

APRIL NEWS



MESSAGE FROM THE MODERATOR

It is now over a year since we first experienced Covid-19 restrictions, which have affected our lives in so many ways. Hopefully, with the progress of the vaccination programme, transmission of the virus will reduce, and we can resume many of the things we used to do – though we may have to live with measures like 2m physical distancing and hand-sanitising for quite some time to come. It has been a difficult time for us all, and we may find that ‘going back to normal’ will not be as easy as we imagined.

As followers of Jesus we believe that God has been with us through these difficult months, sharing with us in our pain and frustration, reaching out to us through the care and concern of other people. As we approach the celebration of Easter 2021 we remember that the hope and joy of the Easter message did not erase the reality and pain of Good Friday, but put it into a new perspective. Maybe that speaks to us in a new way this year, as we recognise the difficulties we have been through, and look forward hopefully to easing of restrictions in coming months. God travelled through the painful times with us, and we can trust him to fulfil his promises, which depend upon his reliability and grace – not the vagaries of transmission rates etc.

Christ is risen! He is risen indeed! Hallelujah!

MISSION COMMITTEE



As agreed at the last meeting of Presbytery, we will be developing a job description and preparing to advertise of a Presbytery Mission worker over the coming months.

At a meeting of Faith Impact Forum on 25 February, the following points were raised which may be of interest:

The up-coming Elections particularly to the Scottish Parliament and suggest we might host or share in organising Hustings on-line. Some helpful links were given:

<https://www.churchofscotland.org.uk/resources/covid-19-coronavirus-advice/hustings-guidance>

Souper Sunday is a special act of worship led by elders (any Sunday of the year) to raise awareness of the many issues around HIV, as well as to raise money for HIV initiatives around the world. The worship is followed by a simple lunch of soup and bread.

<https://www.churchofscotland.org.uk/serve/world-mission/get-involved/hiv-programme/get-involve>

There was encouragement to look out for COP26 briefings, engage and highlight relevant topics.

Resources

Online discussion and debate on Poverty in Scotland 2021, Friday 23 April 10am-12 noon. For mor information and booking click the link:

https://us02web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_Rx-UO5wtTD2VAKpfGOc4tA

Mission ideas and inspiration: <https://derby.anglican.org/en/our-mission/community-engagement/ideas-for-community-engagement.html>

Two links for videos from last week’s Faith Impact Forum which discussed: ‘Refugees, migration and Climate Change’

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Mnvht5mjDNE&list=PLcE1-KuB42WlQF5pkwNyxQb9xutmWabyA&index=7>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nDxhPhax1kg&list=PLcE1-KuB42WlQF5pkwNyxQb9xutmWabyA&index=8>

Rev. Gary Noonan – Mission Convenor

ORGANIST VACANCY

Barrhead St Andrew's congregation are seeking a new Worship Leader/Organist. For further information, please contact the Minister Tim Mineard to arrange an informal chat: 0141 587 7913 or e-mail: tmineard@churchofscotland.org.uk A full job description is available from the Presbytery Office and closing date for applications is 3rd May 2021.



OLIVE TREE POP UP SHOP



After the huge success of the Christmas POP UP SHOP the OLIVE TREE team is ready to open up again NOW for a long Easter season. They invite you to see and enjoy the beautiful crafts from the HOLY LAND that have found their way from BETHLEHEM to Bridge of Weir. Whether you are searching for meaningful gifts or treats for yourself you will be amazed by the lovely OLIVE WOOD (crosses galore and more), brightly hand painted CERAMICS, felt and embroidered PURSES and bags etc not to mention that extra special OLIVE OIL and DEAD SEA SOAP! Perhaps pretty PASHMINAS or silver and opal JEWELLERY are tempting too.

Every purchase, however small, helps to fund a vital lap top, pay school fees for impoverished Christian families, pay a doctor's bill and ease the pain of poverty and unemployment in the HOLY LAND (O.P.T. Occupied Palestinian Territories) and Gaza. Vaccines, jobs and tourists are missing there but sadly not destitution.

To make a difference just phone Juliet – 01505612963 – and arrange to visit under the house via the outside path or see the web site www.olivetreescotland.org. You can also contact us by e mail – olivetreescotland@g.mail.com WE ARE OPEN!



FROM THE CLERK

'The Times they are a Changing'

For most of my adult life I feel as though I have been arriving just at the ending of something. First entering the workplace in 1977 it was already clear that the great age of mass employment in Scottish industries was over. My predecessors had walked into jobs of their choice virtually at will, but now post-industrial decline and the ensuing economic weakness meant that good jobs were a more scarce commodity. At university too, it was clear that the former age of grant funded education and a time when the lives of students were fairly untroubled and carefree was drawing to a sharp close. This feeling of wistfulness for things long past accelerated later, when, as a young academic, it became clear that the idea of university teaching as the leisurely pursuit of former years had come to an end and a much more competitive environment focussed upon research output and punishing grant funding targets had taken hold. The teaching of students in such an environment had become but the means to an end rather than the end in itself.

All of which is to say that I have lived and worked for virtually all of my working life in a time of change – and that has been true of the church perhaps most of all. For undoubtedly we live and work and pray at a time of great flux in the church and that is not always an easy place to be. Change, of course, can be a great catalyst and energiser, invigorating when you are caught up in the flow of something new and exciting that is taking place. However, it can also be difficult and enervating when the change is from an uncertain present to a less certain future, when all our familiar patterns and routines are disrupted and we are not at all sure what will remain standing in the new order of things. What of our heritage will endure and what will pass away? Will the skills, habits and practices forged over generations be swept away in the rush to embrace the new, and will the 'new' thing that is emerging be any better than what it is seeking to replace?

Reflecting on these feelings I was minded to recall a song by the 1970's folk comedian/musician and social commentator Matt McGinn. It was entitled the Ballad of the Q4 and it was a paen to the already passing glory days of Clyde shipbuilding. Recalling the skill and ingenuity of past workers who had built the great ships of their age, McGinn celebrated their abilities and the talents they had and acknowledged that those days had past. But he was not simply lost in a terminal and wistful nostalgia for an age now gone, but instead pledged to do more and better going forward. The great ship that had only recently been built of course was the QE2, known during its period of construction as Q4, and McGinn looks forward to a new age of further creation as the refrain of the song repeats thus:

'Thank you Dad for all your skill,
But the Clyde is a river that will no staun still.
You did gie well, but we'll do more,
Make way for the finest of them all Q4.'

And so it is for us as we think of the gifts, skills and contributions of previous generations of Christians in the glory days of the parish church era. They did significant and great things in their day and, although we can now forcibly feel, and daily see, the passing of that age – we need not surrender to a terminal wistfulness for it either. In truth we will do well if we can create new forms of community and fresh expressions of faith that are as vital and as enduring as our old parish churches were when they were in full flood. But whilst thankful for the gift and graces of our predecessors- and acknowledging that the 'Clyde is a river that will no staun still' – for the responses they made in their time and their day – are not the responses we are called to make today. The situations we face and the questions being posed are different from those who went before us, but we should be confident that we too will make as faithful and confident response in service to God as our forebears did. Clyde is changing and we are changing with it. Covid has demanded a response from our congregations that has been challenging to our very core, but it has also been heart - warming to see the energy, vision and imagination with which many of our congregations have responded. Surely in all this burst of activity and new thinking, as digital forms of church sprung into life and many congregations engaged with their communities in fresh and engaging ways on scales not seen in a long, long time, surely something of a new and hopeful future for the church has begun in our midst already. They 'did gie well, but we'll do more' might turn out to be our refrain after all.

Something else was happening in the late 1970's that was going to change the world as it then was. A group of research staff working for Xerox in Palo Alto, California, invented the first graphical user interface for a computer. (Essentially the windows system that we use today that made computers user friendly with drop down menus that gave a what you see is what you get interface). It also had a mouse and ethernet networking making computer to computer communication possible. But the R & D staff based in California couldn't get their management based in New York to show much of an interest in this stuff. Xerox built photocopiers and not computers. Unable to get their company's interest, the R & D guys opened up their lab to show their stuff to some other tech geeks from California – two of whom immediately saw the promise of this technology. Their names were Steve Jobs and Bill Gates and thus it would be Apple and Microsoft that would become trillion dollar companies that changed the way the world worked and which would usher in the information revolution. (Jobs would famously later accuse Gates of stealing Apple's early ideas – including the pull down windows graphical interface – to which Gates famously replied 'Steve, I think it's more like we both had this rich neighbour named Xerox and I broke into his house to steal the TV set and found out that you had already stolen it.') The moral of the story is that sometimes the future is already happening right there in front of us, but we are blind to it. The fact that I am writing this on an iMac and not a Xerox is because the Xerox management were so blinded by what they were currently doing, what they had always done – they made and sold photocopiers- that they couldn't see the revolutionary thing their own R & D staff had come up with. Perhaps the future shape of the church is already appearing in front of us. Can we be sure that we are not so blinded by current pressing needs and faithfulness to past loyalties that we are hindered from seeing the new thing that God might be doing in our midst. The Prophet Isaiah famously reminded us not to dwell on former things and to look for the new thing that God is doing. Let us be alert for that in this river that will surely no staun still, for us or for anybody.

*Forget the former things;
do not dwell on the past.
See, I am doing a new thing!
Now it springs up; do you not perceive it? (Isaiah 43: 18& 19)*

Peter McEnhill – Presbytery Clerk

HIGHLIGHTING HEALTH

Renfrewshire Macmillan

Improving the Cancer Journey (ICJ) service.

I think that there is potential for some helpful collaboration between ministers & elders and Macmillan to help parishioners whose lives are blighted by cancer, either as sufferers or as carers.

Recognising that most people with cancer or their carers don't know who to turn to in that moment of panic when they receive a cancer diagnosis, Macmillan is working with several local authorities to help provide a 'one-stop-shop' to lead and guide them on this most difficult journey. The service is well established in Glasgow and has been operating in Renfrewshire and West Dunbartonshire for over a year. It is due to expand into Inverclyde and East Dunbartonshire later in 2021.

Supports may include help with financial issues, housing, shopping/cooking/eating difficulties, overcoming mobility problems, emotional care, end-of-life planning and bereavement support. No two people affected by cancer are ever the same and our local case workers, Caroline and Karen, will always strive to find a solution to a problem, no matter how obscure; from finding someone to look after a beloved dog during hospital stays to helping a dying mother write birthday cards to the children she will never see grow up.

In our first year we have supported over three hundred families across Renfrewshire affected by cancer. We've helped them access over £250,000 of extra benefits and grants. We've helped secure better housing for people whose living conditions were impacting their treatment. We've arranged shopping or 'meal-on-wheels' services for those unable to leave their homes. We've helped those with terminal conditions write wills and helped facilitate future care arrangements for children soon to lose their only parent. We've helped those in distress get counselling, befriending and mental health care. We've been there to listen to their fears and offered a hand of friendship and love in the darkest hour.

That's all well and good but, we want to do more. There are over a thousand families in Renfrewshire impacted by cancer every year and so far, we've only been able to help about a third of them. We're especially struggling to get men to seek the support and assistance we offer. If you think men are bad at asking for directions when they are lost, many are even worse at asking for help when they have a cancer crisis! As a result, we are reaching out to organisations we know are already doing excellent work, like the Church of Scotland, to see if we can help you to help your parishioners, especially the men, as carers or cancer sufferers, whose natural reaction is often to try and be stoic and suffer in silence.

I would welcome the opportunity to work with yourself in your own parish or a group of ministers across Renfrewshire, whatever you would deem most helpful and appropriate. We have good case study examples to share that demonstrate the help ICJ can provide and would welcome your advice on new ways for us to get our offer of help out to those with cancer. Please give me a call at a time that suits you and we can see how best we can help those in your community affected by cancer.

*Robbie Weir - Service Delivery Manager (Frontline);
0141 618 6081; robin.weir@Renfrewshire.gov.uk*

As you can see these services exist or are being established in all areas.

PRESBYTERY WEBSITE

A small team has been set up to look at the Presbytery Website and suggest improvements. One of the things they would like to see included is a website address for every congregation. Please visit the site at www.clydepresbytery.org and check if your congregation's details are there. If they are not, please contact the office clyde@churchofscotland.org.uk with the necessary details and they will be included.