

Weekly Newsletter

10th March 2026



Holyrood
Church

Reflection: Are you a role model?

By Lorna Ferguson

“You became imitators of us and of the Lord, for you welcomed the message in the midst of severe suffering with the joy given by the Holy Spirit. And so you became a model to all the believers in Macedonia and Achaia.” (1 Thessalonians 1:6-7)

Did you watch any of the Winter Olympics? I was especially impressed by events like freestyle skiing, snowboarding, and figure skating. The spins and twists the athletes perform in midair hardly seem humanly possible! I was also struck by several of the post-event interviews when some of the female athletes talked about wanting to be role models for young girls, to show them what is possible if you work hard at a sport. And I am sure many children are now asking their parents for skating, snowboarding, or skiing lessons!

It's not an Olympic sport, but one way I have sought to get to know people in Sakata is by joining a local *fukiya* (blow darts) club. We meet each week at a local community centre to practise. Using a long pipe, you blow round-tipped darts at a target. As in many Japanese sports, your posture, breathing and accuracy are all important; it is almost as much an art as a sport.

When I first started, one of the older members explained the basic rules and how to blow the darts. I was amazed that I actually managed to hit the target! At first, no one commented on my technique. But then the chairman began pointing out various things that I wasn't doing quite right. It seemed that each week brought another correction. Finally, pointing to some of the older members, he said, “If you want to improve, the best thing you can do is to watch the better players”.

In Japanese culture, you are often expected to observe and learn by imitation rather than by detailed instruction. The concept of *minarai*, meaning “learning by watching,” is a formal part of a geisha's training, but it is also practised in various traditional arts and crafts, and sometimes in the workplace. Some Western missionaries struggle when training under a Japanese pastor because they want to learn by doing, whereas the pastor may expect them to learn first through careful observation.

In his first letter to the Thessalonians, Paul commends the believers for becoming “imitators of us and of the Lord.” Jesus was, of course, their ultimate example, but Paul also recognised the value of more mature Christians serving as role models for new believers to watch and imitate as they learned what it meant to serve the true and living God rather than the idols they had previously followed (v. 9). He similarly urged the believers in Corinth to become imitators of him as he was of Christ (1 Corinthians 4:16 and 11:1). Can you think of Christians who have been a role model for you in your walk with Jesus? I imagine many of you can, which is something we can be very grateful for.

But in 1 Thessalonians, Paul doesn't leave it there. He goes on to say that these believers have themselves become a model to believers in other places (verse 7). The Thessalonians didn't need to wait until they were fully mature to become a model to others; they already were as they received Paul's





message in the midst of severe suffering with the joy given by the Holy Spirit. The Greek word used here for model is *τύπος*, which originally referred to the mark of a blow before coming to mean an imprint or pattern. The same word is used in John 20:25 for the imprint of the nails in Jesus' hands. Just as the Thessalonians were imitating Paul and the Lord, now their lives were bearing the imprint of Christ in such a way that others could be shaped by observing them. They received the gospel, imitated Paul and the Lord, and in turn became models themselves.

This should be the pattern for each of us. I asked if you could think of people who have been role models in your life, and that was probably quite an easy question to answer. But what if I were to ask, "Are you a role model for others?" In Scottish culture — not unlike Japanese culture in this respect — that question can feel rather uncomfortable. Few of us would readily say, "Yes, I am a role model". Yet this is God's desire for each one of us: that as we grow in our faith, we become someone others can imitate.

You don't need to accomplish anything extraordinary, like Olympic athletes do, to be a role model. Most of the time, faithful Christian living looks quite ordinary. Yet as we follow Christ day by day — in the way we speak, serve, endure suffering, and show joy — we leave an imprint. Others are watching, perhaps more than we realise. So let's not be afraid of being a role model. Rather, by the power of the Holy Spirit, may this be something we aspire to, to the glory of God.

Pat Urquhart

We were sad to hear the news that Pat died yesterday but give thanks that for her it is better by far. Pray for Wilf and their two sons, Robert and Andrew, in their grief. More details about the funeral arrangements to follow.

Fundraising Quiz – Friday 13th March



Ralph Kelly is heading to the Netherlands from 19th March to 21st April to serve with Pioneers. He writes 'I'll be serving in a church setting, as well as in and around the university, though the current aim is just to be helpful wherever possible. I'm excited to be taking this up as not only will I be doing my best to spread the gospel, but also draw me closer to Christ and allow me to depend on him more, as this sort of mission isn't like anything I've ever done before.

In order to fundraise, I will be running my own marathon from my house in Trinity to North Berwick sometime in early March. I'll also be hosting a Quiz Night at Holyrood Church on Friday 13th March, at 7.30pm'. Please come along and support Ralph. If you would like to give, details are [here](#).





His Word in My Hands – Saturday 14th March

Cornhill Scotland invite us to join them for His Word in My Hands - a day to help people to read, understand and teach the Bible. It is open to anyone and will be of benefit to you whether you are a small group leader, Sunday School teacher, student, lay preacher or just someone who wants to know their bible better.

The day will be held on **Saturday 14th March** at The Tron Church, Glasgow. The theme this year will be the Psalms and for more details go [here](#).



Ladies' Brunch – Saturday 21st March

We're looking forward to getting together as women in the church family for brunch on **Saturday 21st March**. We'll eat together at **10.30am** (not 10am as previously advertised!) and then have time in God's word. It's open to all women, so please come and join us even if you're new to Holyrood or have been coming for decades!

We'll finish up by **12 noon** and look out for a sign up sheet at the front door over the next couple of Sunday. We're planning bacon rolls so it would be great to have an idea of numbers! Thank you!

Church Calendar

For your info and prayers:

- Wednesday: Home Groups across the city. Contact Liz@holyroodchurch.org for more details.
- Thursday: Women's Bible Study from 10.30am-11.30am (last one!)
- Friday: Ralph's Fundraising Quiz from 7.30pm
- Sunday:
 - Worship Service at 10.30am – Joe Barnard preaching (live streamed)
 - Evening Service at 6pm – Joe Barnard preaching (live streamed)
- Monday: Baby and Toddler Group from 10am – 11.30am

