

Weekly Newsletter: 28th November 2023

Reflection: Are you shaken?

By Lorna Ferguson

“For God alone my soul waits in silence; from him comes my salvation. He alone is my rock and my salvation, my fortress; I shall not be greatly shaken.” Psalm 62:1-2

Japan lies on three tectonic plates on the ‘Pacific Rim of Fire’, making it one of the most earthquake-prone countries in the world. Each year there are in the region of 2,000 earthquakes. Most are too small to be felt, but others cause the windows to rattle and the buildings to sway. A few even cause some damage. It has been calculated that there is a 70% risk of Tokyo experiencing a massive earthquake (referred to as the ‘Big One’) at some point in the next 30 years.

So you might be surprised to know that the oldest wooden structure in the world that is still standing can be found in Japan- a 5-storey pagoda at the Horyuji Temple complex in Nara built over 1,300 years ago. Nor would Japan be the place you would probably think about building the highest tower in the world – and yet that is exactly what happened when the 634m Tokyo Skytree was completed just over 10 years ago. What is the secret which enables these structures to survive in places where the ground regularly shakes? The answer lies in a ‘shinbashira’, literally a ‘heart pillar’. This ancient Japanese technology places a pillar in the centre of the construction which moves independently from the structure itself, counterbalancing and suppressing the swaying motions during an earthquake.

We face many things in life which shake us emotionally or spiritually. Some only affect us or those close to us; others affect a larger group of people, or even the whole world. Perhaps someone reading this is feeling quite shaken at the moment and longing for the ground to be still again. We also live in a world which is shaking. There are huge uncertainties geopolitically. The pace of change in the world is already great and is accelerating. Advances in AI are raising questions as to what it means to be human. Many people feel quite overwhelmed and fearful for the future, wondering who is in control and if anything can be done.

King David experienced many events which threatened to shake him. In Psalm 62 we find him facing attacks, people who wanted to topple him and were prepared to lie and curse in order to do so. And yet David writes that he “will not be greatly shaken”. What is David’s secret which enables him to say this? I think we can find the answer in this Psalm. David reminds himself of what he knows of God, firstly in verse 2 and then he repeats it in verses 5-7. He knows too that he can pour out his heart to God (v7), but that there is also a time to wait for God in silence (vv1,5).

God is David's rock, solid and firm. Salvation comes from God alone, not from anything David has done, or needs to do. God is his fortress, a place of defence and protection. True power belongs to God, not to his enemies, however powerful they may seem. And so God is his hope, someone David can put his trust in. By telling his soul to be silent and by meditating on these aspects of God, David is able to say that, in spite of all that is happening around him, he will be not greatly shaken. His understanding of who God is and his trust in him is like a shinbashira – a heart pillar that helps suppress the shaking so that he can stand firm in the face of adversity.

In Tokyo, we are waiting for the 'Big One', knowing it will happen sometime but not sure when. Scripture tells us that an even bigger shake is coming to the world. In Hebrews 12:26-27, we are told that a day is coming when God will shake the earth and the heavens and all that can be shaken will be removed. Only what cannot be shaken will remain. This sounds terrifying, something which might well make us feel shaky. Yet the next verse (28) gives us our shinbashira, our heart pillar which enables us to stand firm. We are told that we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken. This is the Kingdom of our Lord, Jesus Christ. What an amazing thought this is, what hope for weary or anxious souls. And what good news for a world which is shaking.

Ladies' Christmas Market Trip – Cancelled

We had hoped to go to the Christmas Market together this Saturday but the crowds that were there last Saturday have made us rethink it! We're going to cancel it this year and keep warm at home instead 😊

We are meeting together on Thursday morning at 10.30am in the church for Bible study and are looking forward to our trip to Handel's Messiah in the new year.

Praise Workshop – this Sunday

This Sunday evening we'll be having a praise workshop at 6pm. The music team is going to be working with us so that we can sing better as a congregation and have a couple of Christmas carols more solidly under our belts. Come along!

Plans for the Christmas Season

Here are the plans for over the Christmas season-

- **Tuesday 12th December** - Carols by Candlelight from 6.15 to 7pm
- **Sunday 17th December**
 - Worship Service at 10.30am with a Christmas message from the Sunday Club
 - Baby and Toddler Nativity at 3pm
 - Carol Service at 6pm
- **Sunday 24th December** – Worship service at 10.30am (no Home Groups)
- **Wednesday 27th December** – Prayer meeting (on Zoom) at 7pm
- **Sunday 31st December** – Worship service at 10.30am (no evening service)

Christmas Appeal 2023

This Sunday will be the launch of our Christmas Appeal for 2023. Thank you to everyone who suggested projects and there are four that have been selected by the elders for our support this Christmas. We'll hear more about these projects during our morning services and the appeal will run until the end of December.

The projects are as follows-

- **Tim Rawlinson and the Tranent Church Plant**
- **Kilmallie Free Church (where Euan Dodds is the Minister) to support their Minister in Training**
- **Scripture Union Scotland**
- **Tearfund for their Middle East Emergency Appeal**

The elders decided that the funds would be allocated with the Tranent Church Plant and the Kilmallie Minister in Training receiving 30% each. Scripture Union and Tearfund will receive 20% each.

Giving towards the appeal can be made by bank transfer to the church account <https://holyroodevangelical.org/giving/> (using the reference 'Christmas Appeal') or can be placed in an envelope marked 'Christmas Appeal' in the offering box. Thank you!

Men's Discipleship

The men's groups have now finished for this term and won't be meeting on Tuesdays or Thursdays.

Church Calendar

For your prayers and info:

- Monday:
 - Baby & Toddler Group from 10am – 11.30am
 - Warm Space 12noon – 3pm
- Tuesday: Pickleball and Table Tennis at 7pm
- Wednesday: Prayer Meeting at 7pm on Zoom
- Thursday: Women's Discipleship 10.30-11.30am in the church
- Friday:
 - Holyrood Youth – The Hudson Taylor Challenge from 1.15-2pm on Zoom.
 - Holyrood Youth First Fridays – Meeting this Friday evening. Look out for an email from Andy with more details...
- Sunday:
 - Communion Service at 10.30am (and live streamed). Joe Barnard preaching.
 - Choir practice after the morning service – all welcome!
 - Praise Workshop at 6pm



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