Kostas and I was sure that this was the start of something long lasting. In March, I flew to Glasgow to meet him for the first time, the first of many times. The weekends in Northampton that I wasn't working, I would go to the Greek Orthodox church in Duston (a village near Northampton). The church was very old, and beautiful from the inside. I still remember the first time I went there. There were a few old women standing there, they had little heaters at their feet because there was no central heating in the church. All together there must have been 20 people every Sunday. For me, it was interesting, there was nothing in common with the church services that I was used to back home. I didn't understand anything from the service, it was all Greek to me! I wanted to do things properly so I was standing for the whole service even though the ladies told me several times to sit down. The big shock came after the liturgy, I was invited to a party held by the community, as it was the annual feast of the parish. There was popular music and dancing and a lot of food. To me, popular music and a church event did not go together. However, the whole experience was pleasant, people were very friendly and welcoming. I kept going, later I found out there was an Orthodox church in walking distance from my accommodation, so I started going there. I will be honest; looking back, I have to say that my encounter with the Orthodox Church wasn't love at first sight. My meeting with Kostas was! His interests became mine and this is what fuelled my decision to learn more about Orthodoxy.

It took me years to start appreciating the Divine Liturgy. In the beginning, it was all very exotic to me, very foreign. I couldn't connect easily because I didn't know how to participate in the liturgy. I didn't see the point of lighting a candle or kissing an icon, and praying to the Mother of God. From a young age I knew that in the Catholic Church they prayed to Mary, and this was one of the main reasons that we were

Protestant. We believed that you shouldn't pray to Mary or any saint. Even the word 'saint' was something not used in our church. So it took me a couple of years to wrestle with all the differences. Thankfully, I didn't have to wrestle on my own; Father Markos sacrificed much of his time to answer the many questions I had. This really helped me to start appreciating the things I found initially very difficult.

My family had many concerns regarding my relationship with Kostas and my interest in Orthodoxy. Before I met Kostas, my parents urged me to be careful. After all, I'd never met him in real life, he lived far away, and he was Greek. My family was anxious about me becoming Orthodox, they had many questions. For them, the Orthodox Church was like the Catholic Church. We had many conversations about this. However, these conversations became less and less, especially after they had met Kostas. They were very happy with him and they saw that our relationship was serious and they didn't want to interfere. It must have been very difficult for them, seeing me making such drastic changes. But through all this, I always felt assured that their love for me wouldn't change, whatever decision I made. I was very happy that they came to our wedding and joined the service no matter how difficult it was for them. Now, after a couple years, they've grown used to it, and they can even appreciate some writings of the Orthodox Fathers.

If someone had told me ten years ago that I would be Orthodox now, living in Glasgow and married to a Greek man, I would have laughed! But this is perhaps exactly how God works, in

ways that we cannot imagine. I'm thankful for my life, the way it is now. All the changes were not easy, and there have been many times that I wondered why I made all these decisions. But it takes time to get used to new things, and now I feel at home in the Orthodox Church. The sense of unity is something great, wherever you go in the world, when you find an Orthodox church you can expect the same service. This is unique. What I love about the Orthodox faith is that you have a spiritual father as your guide, opening your heart to him and discussing important matters and following his advice is essential for me, it is very therapeutic. It makes life much more simple even though following the advice can some times be difficult. I also enjoy the fasting periods, although it is a struggle, it is something special. During the fasting periods, I strongly feel this sense of unity and commonality with others.

Sunday is my favourite day of the week. Being at church, enjoying the hymns and receiving Holy Communion strengthens me. I love meeting our friends and other church members. I feel at home in St. Luke. I really miss the coffee times after the liturgy, I hope we can start them again soon!

What I love about Orthodoxy is the essence of it, it is the path of Truth. We are connected all the way back through history to the church of the apostles established by Christ Himself. The Divine Liturgy and other services are not subject to change because of personal views or interpretations of the Bible. The Orthodox Church is not a hype, a church that is here today and gone tomorrow. Thank God for that!



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