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LIFE AND WORK

THE MAGAZINE OF THE CHURCH OF SCOTLAND

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WAR'S END

The role of churches in peacebuilding across Europe on the 75th anniversary of VE Day

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From The Editor



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As I write, the world is in the grip of its biggest public health crisis in over a century.

The Coronavirus Covid-19 has travelled across an increasingly mobile world and caused fear and panic.

It is the only subject on the news agenda today – and for the foreseeable future. There is no normality and the landscape changes daily. This public health crisis is bigger than anything in our lifetimes. Workers (except for frontline staff and those involved in the food and medical supply chain and care and delivery staff) have been told to stay at home. Schools have been closed. The elderly and vulnerable have been asked to self-isolate at home for 12 weeks. Households are being asked to stay away from others. The National Health Service is in the throes of its biggest ever epidemic. The world's economy is in crisis. Interest rates have been slashed, stock markets have crashed. Livelihoods – and our daily way of life and community is under threat. Everything we know has changed.

The Church (and this magazine) are not immune to the crisis around us. Churches have closed, services have halted – along with vital work undertaken at local level, which represents significant social capital within our communities. Income will be dramatically reduced in the months ahead. Thanks to technology and advance business continuity and emergency planning we have been able to create the content of this magazine from our homes and the work of our external partners has enabled us to deliver the magazine both in print and digitally, wherever possible. A pdf of this issue will also be available on our

“

Faith has been rediscovered and is perhaps the only constant when change is on the agenda every day.

website at www.lifeandwork.org to make sure no one misses out on their copy of the magazine of our Church.

When the virus has subsided, the landscape of our world will be forever changed.

But in the midst of it all, faith has been rediscovered and is perhaps the only constant when change is on the agenda every day.

In seeking to keep the message of hope alive, ministers and the central Church have found creative ways to engage not only with congregations but with the wider global world through online streaming of services and podcasts and are discovering new technologies which enable communities of faith to come together. They have also been finding ways to work with the poorest in our communities despite the restrictions – and the commitment to helping the poorest is reflected in our cover feature focussing on foodbanks.

In the meantime the seeds of a new Church of the future are being sown amid a search for sanctuary at a time of crisis and isolation, fulfilled in the promise of the words of Hebrews 13:5: “For he has said, “I will never leave you or forsake you.” ■

Lynne McNeil
 Editor

GLASGOW SOCIETY OF THE SONS AND DAUGHTERS OF MINISTERS OF THE CHURCH OF SCOTLAND

The Society's primary purpose is to grant financial assistance to children (no matter what age) of deceased ministers of the Church of Scotland.

To the extent that funds are available, grants are also given for children of ministers or retired ministers but such grants are normally restricted to students. These latter grants are considered in conjunction with the Edinburgh based Societies. Limited funds are also available for individual applications for special needs or projects.

All applications to be submitted by 31 May

Application forms may be obtained from

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Applications will also be received from daughters of ministers, especially those who are aged and infirm for alimentary assistance from the Robertson Chaplin Fund and from unmarried daughters and unmarried sisters in necessitous circumstances of ministers from the John Lang MacFarlane Fund.

All applications to be submitted by 31 May

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Lord, in a world turned upside down,
where daily life is far from normal,
we come to you,
the One from whom our help comes.
The One who is the same,
yesterday, today and for ever.

We come to you,
giving thanks that
you have promised to always be with us.
In your presence we find the security
for which our hearts cry out at this time.

In this time of personal and national crisis
help us to believe this is true.
Help us to trust in you.
Give us a faith that will be an anchor,
firm and secure, in the storms we are
going through.

Lord, we pray for all directly affected by
the Coronavirus Covid-19.
For those who have been infected;
those who have been hospitalised;
those who have lost loved ones.

We pray also for all who are caring for
and supporting those with the virus.
Medical staff, health workers, carers.
The emergency services.
Families and friends.
Give them strength, compassion
and love in these difficult days.

Lord, you knew abandonment and isolation.
In the Garden of Gethsemane
you were abandoned by your disciples.
They slept while you prayed.
In your anguish they could not keep watch with you.
On the cross you felt abandoned by your Father.

We pray for all who feel abandoned or isolated
because of the emergency we are going through.
Help us, in these difficult days, to be good neighbours.
To reach out in love
to our neighbours
in our communities and beyond.

Lord you said,
'By this everyone will know that you are my disciples,
if you have love for one another.'
We give thanks for all who by their acts of love
and selfless service are standing by their neighbours
especially in these challenging days.

Amen.

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impacts all of us.**

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us all.**

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and action for our
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Faith Muvili carrying
her son Hilary across
fields in Kenya.



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Green Shopping

In response to the Editor's remarks on fruit and vegetable packing I note that some supermarkets sell reusable net bags.

However, knowing that I would probably forget to bring it with me, I have resorted to what we used to do. I just put my loose potatoes and vegetables in the shopping trolley and have it weighed at the checkout and put it into my shopping bag loose – that's what we used to do in the old days. I know the checkout operators don't really like it, but if they provided them with suitable weigh scales then it would help. Us "oldies" were eco friendly long before it became a buzz word!

Andrena Crawford, Edinburgh

Coronavirus, Bible and Meat

At times like these many – not just church goers – will want to go back to the Bible (especially the King James Version).

I personally find Psalm 91 a great comfort. Some words in particular speak to our situation:

'He that dwelleth in the secret place of the most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty.

Surely he shall deliver thee from the snare of the fowler, and from the noisome pestilence.'

The Rev Andrew McLuskey, Ashford, Middlesex

St Patrick's Day celebrations have been cancelled in Belfast and Dublin due to Coronavirus Covid-19 concerns, but would that bother the real saint himself? Patrick as a God-fearing man would not approve of the level of veneration accorded him, or of having a saint's day named after him, nor would he condone the revelry and secular partying that accompanies the occasion.

Realising that the first source of coronavirus was apparently from a seafood market that sold many kinds of wild meat, it reminded me of the Biblical food laws that provide a list of animals that are considered 'unclean' to eat. I always thought that these laws were exclusively for Jewish people, but then I read in Genesis, the first book of the Bible, where Noah boards the animals on the Ark, the unclean animals in twos, purely for breeding purposes, and then clean animals that could be eaten in sevens as they were to supply food. If Noah knew the distinction between clean and unclean animals long before the commandments written in Leviticus and he was not Jewish, then it was obviously to protect all of mankind.

The early Celtic Christians that followed on from Patrick did not eat pork or shellfish as they kept the Biblical food laws. Such animals were not bad, or they would not have made it onto the Ark. They were created as an ecological necessity to clean and replenish the planet, but were not to be eaten as their flesh would have high



Cartoon: Bill McArthur

levels of toxins due to their scavenging all kinds of waste. St Patrick, like Jesus Himself, would not join you for your bacon buttie or your prawn cocktail. If the guidelines of the loving Creator were upheld there would be no contagion passed on to human beings by ignoring these rules, or at least the risks would be greatly reduced. Even in catering college I was told that pork and shellfish were 'high risk.'

Patrick was a God-inspired visionary who brought about radical change across Ireland among people who neither cared about God or obeying His rules. In the end by sheer perseverance and determination these brave Celtic missionaries founded communities that welcomed those among them who once rejected such strange ideas. They kept the Sabbath and Passover of the early Jerusalem Church before the Roman system of Sunday and Easter overtook. If Patrick were here in 2020 I think he would be happy to see the parades cancelled, but he may have difficulty having an Ulster Fry with churchgoers of today who keep a whole lot of customs he would never have entertained.

He wouldn't need to self-isolate, as he'd be branded as a heretic anyway for having such pure Biblical beliefs and observances, as opposed to the man-made customs that exist in the churches today. Many people venerate Patrick as a man, yet ignore his actual practices as a person.

Colin Nevin, Chef, Hilton Tel-Aviv, Israel 1991-2002

Candlemas and Music

Music has always played a huge part in my life and on Candlemas Day 2020, remembering your editorial from the August 2019 issue of Life and Work made me smile.

You see Candlemas Day, February 2 each year, is a day of joy and this year in our village church it was celebrated by candles being lit and we sang my late mum's favourite hymn, *Jesus Bids Us Shine*. Straight away I was transported back to my childhood and I came home and wrote about it for my granddaughter so that the youngest generation of our family could share in the joy that this hymn had given to at least three previous generations of our family.

I give thanks with a grateful heart for hymns. I also love hearing handbells played and I read recently that one of the country names for a particularly favourite flower of mine is *Candlemas Bell*, which is due to the association that snowdrops have with the religious festival. Snowdrops are viewed as symbols of purity and hope and their heads do dangle like handbells.

Music, candles and flowers, these wonderful things to share with others.
June Armstrong, Crossgates, Fife

War Commemorations

As centenaries go, eventful Great War dates recede into history, there must be room for tales of extraordinary Scottish soldiers.

From July 1915, Scottish soldiers, heading for leave, arrived at London's Victoria Station, initially in the wee small hours. They were spotted by formidable St Columba's ladies and gents and invited to rest in the nearby church hall. Up to 250 men each Sunday were duly refreshed with kindness and hospitality.

In the evening, farewells were said at Knightsbridge Station as they set off to catch night trains to Scotland. Stopovers were initially 19 hours, later reduced to six hours.

Chapter 1 of that noble publication, *Scots in Great War London*, published in 2018, paints the fuller picture. This local response to war was quite different to knitting socks and fundraising for comforts for the troops.

I estimate their journey of some 750 miles would have taken at least 24 hours. With the London stopover, two precious days would be used for leave (furlough) homeward journeys. Southbound schedules did not include much time in London.

By 1918, aided by 1000 miles of light railways, ex-London buses, mule-trains and mainline trains etc, up to 200,000 men and 200,000

tons of supplies were, each week, delivered to the Western Front.

As a life-long beneficiary of the post-WW2 peace dividend, I have made many long-distance journeys by ship and train to Paris, Geneva, Venice, Trieste, Vienna, Moscow, Dresden and Copenhagen. In Paris when Eurotunnel caught fire, my plan B back to London used three buses, two trains and a ferry. A frequent free sandwich service, while welcome, could not match the passionate, polished Presbyterian Pont Street service to 50,000 Great War Scots from 1915 to 1919. This service was the talk of the trenches, not only the trench named after Pont Street between Ypres and Loos.

J Michael Buchanan, London

It was great to see the review of our recent publication *SASRA in the Second World War* on p51 of the April 2020 edition – however the image that accompanied it was another recent SASRA publication *40 Days to Peace*.

So far, just short of 13,000 copies of *40 Days to Peace*, a Daily Devotional for the period April 1 to May 10, have been given out. May 8 2020 is the 75th anniversary of VE Day, and has been declared a UK bank holiday.

More information can be found about *40 Days to Peace* and the peace2020 project by visiting the website www.peace2020.org.uk or from this short video: <https://vimeo.com/394384896>

Phil Rush, Development Officer, Sasra

'Seeing Is Believing'

In his excellent and thought provoking article, the Very Rev Dr Derek Browning (Life and Work April 2020) finished with "people won't start looking for Jesus if they don't see Jesus in us". I heartily agree.

I would further say that when we befriend someone, Jesus is with us and transforms the relationship.

Thus the presence of Jesus enables love, kindness, generosity and compassion to penetrate and when our friend feels this he/she will begin to see and feel His presence. Thus seeing is important but feeling is vital.

John Kusel, Cumbernauld

Life and Work welcomes letters from readers of not more than 350 words which can be sent by email to magazine@lifeandwork.org during the Coronavirus Covid-19 epidemic.

For verification purposes letters must be accompanied by the writer's name, address and daytime telephone number. Anonymous letters will not be published. In exceptional circumstances the Editor will consider publishing a letter withholding the details of the writer, provided verification can be made. The Editor reserves the right to edit letters for space and legal reasons.

The Big Question

This month's question is:
'Does your church engage with a foodbank?'



Gordon Sharp,
reader, Locum
and Community
Development
Worker, Dundee
West Church/Making
Dundee Home

"Dundee West has contributed to Dundee Food Bank, but now the contributions go to our project: Making Dundee Home. As well as donations of food from church members there is Fare Share, Greggs, Tesco and M&S all providing food. In addition, some local businesses and people contribute food through our collection box in our community cafe that runs Monday to Friday: The Roseangle Kitchen Cafe.

"Making Dundee Home draws on creativity, hospitality and spirituality to promote justice and well-being. This includes Wednesdays and Fridays when we are open from 11am-3pm and provide lunch at 1pm for those who are struggling to make ends meet. We've never missed a day since opening, including Christmas and New Year. On Wednesdays we have more than 30 and on Fridays around 50. Friday is always a three-course lunch. That is, until the Coronavirus Covid-19 where we are now limiting food to what we can hand out and what can be picked up.

"There is now a new food security network in the city that will work on the provision of food to prevent handouts as that can be demeaning. I think that the only way we can properly address food poverty is through a basic income guarantee for everyone.

"Our own approach draws directly from the common meal tradition of the New Testament where we all eat and share together around one very big table. To this has been added a drama production entitled 'the Mental Musical' produced by Just Bee Productions."



**Mark Birkett, locum
and assistant
at Edinburgh:
Richmond
Craigmillar**

"We at Richmond Craigmillar Church run what we call a 'Fair Share Scheme'. This is distinct from a food bank. The Fair Share aims to provide good food at a low and affordable cost. In our Fair Share we use a membership card and stamp system enabling locals to access a wide range of produce for £2.50 a card.

"Customers have the option of buying one item for two stamps, one item for one stamp, and two items for one stamp. We also have a popular loyalty card system that covers toiletries and cleaning products as well as a free table that stocks food that is near the end of its sell by date and sanitary products.

"On occasion we provide emergency care packages for those who require immediate assistance. Ultimately, the Fair Share we run is grounded in social justice and helps us to combat the feeling among local people that they don't want to ask for help because they are proud.

"Working in tandem with the local foodbanks, we hope to tackle the damaging effects of food poverty within Niddrie.

"The scheme has also given residents the opportunity to meet in our church cafe and enjoy the benefits of community and fellowship. There is a good spirit among the volunteers, staff and customers- together we work towards a common goal.

"We aim to offer solidarity not simply charity."



Joyce Leggate,
elder at Kirkcaldy:
Torbain

"I am an elder and safeguarding co-ordinator at Torbain Church in Kirkcaldy. I am also the Chair of Kirkcaldy Foodbank. Torbain Church along with every other faith group in the town supports Kirkcaldy Foodbank with weekly food donations and collections for the foodbank at special services.

"Kirkcaldy Foodbank is an independent foodbank and has been generously hosted within Dysart St Clair Church since its inception seven years ago.

"We have recently relocated to Viewforth church hall which became surplus to requirements within the presbytery following a presbytery review. This move has enabled us to enhance the support we can offer to those in need.

"The food bank issues over 1200 food parcels every month within the town and is supported entirely by voluntary donations for the community.

"The support from all the churches is invaluable and we receive regular donations of food and cash from all congregations. Many volunteers at the food bank are church members and the Christian spirit is found daily in the work of the foodbank. Helping those in need at a time where they cannot help themselves is a fundamental part of my faith journey as it is with many others. On many occasions the food bank has faced challenges due to escalating demand and limited resources and our prayers have been answered every time.

"I feel that the church has an essential role in ensuring the poor are fed and given comfort in their time of need and I feel privileged to be a part of it."



The Rev Iain May, minister,
Edinburgh: South
Leith

"In Leith over 50% of those who use our foodbank are working.

"Yet due to zero hour contracts or low pay they find it difficult to put food on the table.

"Five local churches run the foodbank in this area of North Edinburgh and Leith.

"We started some seven years ago and since then have served approx. 4-5,000 local folks per year, 25% of them children.

"We should not be having to do this! The coronavirus crisis will only increase the demand for the services we provide. It will be those in low paid work within the service industries who will no doubt, be the first to have their hours cut or laid off with no sickness benefit or pay.

"Here in Leith we will keep the foodbank open to ensure those in need have food.

"But there are encouraging signs as well.

"We have had numerous folks offering to help and volunteer within our foodbank. The locals have been even more generous in their food donations. Our local supermarket collection bins are overflowing. One individual has given us a donation of £10,000 to ensure we can buy food so others do not suffer.

"This is a blessing and a real sign that people do care and are willing to help others. A true sign of a community coming together, I pray this sense of sharing and belonging continues when the current crisis is over."



Rev Melvyn Wood, minister, Glasgow:
Blawarthill

"In Blawarthill, our food bank was started in 2013 by members and friends of the congregation, some of whom had personal experience of food poverty, who wished to help others facing the same challenges today. While we are affiliated with the Trussell Trust, the foodbank remains an organisation of the congregation.

"Glasgow NW Foodbank issued 10,613 three day food parcels in 2019, and demand has grown year-on-year. Last year we had our biggest challenge, with the rollout of Universal Credit causing delays to benefit payments. Demand from refugees and asylum seekers was also high.

"Little did we know then what lay around the corner. The Covid-19 emergency threatened our very operation, as the advice came out to close all churches. Then it was quickly accepted by the authorities that we were providing a vital local service and our staff and volunteers were designated key workers by Glasgow City Council.

"Some volunteers had to step back as being in an at-risk group, however we had many new offers from others who found themselves with unexpected spare time. Our collection points at local supermarkets were filling up faster than ever. People were exceptionally generous and were donating more than ever. We had to start operating in a very different way, as we followed the rules on distancing, disinfection, hand-washing, etc.

"We have always looked forward to the day when our services are no longer required. However, Jesus fed the hungry and that's what we feel he is calling us to do here."



Offering shelter

Ron Ferguson considers the impact of the Coronavirus Covid-19 pandemic.

A COUPLE of years or so ago, who would have thought we would soon be reading about a pandemic that would kill many people in different parts of our world?

It would have seemed unthinkable. Yet it arrived, with a vengeance, bringing fear and anxiety in its wake. It brought other things as well, and we'll look at that in a minute.

One doesn't need an honours degree in history to know that the unthinkable can become very thinkable in a flash. Many previous generations have had to contend with plagues and other forms of devastation, taking the lives of countless people in a relatively short space of time. Our ancestors knew what it was to live constantly with a lurking expectation of instant visitations by self-appointed grim reapers – some of them claiming divine authority.

Up here in Orkney, the sight of Viking ships on the horizon did not leave people imagining that a Sunday school picnic was on the cards.

In more modern times, human beings – at least in the Western world – have generally felt more secure in the world (yet who would have predicted that a civilised and cultured nation at the heart of Europe would harbour people who would slaughter Jews, Romanys and gay people with apparent abandon?)

What the Coronavirus has done for our generation is to shatter the illusion that we are invincible, that we can control events,

that our brilliant technologies can deliver us from evil. It has also exposed a vicious human tendency to look after one's own interests when trouble strikes – the squalid fights over toilet rolls in supermarkets are a case in point. This modern plague also puts a question mark against our complacency and our pretensions. Sinner man is naked and has no place to run to when a radical crisis comes. One doesn't need to be an uber-Calvinist to understand the biblical insistence that all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.

I mentioned earlier that the pandemic also brought other things in its wake. It triggered an avalanche of good things: acts of random kindness, sacrificial giving, heroism on the front line of the struggle, particularly by members of NHS staff – some working to the point of exhaustion. They modelled how to love each other from a distance. They challenged the unfettered individualism so visible in society, the “Me First” mentality that undermines any sense of loyalty to a wider community. To use a theological metaphor, at our best we are members of one another and we flourish best when we care about one another.

Surely we won't have to continue battling to make sure that the NHS is adequately funded.

I want to recommend a brilliant book. Titled *In the Shelter: finding a home in the world*, it is written by Pádraig O Tuama, a

“

What the coronavirus has done for our generation is to shatter the illusion that we are invincible, that we can control events, that our brilliant technologies can deliver us from evil.

brilliant Roman Catholic poet-theologian who was leader of the Corrymeela Community, a peace and justice group working for reconciliation in Northern Ireland. It is based around an old Irish proverb: ‘It is in the shelter of each other that the people live’.

This is a title for our times. Sometimes we should offer shelter to those who need it, other times we need shelter ourselves.

It is sad if we need a virus to teach us the meaning of virtue. So be it. ■



THE GOD OF DREAMS

UNDERSTANDING the
Meaning and Significance
of DREAMING

ARCHIE W.N. ROY PhD

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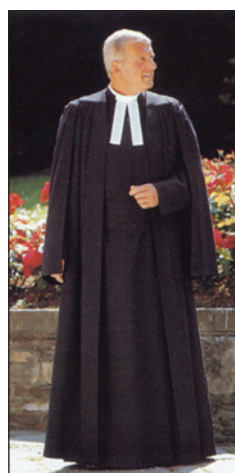
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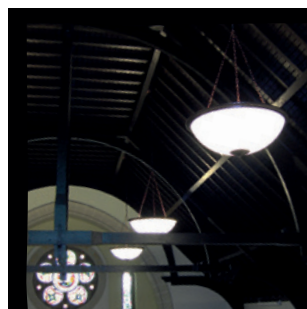
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The new landscape

The Very Rev Albert Bogle reflects on the impact of the Coronavirus Covid-19 on the business of the Church of Scotland.

I BELIEVE this lockdown is having a profound effect on many people. We are in hiding from this virus and like our ancestors Adam and Eve of old, we now find ourselves naked in the garden.

Hiding 'locked in', because we have become aware of our vulnerability and the fragility of our lives. But let us pray that we're not locked out of the garden completely. Let us trust and believe in the promise of redemption.

Redemption may well come through change and perhaps as quickly as the hiding from the virus has been taking place. All of a sudden, within a few days, more people have time to think, time to decide if what they have been doing is really what they want to do for the rest of their lives. The 'shut down' is going to have far reaching personal implications. Looking back for some this will be their redemption.

We shouldn't be surprised if many people never return to their previous employment, some out of choice will use the time to make a clean break, while others will have no choice because their job will have gone. Regardless of what happens we are all entering into a new landscape for living. The old so called certainties of the past world have gone. Capitalism as it has been known has gone. Governments have become interventionists. People for once seem to mean more than the markets.

All that I was speaking about in my last article in April has never been more relevant. The Christian church in this generation now faces the greatest challenge that any has ever faced. The Holy

Spirit is surely calling the church to reboot itself. The question is will a rebooted Kirk require all the structures of the past, especially if we discover we have survived and perhaps outgrown their usefulness?

We need to remember the way we have in the past resourced and administered the 'ordinances of religion'. While it has, for some, been of great value it is not church. Too often we have placed too much emphasis on maintaining the structure of administration rather than being open to the free moving presence of the Holy Spirit moving and shaping our corporate lives, cutting through our futile theological debates that have for too long divided us into conservatives and liberals.

We need to discern a new reality which invites us to engage both with the humanity of Jesus and also his divinity. It is the presence of the Holy Spirit among us that will bring about the much needed transformation and confidence that will allow us to call the eternal everlasting God 'Abba Father'

I believe this new landscape, created by an unwelcome virus, has dismantled the old order and we find ourselves once again worshipping and praying in each other's homes. Through the wonders of digital technology we have been brought back to first century church deployment.

Every day we find Christians coming together into the Sanctuary First Virtual Coffee Shop, or calling up their friends on Zoom, and having a bible study. Acts 2 is being re-created. Some are even gathering around the table of the Lord and partaking in the reality of

the Lord's Supper on a digital platform.

For the first time in their lives some people are alone. And the fear of loneliness overtaking them means they find themselves opening up to God in prayer. A great reformation principle is being rediscovered. The church community was first instituted by Jesus of Nazareth but it is daily being constituted by his Spirit. It is when we learn to let go of the fear and anxiety that comes with living in a new space that we discover new songs of praise to sing. Like Israel of old we discover new songs in a strange land.

I was sitting strumming the guitar and the words 'never alone' came into my mind and before long I was writing a song of comfort for myself and indeed anyone who would listen. Over and over like a monk chanting I sang 'never, never alone, never, never alone' and I found myself in dialogue with the Almighty. I was being drawn deeper and deeper into the rhythm of the music and I found myself understanding that for the Christian we are never alone because God has placed his Holy Spirit into our hearts.

As I strummed the chords it was as though I heard the voice of God saying, 'at last everyone has stopped, my world has been brought to a standstill, perhaps now people will have time to listen to and sing the new songs of deliverance that they are about to learn'. ■

The Very Rev Albert Bogle is a Pioneer Minister of Sanctuary First Church Online at www.sanctuaryfirst.org.uk

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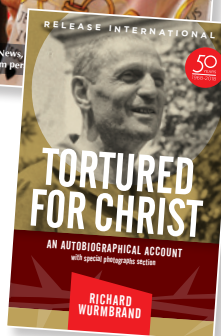
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Feeding the hungry

Stewart Lowe describes the stark reality of life for visitors to the North East Edinburgh Foodbank in Leith.

AND so, the i's dotted and the t's crossed, we opened up for business. Signs were put up outside church halls, and we waited. It was October 2013.

Would people come? Had we misread the signs?

We had to be patient. A system was in place. We had to let the agencies get on with their work. The agencies knew who was hungry. They would refer hungry people.

And slowly at first, but certainly, they came.

Men came, single men. Thin. Slouched. Carrying the world on their shoulders. Drinking hot, sugary tea. Eating biscuits. One after the other. Some men need to talk. Some remain silent, giving nothing away, the mask of suspicion firmly in place. You can never tell who the talkers will be,

And the women. The old ones, old as your grandmother. Worn-out clothes. Young women. Full make-up. A face to greet the world. No matter how hard they try to

disguise it, there is chaos in their eyes. Talking. Talking. Care homes. Marriage breakdown. Zero hours contracts. Drugs. Universal credit. Lives lived on the edge.

"I worked on a boat," the lady said, smiling, "a boat with huge sails. Took disadvantaged children around Great Britain. That was before alcohol came into my life, knocking at the door. I let it in, the devil in a bottle."

And the children. Babies in buggies. Loading the buggies with tins. Move over, kid, a tin of soup to rest your head against. All the time a mental equation going on in mum's mind, a slow release of worry as the weight of food increases and as the weight of food grows, the worry lessens, hidden, for a short time, behind a cloud.

With food in your belly – never really full, never a meal you'll remember, nothing worth writing home about – you can begin to think about other things, your hair, the

washing, the colour of the sky, tomorrow.

The food bank van sidles along the narrow road of Madeira Place, half-on, half-off the pavement. It is a peaceful street, a place where you feel it is okay to stop and think. On Ferry Road, some hundred yards away, the traffic never ceases. The noise addles the brain. Here, on this old lane, things are different.

Three men ease themselves down from their perch in the van. It might be a parody of "New Tricks", these old geezers not gathered to solve ancient crimes but come together to feed hungry people.

The van is full to bursting with donations collected from Tesco and Asda and Boots. The kind people of Leith know why their heart is alive and why they are needed.

The buzzer rings as though it might come through the wall.

"That'll be Arthur," says Ellen, readying a long table for the gathered boxes of food to be sorted out.

Arthur, Rob and Lyall burst into the room. They are no spring chickens but they refuse the easy life. Not for them the big chair and the newspaper. They are determined to snap at the heels of Time. Their laughter fills the room. The barrow is loaded with crates of food. Their movement is purposeful and joyful. It is, altogether, fantastic.

"These boxes are from Tesco," says Lyall.

The boxes are lifted on to the scales.

"14 kilo."

More boxes. A relay of donated food and toiletries.

"12 kilo."

"A heavy one. 21 kilo."

And it happens, week in, week out, this gathering of food, a harvest of giving which never ends.

The empty van is soon restored to its filled state with the orders from the five churches which serve the community. A centre is open every morning or every afternoon from Monday to Friday. The van bumps down from the pavement and sets off, weaving in and out of the streets of Leith, the dropping points familiar as old friends.

A man enters and slides awkwardly down

the one inch slope into the foodbank. He is taken aback by the gentle awkwardness of his entry. The surprise on his face takes away any semblance of the embarrassment he has been holding close to his heart.

I clasp his hand and smile. I wonder how the room looks to his fresh eyes, the tables and chairs, the food in different stages of preparation.

Does he catch sight of the old Labrador hiding, briefly, under a table? How will he respond to the lively banter amongst the ancient crew?

He hands over his voucher which entitles him to a box of food.

"I can see you are hungry," I say.

"I haven't eaten for two days."

I land the box of food at his feet. His eyes show amazement.

I can hardly get through three hours without feeding. I am embarrassed by this fact. I can hardly think about the cupboards at home which are full to bursting and the fridge packed with all kinds of fresh produce. The world beyond the tin. The world where you can choose when and what you eat.

"What a weight of food."

He accepts the carrier bags and pauses

to drink his tea.

"I've just come out of prison."

"Do you get help to get back on your feet?"

"No, I'm on my own."

He has sunken cheeks and eyes deep in his head. His sallowness hints at trouble lying beneath the surface.

In the end, I am a man talking to another man, here in the food bank. Honesty, of necessity, is our currency. To stand close to a stranger and look into his eyes and see real hunger is to feel a deep sense of shame.

In the end, his fill of tea taken, he gathers up his bags and I lead him to the door.

I send him off.

Another client enters. All attention focusses on gathering up the toiletries and extras which accompany the box of food.

A lady from Malawi. She has been before. A fussy lady. She knows what she wants. Not this, but that.

We are laughing about the farce that parliament has turned into.

"In Malawi," she says, "You can say nothing."

She is a very open person. She tickles the dog who lays his noble head in her lap.

"It is too dangerous."



“

"I can see you are hungry," I say.

"I haven't eaten for two days."

I land the box of food at his feet. His eyes show amazement.

Suddenly I feel I know nothing of the world. All my theories about this and that amount to nothing. I have never been truly hungry, truly silent, truly cold, truly alone, truly frightened.

Perhaps, that is what it is all about. Perhaps, that is the essence of the parable of the Good Samaritan. Being open to finding out how little you know. Not being scared to learn that what you thought was the way of things turns out not to be the case.

I have talked to primary school children about the foodbank. Little ones seated before me in their hundred, parents and grandparents assembled at the back and teachers watching from the sidelines.

“What do you like for tea?” I ask.

Hands go up.

“Pizzas.”

“Chips.”

“Burgers.”

As the answers are given, I empty a box of food prepared for a single person along the front of the hall, tinned eating in all its many manifestations; beans, soup, pasta, rice, meat, fish, tomatoes, pasta sauce, vegetables, custard, fruit, tea bags, coffee, cereal, biscuits, long life milk and juice. Stuff that doesn't go off.

“Well, I have none of the things you like to eat.”

The box takes on an aura of disappointment in the eyes of the children. I can see their attention quickly dwindle. The children wouldn't cross the road for the contents of such a box.

I settle a prop upon the table. It is a cardboard box doctored to resemble a cupboard with a tatty door knob attached. When I try to open the cupboard, the handle falls apart and the kids laugh. I run my hand around the insides of the box looking puzzled like the stage magician who has disappeared his beautiful stage assistant.

“Nothing,” I say, “not a bean. How must a mum feel when she looks inside her



cupboard to find it completely empty and her children are due back from school?”

An empty cupboard is the scaffolding of your life toppling about your ears.

I look at the faces of the audience and wonder, is there a child, is there a mother who recognises the situation?

A man I meet at the foodbank has long been in my thoughts. He is a warm-hearted, honest man whose troubles run deep. He lives in a cold flat and as winter approaches he surrenders his living room, he and his cat, and sets up camp in his bedroom. The damp seeps through the walls, a silent enemy, waiting to pounce.

There are times when he cannot face the world and he makes do with his guitar. He writes songs and will take them to open-mike venues when his head is in the right place.

As a teenager he was uprooted from his home in North Berwick and placed in a children's home in Craigmillar.

He found solace in the dangerous world of alcohol which offered the illusion of happiness. He is reluctant to accept food.

“If only you can feed my cat,” he says.

He looks into my eyes.

I feel his pain.

All I can do is feed him and his cat.

The session is over.

The door is closed.

The Hoover runs over the carpet. Tables are clattered into shape and stored away. The food is hidden under blue blankets until the next time.

The old Labrador dog knows the routine. He has been here Friday morning and Monday evenings for six years.

You would need a library to house the stories he could tell.

Movement flattens to stillness.

The hungry will always be with us.

But this thing, this foodbank, is neither a house we are building nor a symphony we are composing. We have to accept that the finishing line is not of our own making. The finishing line, if it exists, lies in the hands of powers we have no control over. We don't cause the hungry people and we cannot bring that hunger to an end.

I release the foodbank sign from its slot above the doorway and pause to look up and down the street. The history of a place depends upon what the writer believes to be important. Many histories are never told.

For me and my team another morning is over. For the client of the foodbank it goes on, somewhere, becoming a new beginning. ■

Pandemic food crisis

Jackie Macadam reports on the impact of the Coronavirus Covid-19 pandemic on foodbanks and charities caring for the homeless across Scotland.

"I'M sorry to take so long to get back to you," says Joyce Leggate, elder at Torbain Church and Chair of Kirkcaldy Foodbank. "But it's just been hectic here."

"Hectic" could be the understatement of the year. Foodbanks are in crisis.

"Normally, we distribute around 1200 food parcels every month in the local area and this service is run by a marvellous team of around 146 dedicated volunteers," she says.

"This team of volunteers have a variety of roles, including ordering food from supermarkets to the value of around £10,000 a month, placing all the purchased and donated food on to shelves ready for the teams of packers who make up the 1200 food parcels. These parcels are then distributed by another team of experienced, knowledgeable volunteers to the public who present with a range of issues including addiction, mental ill health, loneliness, poverty and debt.

"Following the government advice, at the start of the Coronavirus crisis, telling us all to self-isolate, we lost 70% of our volunteers overnight who, for reasons of age and risk factors made the difficult decision to step away from the foodbank.

"At the same time, we discovered that despite placing large weekly orders with local supermarkets they could not supply us with much of our essential goods that make up a basic food parcel, due to the panic buying of essential items by those who were able to do so."

The stockpiling has caused incredible problems for Joyce and her team. "My board members and I have spent endless hours trying to source food items by visiting supermarkets and cash and carry outlets trying to buy milk, meat products, tea, coffee and many other items essential to daily living."

The difficulties getting the basics have been exacerbated by the double-whammy of people prioritising the needs of their own families as well.

"Our donations from the public have reduced although many people are donating money, which is great, but right now, we need people and food!

"We appealed for more volunteers on social media and have had a wonderful response. We do not want to condense all our services into a short period of time in the week as that will aid the transmission of this dreadful disease.

"We need to always remember that we have a duty of care to our volunteers to keep them safe from harm."

And it's not just the 'regulars' who are coming to the foodbank trying to get parcels.

Joyce explains: "We are being presented with people coming for food who are ignoring all the advice yet are expecting us to be there to help them as they will when they turn to the NHS when they become ill and need urgent medical care.

"But people are desperate and frightened. We've never faced this situation before."

Many times, Joyce falls back on her faith for help.

"I pray that we survive this with a greater sense of humanity towards one another and that this reminds us all that we cannot only think of ourselves. We all live on the beautiful planet and have not been kind to it all for many years. Let's be kind to ourselves, to others and all that God gave us."

"On a normal week across the city there are drop-in cafes being run by faith communities, offering free food, support, friendship and advice every day," says Jacky Close, Development Co-ordinator, Faith in Community, Dundee.

"But the picture is changing rapidly as restrictions are brought into force; cafes can no longer run, the foodbanks are struggling with increasing referrals and decreasing donations, people on low incomes are facing larger heating and food costs and less support as they isolate at home."

She said: "There are two foodbanks here, one run by a Christian organisation and one run by a Muslim organisation, with a positive partnership approach that responds to the needs of the most vulnerable in our city.

"Yet, the city is still a place of generosity and hope. Faith communities have adapted their cafes to become takeaways, where people can come and pick up a bag of food and take it home, with a cheery wave from the volunteers on the other side of the 'safe distance' table. The foodbanks are in discussion about how they can work closer together, as need increases, with 'Taught

by Muhammad' continuing their food bag delivery approach," she says.

"We at Faith in Community are working hard to build conversations between the Council, faith communities and other key third sector organisations so that, as responses are developed specifically to Covid-19, the poorest in our communities are not forgotten.

"In March we hosted a video conference call with senior managers from Dundee City Council and representatives from the main free food providers within the city.

"In the end we value the community, hope, connectedness and life that we see in Dundee."

"Since launching in 2013, we've faced many challenges but none like Covid-19," says Kyle McCormick, Project Manager of Glasgow NW food bank. "On the one hand, it feels a bit like Christmas – many people are being very generous. Our JustGiving crowdfund raised £4515 in its first seven days, our fastest ever fundraiser. Someone presented us with a cheque for £7000, and people are, where they can, supporting us at our participating stores by donating food.

"But supermarkets have had limited stock so there is a limit on how much people can buy, which also includes then how much they can donate. Normally at this time we see a natural decline in donations following Christmas, so where we would be spending £200 – £500 on line a week to keep our supplies topped up. Restrictions mean our current basket is sitting at only £24.31 as we have reached the maximum number of items we can purchase!

"Many of our volunteers have been with us for many years, some as far back as 2014, but due to their age, their health problems, or those of a loved one, they cannot volunteer at the moment. We value their need to stay at home, and want them to stay safe – we will be glad to welcome them back when this all blows over.

"In the last two weeks we've seen a surge in support from people that are not as restricted by their own health or that of a loved one, but have had to stop working because of the virus, and wish to volunteer in their spare time, but will have to go back to their normal work when this blows over. Seeing the ways people have come together



Kirkcaldy Foodbank

like this, during a time when the virus is such a massive impact on everyone's lives, is really incredible.

"Where it is not like Christmas is people panic buying, clearing the shelves, not thinking of others' needs, giving shop assistants abuse because of lack of supplies, or because the shop assistant won't let them buy several of the same thing, shouting abuse at our volunteers, saying 'that's ridiculous, there is no need for you having all of that' and continuing it even when told that we were collecting for the foodbank.

"This is a difficult time for us all. We must remember to be kind to each other – and to approach this difficult time with compassion, dignity, and a sense of community.

This will pass. No one knows how long Covid-19 will be here before we can get back to our day to day lives. But at some point, the immediate crisis will pass. Poverty in our communities will not go away just because of a virus – we need your support today and tomorrow."

It's not just foodbanks that have been badly hit.





Glasgow City Mission has found themselves living in a new world.

The mission usually delivers a two course meal to up to 100 people each weekday night and about 50 on a Saturday, as well as running women's brunches, men's hot filled rolls on a Wednesday and an international's brunch on a Thursday. They also give out food parcels daily, so the impact of their closure is wide ranging.

Charles Maasz, CEO of GCM explained: "It's too early to offer an accurate picture of how it is within the sector as each person's needs will be particular to them and their level of concern will differ also. As soon as we announced we were going to phase close the shelter we moved toward lobbying Scottish Government and the Glasgow Health and Social Care Partnership to bring a more creative attitude toward isolation appropriate accommodation. We are delighted to be able to say that this has happened in Glasgow and is about to be rolled out in Edinburgh also. The result is that almost all persons rough sleeping or who recourse to shelter accommodation should be provided with an appropriate alternative for the duration of the accelerating phase of contagion.

"The focus for our project teams then becomes how to service the particular needs of the community and individuals in this

new context."

The project teams have identified a list of around 600 vulnerable people who will be contacted, most of them regular guests. "We will also consider our capacity to support additional vulnerable individuals who have just received accommodation after presenting as homeless, such as those accessing hotel spaces."

Charles says they've already begun delivering food parcels and are trying to figure out how to ramp that effort up over the coming days.

"Sadly," he says. "We've had to close our building down to the public temporarily. Our Child and Family Centre is also using the phone to reach people and respond to their needs. Some of our staff have even uploaded family activities to platforms like Facebook so that families can do them together at home!"

"We are, however, concerned with the impact of isolation on vulnerable people especially in the areas of mental and emotional wellbeing and their willingness to abide by the protocols and public recommendations. There will certainly be implications around the area of availability of income through depleted begging opportunities and other means. There is also likely to be some impact on the ability of addicted persons to secure the income necessary to maintain their habits and the

“

Seeing the ways people have come together like this, during a time when the virus is such a massive impact on everyone's lives, is really incredible.

desperation that will arise if these acute needs are not being met.

"One of our main concerns though, is those people who do not have any recourse to public funds. The HSCP are unable to house these individuals due to a legal position however we want to see Scottish lawmakers find a way to overrule this position on the basis of public health and the threat of contagion. People in our country who are allowed to slip between the threads in the fabric are at real risk from exploitation, gang influence, and to falling prey to organised crime. We would like to see all persons who have come to Scotland in search of better lives to be shown world leading levels of hospitality and compassion. We all must breathe the same air and all stand in the face of a common enemy so all distinctions on status should (must) be put to one side to achieve the greater good." ▣

God's not finished with Scotland

Lynne McNeil meets the Moderator-Designate, the Rev Dr Martin Fair, amid the cancellation of this year's General Assembly for the first time in over 300 years.

IT WILL be a very different ceremony to install the Moderator-Designate of the Church of Scotland in 2020.

This year's General Assembly has been cancelled in light of the Coronavirus Covid-19 pandemic (see page 29) meaning that the installation of the Rev Dr Martin Fair in the Church's ambassadorial role will be dramatically different. The Assembly is the first to be cancelled since 1689, such is the gravity of the biggest public health crisis in a century.

A low-key Commission of Assembly has instead been planned.

But Dr Fair, minister at Arbroath: St Andrew's, whilst naturally disappointed, is philosophical about the cancellation of the centrepiece of the central Church's year.

"Since 1689, look at what the world has been through and there has always been a General Assembly and here we are now with the Coronavirus Covid-19 pandemic and there is no General Assembly. That is a measure of how serious this is.

"You have got to acknowledge that people are dying out there and the world, economically, is dealing with intense pressure and the National Health Service is going to be stretched to the limit. Whether the General Assembly takes place is a small matter really compared to all of that and it was absolutely the right decision to cancel."

He believes the Church will become more creative as a result of enforced change stemming from the pandemic. Dr Fair has already been holding online meetings and believes it can transform the way it

conducts business. At the time of writing all public worship has been cancelled until further notice and the Church offices in Edinburgh are closed (see page 43).

But as a result of the pandemic, Martin's first few months will not be the typical time of a newly installed Moderator, but will be spent back in his parish in Arbroath, rather than in the Moderator's residence in Edinburgh. In the wake of the shutdown and faced with an empty diary until the crisis subsides, he has returned to Angus and made the return journey by rail, in keeping with a pledge during his year in office to use public transport wherever possible.

As you travel by bus or train around Scotland over the next year, don't be surprised if you find Martin sitting beside you.

Whilst Moderators in recent times have travelled whenever possible by public transport, he is the first to challenge congregations to help fulfil his promise.

"In my moderatorial year I am going to go by public transport as much as I can.

"Even in this preparation period I am using public transport. It would be easier and more convenient for me to use the car but I am going to travel by train and bus as much as I can and I am going to follow that through the year. It is going to require something of the places I am going to visit.

"I'm doing it because I think it is important. Our youth delegates and others have been so forcefully persuasive to the General Assembly in recent years. This year I had the opportunity to have a car for my convenience but it would be a serious

mistake not to take public transport."

It will present inconvenient challenges for Martin, but he is committed to making a difference, wherever possible, during his year. He had planned to personally carbon offset trips overseas but the picture at the time of writing on these visits is uncertain. Trips had been planned to support distinct minority Christians – particularly in Lebanon and Syria – but the shadow of Covid-19 means the programme is uncertain for now.

The inconvenience of public transport will be multiplied after an accident in 2017 left him with limited movement in his left arm.

"It was a huge life lesson for me suffering this accident and how it has left me with the left arm semi functioning. Before that happened I would have considered myself to be self sufficient. I did not need anyone's help. To go from that to needing help, washing, eating and everything you can imagine by way of daily functioning was a life lesson.

"I wish it had not happened, but good has come out of a bad thing. It has taught me a whole lot. It gives one a new perspective in life. It helps me to better understand those who have to live with that all their days. My injury is minor compared to a lot of people. It has just helped me to see better what it is.

"Although it is problematic there are so many people with much harder situations."

Born in Johnstone, Renfrewshire, Martin was one of two sons born into a churchgoing family (his dad Bill was an

The Rev Dr Martin Fair



“

I think as I have ministered probably what people have said to me most is that I am an encourager and an inspirer and that is what I hope to do in this coming year.

elder and his mum, Ena, a stalwart of the local church) in Thornliebank on the south side of Glasgow. His wife, Elaine, was born in the same month and the couple lived in the same street and grew up together at Thornliebank Primary School and Woodfarm Secondary School, church and university, before marrying in 1987.

Martin credits his local church with sowing the seeds of faith that ultimately led to his call to parish ministry.

“What was significant was a new minister, the Rev Ian Purves came when we were aged about 12 or 13, replacing an old traditional Highland minister. Here was a new younger minister who came along and

created a youth group. There was about a dozen to 15 of us in that youth group at the beginning and many more who were involved along the way. Fourteen of us still meet up and of that group four became ordained ministers of the Church of Scotland and there were at least five marriages. (Two of the group, the Rev Catherine Beattie minister at Giffnock South and the Rev Gregor McIntyre, minister at Clydebank: Faifley will serve as his chaplains during the year).

“It was a formative time in our lives. The minister took us on summer mission. We went to Girvan for that year’s summer mission. It was absolutely fundamental in

sensing some call to ministry.”

The minister led the Youth Fellowship which took a couple of services with the congregation each year.

“I got asked to preach when I was about 17. I think it went reasonably well. The minister said: ‘you need to definitely think about having ministry in your life’.” I was set to do a politics degree at Strathclyde University. I was not really thinking about a career in the Church, but it was Glasgow in the mid-1980s and it was recessionary times. I was going to be a social worker or completely unrealistically I thought I was going to be the head of housing at the then Glasgow District Council, or something like



that. I was going to be involved in real life.

“The only job I eventually got was in Leeds but with the Church of England as a youth worker. This immersed me in the daily life working with the Church of England. It was during that time that the prayers, thoughts and possibilities coalesced. I decided I would go into the ministry.”

He applied to the Church’s selection school and was admitted on his first try at the age of 21. Divinity studies followed at Glasgow University: “Elaine was working as a primary teacher so it made sense for me to study in Glasgow.”

He was licensed by the Presbytery of Glasgow in Glasgow Cathedral (among a group of 17) in July 1989 and completed his probation at Christ Church in Bermuda.

“We found a church that was absolutely thriving and we built the youth group up to way over 100 kids. They were just a good church doing really good ministry. It inspired us for coming home. If it can be done there, it can be done here. It was inspirational to us.

“We made lifelong friends in Bermuda and we’ve returned there, most recently last year for the 300th anniversary of the church.”

As probation drew to a close, Martin spent time scanning letters about vacancies from the central Church and the pages of Life and Work. “Because I had been out of the loop it was agreed that I would do six months’ reacclimatisation in Scotland. There were letters going back and forward and I was saying to send me to any church in Glasgow. Word came back that it would be Dundee: St Mary’s. I wrote back

checking my letters had not gone astray and again the letter came back that it would be Dundee: St Mary’s. It turned out the late Very Rev Dr Bill Macmillan was Moderator that year. A locum was looking after things and I would be serving with him. I still think that was absolutely providential.

“The vacancy came up in Arbroath: St Andrews. If we had been living in Glasgow there was no way I would have ever thought about it. I thought I was going to minister in Glasgow. We found ourselves in Dundee and looking at the list, Arbroath was close by – only 15 miles away.

“I remember going to look – it was a dreich, wet autumnal day and we drove through to Arbroath and St Andrew’s. There was nothing to commend it and draw us to it. We could have run a mile but something genuinely stirred within us.

“The next day Elaine and a friend came through on a Sunday morning and went to the Church. Elaine came home and said it was great, so welcoming and definitely worth checking out. The rest is history.”

Martin applied and was called to the charge on January 28 1992 and Martin and Elaine (followed by three sons Callum, Andrew and Fraser) have been there ever since. Having been born near the birthplace of William Wallace, Martin says he found himself in a church across the road from Arbroath Abbey, where Robert the Bruce signed the Declaration of Independence 700 years ago on April 6 2020.

Martin sees his appointment as part of the town’s ‘big year’ and describes it as ‘an honour for the town’.

Arbroath will also be woven into his

Moderatorial outfit – a frock coat.

“I have a friend who has designed a special tartan to mark the 700th anniversary of the Declaration of Arbroath and every thread means something.

“I will have touches of tartan added to the cuffs. It will give me a talking point. Every single thread in that tartan means something.”

In nearly 30 years in Arbroath, he believes his ministry has involved three separate jobs.

“The first was me doing it all because that is how it was. There is a minister, a congregation, youth group, visiting. That was the norm at that time. After a certain number of years it became clear to me that I was going to be a bottle neck.

“We genuinely needed to sort out development and the next phase of ministry was about the people of God. We began to take it seriously, identifying gifts, skills, experiences and freeing the congregation up to say they could have roles to play in the church and the outreach.

“That was an absolutely key time.

“My main focus in that period was raising other people up to do that ministry. I was doing less of the jobs, but was freed to learn and was just encouraging, equipping and enabling. It was so rewarding with people finding themselves and growing in confidence in their own lives.

“We built the Church up.

“The third phase came at St Andrew’s Church when we were asking the question: ‘We have built up a strong church so what do we do so we can begin to impact the community at large?’ That has been the third phase. It has involved Havilah and

things that are genuinely making a difference in the town. We could not have got there without the stages in between. We had to raise up a whole army of people who are ready to serve in the wider community.

"We multiplied opportunities for people to get involved and it was not just what we did on a Sunday morning or the Monday to Friday rest of church.

"The power of it is not about church organisations as such, important as they are, a lot of what we do is about actually just trying to make a difference in the community. Meeting needs where they are greatest. There is a big emphasis on mental health."

Mental health will be one of the key themes of Martin's year, an interest that would have resonated with the Lord High Commissioner to this year's Assembly, the Earl of Strathearn.

"Our mental health services are in such a place that the voluntary sector, not least, the Church steps up."

He is passionate about underfunding of services in a much needed area of healthcare. As an example of the pressures facing those in need and health care staff he talks of a young man he worked with who had tried to take his life three times in a short period but was told he would need to wait 18 weeks for a referral at a time of crisis. St Andrew's with support from grant funding, set up the Havilah Project and three related projects, principally helping addicts and those with mental health issues.

Foodbanks are another area where the congregation was ahead of the curve.

Such concerns have been reflected by the congregation which he says identified a need for a food bank 'long before anyone heard about it'.

Another parish concern he will endeavour to reflect during the year is care and concern for Christians living as minorities, with visits to Lebanon and Syria and Nepal pencilled in. A prayer group meets every

month at St Andrew's to pray for those who suffer for their faith.

Presbytery visits are also planned to Perth, West Lothian and Abernethy.

As someone who has steered his own church through change, Martin recognises the value of the Church at a time of uncertainty and change not just in the Church of Scotland but in wider society.

"I think the Church is a steady influence in testing times and yet, in the Gospel, we have within our hands that which can change lives and transform societies.

"To me we are at least three generations away from when the Church was still influential. Within society, if we are ever going to win back a degree of credibility or the right to speak of what we believe we have got to be proving the truth of what we believe by our service.

"At this point in time the Church is on its knees, not in a negative sense, but in a serving sense and in a praying sense. Our fundamental provision should be that all the things that the Church does to serve people."

An early adopter of webcasting services, he believes they have had an impact on people.

"We get regular messages from people around Scotland and around the world. We have a senior elder who watches every week who is no longer able to come to church.

"It's so that young people are away working shifts or offshore can still be part of church. There are some who say webcasting may lead folks away from the church, tempting them just to stay in bed on Sunday mornings! There may be one or two who do that but what happens if you are getting another 49 or 50? Since the enforced closure of churches in mid-March, lots of churches have been putting out digital versions of Sunday worship and many are repoting significantly more 'views' than ordinarily they have in their churches week by week.

"As we are struggling for ministers, certainly in the more rural areas of the country the streaming of services may become an option.

"His work was boosted by a doctorate at Princeton in the early millennium which he has deployed in his ministry.

"When I did my BD it was all theory, reading this stuff but with little experience to apply. Going back and studying with eight to ten years of ordained ministry behind me – it was a completely different experience. The doctorate was crucial."

He has served the central church as Convener of the Parish Development Fund and as Vice Convener of the former Mission and Discipleship Council, as well as at presbytery level.

"I honestly still feel as enthusiastic and encouraged and just up for it from the day I started. I have said through the years if I thought the Church was dead then I would have quit and done something more useful with my life.

"I am absolutely convinced that God's not finished with Scotland.

"The Church we are going to see in the days to come may not be recognisable from what we know but it will be there."

In his absence away from the parish, a range of people will help out and on two Sundays, the congregation will look after worship themselves.

At a time of change for the Church, he hopes to spend the year offering encouragement.

"I think as I have ministered probably what people have said to me most is that I am an encourager and an inspirer and that is what I hope to do in this coming year. "I think that Church is at an inbetween time. I hope I can be someone who will enthuse and encourage all as a church to remain faithful and to believe that God has a future for us and that we continue journeying towards that." ■



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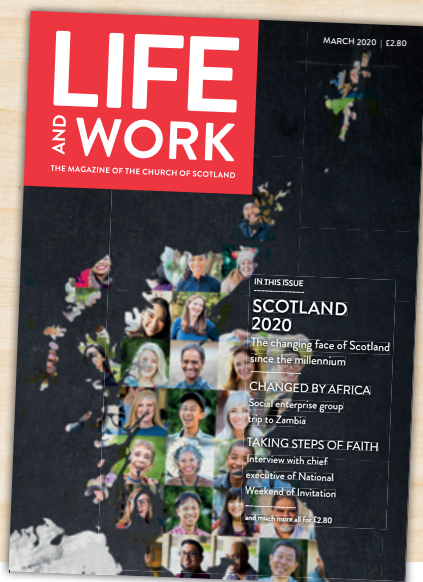
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Assembly 2020 cancelled

Thomas Baldwin reports on the cancellation of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland.

FOR the first time in over 300 years, a General Assembly of the Church of Scotland will not take place in 2020.

The annual gathering of the Church was due to have been held in Edinburgh in the week beginning May 16, but was called off on March 17 as the scale of the Coronavirus Covid-19 epidemic was becoming clear.

Alternative arrangements will be made to allow urgent non-controversial decisions, and to confirm the installation of the new Moderator of the General Assembly.

The Principal Clerk to the General Assembly, the Rev Dr George Whyte, said: "We did not take this decision lightly but in the current circumstances it was the only choice we could make. Our Assembly would have brought almost a thousand people to a week-long meeting in Edinburgh including visitors from overseas and from other churches. It is a time when we can celebrate being the Church and make important decisions about our future but these are exceptional times and people's health must come first.

"We were also looking forward to welcoming the Duke of Cambridge as the Queen's representative but we are assured that Prince William will understand our unavoidable decision. We hope that he may be Lord High Commissioner on another occasion.

"In the meantime the Church will find alternative ways to make urgent decisions including confirming the appointment of our new Moderator, the Rev Dr Martin Fair, who will take up his duties in May."

Dr Fair said: "Of course it's hugely disappointing on a personal level, having spent the last six months preparing!

"I had been very much looking forward to the General Assembly and everything thereafter, believing that these are exciting times we're moving into.

"But of course, the crisis has advanced so rapidly that the cancellation was inevitable.

"Now, in the big scheme of things, having the Assembly or not seems a trifling matter, and much more important is that the church locally and nationally focusses its attention on creative ways of continuing our ministry and mission, particularly in terms of supporting the most vulnerable."

The Assembly would have been the first since the formation of the new Faith Nurture and Faith Impact forums, replacing four former councils. It would have included discussion on further changes, including Presbytery mergers, following on from last year's approval of the Radical Action Plan and recommendations from the Special Commission on Structural Reform.

Dr Whyte said that it was hoped to hold some sort of Commission of Assembly (a body consisting of around 10% of last year's Assembly) process, without the need for a physical meeting, during the second half of April. This would be asked to pass 'non-controversial' matters including Dr Fair's appointment, approving some new Presbyteries and making appointments to committees and trusts.

A second Commission of Assembly may also be held in the autumn if there is

“

We did not take this decision lightly but in the current circumstances it was the only choice we could make. Our Assembly would have brought almost a thousand people to a week-long meeting in Edinburgh including visitors from overseas and from other churches. It is a time when we can celebrate being the Church and make important decisions about our future but these are exceptional times and people's health must come first.

business that cannot wait until May 2021, depending on virus restrictions having been lifted.

It is believed this will be the first year that an Assembly will not be held since 1689, the year before the establishment of Presbyterian governance in the Church of Scotland. ■

Life and Work will cover any decisions made by the Commission of Assembly at www.lifeandwork.org, and in future magazines.

The Big Picture

Right photo: Forth Bridge by Ian Watt

Below: Sunset over Troon Ballast Bank by Avril McDonald

Bottom: Dipper at The Den, Kirriemuir, Angus by Ted Logan



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Reflections from the Moderator-Designate

The following are brief reflections on the passage which the Moderator-Designate, the Rev Dr Martin Fair planned to use during the week of the General Assembly.

‘ONE day as Jesus was walking along the shore of the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and his brother Andrew throwing a net into the water, for they fished for a living. Jesus called out to them, “Come, follow me, and I will show you how to fish for people!” And they left their nets at once and followed him.’ Mark 1:16-17

Day 1

Last year, the General Assembly, and therefore the church, committed itself to both the Radical Plan and the findings of the Special Commission. Since then many folks have been hugely busy working out how to translate these various ideas, goals and principles into practical out-workings. Naturally enough, much of the effort has been directed at the business of restructuring – the reshaping of the central bodies and the creation of larger regional units (‘super presbyteries.’)

But deep down, we’re all aware – or should be! – that restructuring in itself will prove to be of little help to us unless it is accompanied by a wholehearted recommitment to the mission to which Jesus called us. To put it another way, unless our new shape frees us up to do that which we are primarily called to do then malaise and decline will doubtless continue unabated.

Is this a counsel of despair? Not a bit of it! I for one remain entirely hopeful. I’ve said on numerous occasions that if I thought

there was no hope for the Church of Scotland then I’d quit ministry and find something more useful to do with the remainder of my working life.

But here I am. Still here. Not going anywhere.

God isn’t finished with Scotland and will, I pray, use us powerfully in the days ahead as a channel through which his love, joy and peace will be known afresh to the peoples of our nation and beyond.

So as we continue with the necessary business of redesigning the way we operate, let it go hand in hand with a full-blooded, no-holds-barred, commitment to what Jesus called those first disciples to: fishing for people.

Day 2

I have some wonderful memories of growing up within the family of the church and not least within the infant department of the Sunday School. Maybe that’s because my best friend and future wife was one of my young classmates!

But alongside that, I can remember us singing and of all the choruses we sang, I will make you fishers of men was among my favourites – the words and the accompanying actions! During my seven years of Summer Mission on the beach at Girvan, that song was still a fixture in the repertoire of songs that we’d use in our engagement with the local kids

and families.

Times have changed. The exclusiveness of the language is problematic now. The song is certainly of its time, a bit dated we might say.

But while we might want to sing a new song, let’s rejoice in the timeless truth that Jesus is still calling us to follow him and, as the gospels have it, to ‘fish for people.’ The most serious mistake we could make – and perhaps have? – is to tell ourselves that the task of fishing is ‘of its time’ and somewhat dated now. How we go about it must be worked out anew in every time and place but that we do it is not up for debate. It’s why we’re here – not an optional extra.

The seas around our coastlines may have suffered from seasons of over-fishing. We caught too many fish. In terms of fishing for people, in this season we’ve barely got into the boat.

Day 3

There are some wonderful old black and white pictures of the fisherfolk of Arbroath – the town in which I’ve lived and ministered throughout the whole of my ministry. What strikes me most in these grainy old images is that everyone was involved – the bairns, the men and the women and the grandparents. It might have been the menfolk who went to sea but the land-based part of the endeavour was equally important; baiting the lines,

mending the nets, gutting the fish and of course heading off far and wide to sell the catch. We can be sure that nobody was sitting around with time on their hands!

Recovering the essential mission of the church – fishing for people – will require that all of us are involved. There may still be room for the occasional rally featuring a renowned evangelist but the basic business of fishing for people is more to do with what each of us is about in the day to day ordinariness of life. And while some will still be called to ‘leave what’s known and dear’ in answer to a particular call, for most of us our fishing ground will be right where we are – among our neighbours, colleagues and friends.

Though having a working knowledge of what our faith is all about will of course help, you won’t need a doctoral degree in systematic theology. More important will be your love for people and your willingness – like those first fishermen – to be obedient to Jesus’ calling.

Day 4

Fishing for people does require that those of us who have answered Jesus’ primary call to follow him are ready and willing to speak of the one to whom we have committed our lives. Silence isn’t golden.

But the speaking part should be woven seamlessly into the whole of our living.

Jesus promised those first followers that he would teach them, or show them, how to fish for people and we might argue that the greater part of those few years that he was among them was given over to fulfilling that promise.

When we reflect on the gospel accounts, and see then what he ‘showed them,’ it’s abundantly clear that there was plenty of ‘doing’ alongside all of the ‘speaking.’ It’s clear that Jesus cared for people – not just because he said so but because he showed it to be so. He healed the sick, ministered to



the crushed and broken in spirit, sat with those who were excluded and marginalised, ate with those who knew only that they didn’t belong and were despised.

All of that was integral to the business of fishing for people. And it still needs to be today. We’re a long way from that time when we had some kind of right to preach – and a long way from any realistic expectation that many were interested or would listen.

That’s why the doing and the serving and the caring are so vital in this age.

If we want the opportunity to stand up and speak, first we need to kneel down and serve. Fishing for people demands nothing less.

Day 5

I’ve never been keen on fishing and therefore know very little about it. Nor I suspect would I have the patience for it. From what I’ve seen, it seems to involve a lot of hanging around doing, well, not very much!

But I do know this much; you need some kind of bait. I once took my boys fishing while on a holiday abroad and was advised

that the best bait was chunks of Kentucky Fried Chicken!

I wonder if that’s perhaps how we’ve thought about church, and mission – the whole business of fishing for people? Maybe we’ve told ourselves that if we come up with the right bait then the fish – people – will come swimming right up, and in. Have we imagined that if we got our music right, or changed the version of the pew Bible, or projected the words, or served better coffee, or installed nicer toilets that people would come?

If so then we’ve been guilty of using the wrong bait. There’s nothing wrong in any of the above but ‘doing things better’ is no substitute for offering the love of God made known in Jesus. When first present, people were drawn to Jesus. That hasn’t changed.

But there’s something else about the idea of bait. By implication it involves luring, or drawing fish, to us. What if, in sending us out, Jesus means for us to... go out! So we’re not to ‘stay in’ and lure people to us; we’re to ‘step out’ and take with us the greatest gift we have to offer.

Jesus. ■

War's end

George R Wilkes reflects on the role of churches in peacebuilding across Europe on the 75th anniversary of VE Day.

SEVENTY-FIVE years ago, victory was declared in Europe. Churches and religious thinkers were prominent amongst those insisting that the world should never again see such inhumanity. Warfare continues to have shocking consequences, but we have not seen a war on such a scale. Perhaps the weightiest barrier to a return to war in Europe was the new Cold War reality, but the long peace also reflects a continent-wide revulsion against the costs of war, against the assertion that might can by itself provide a ground for right. Religious and secular responses to this revulsion have made an impact, but there remain areas of continuing controversy. They seem so great that we may no longer be able to assume that the postwar victory of right over might generates an intellectually coherent consensus.

It did once. Post-war Western European democratic leaders found broad support for actions that would provide guarantees against another slide into brutality. As they devised new international treaties and institutions, a key element of their reasoning lay in a new Christian politics. Many of the founding fathers of the European institutions – Winston Churchill, Robert Schuman, Alcide De Gasperi – deliberately grounded their opposition to militaristic extremism on their understanding of common Christian values. The movement for European unity based on human rights was intended to derail the economic and political arguments for war, and it had the active support of leading figures in Europe's churches – as well as religious Jews and non-religious thinkers.

It was also defended in Christian terms by a generation of intellectuals, such as the hugely influential French Catholic Jacques Maritain, for whom it was obvious that Christians needed to support international liberal institutions in order to lay to rest the barbarism of Europe's recent past.

Whereas between the wars a quite secular movement had sought to outlaw aggressive war an additional, specifically religious ground for opposing military might with rights became politically influential after 1945. This rested on arguments that the theologians Simone Weil and Paul Tillich pressed: Europe's brutal murders were a function of a bloodthirsty pagan form of thinking about Christianity; in two wars, the Churches had accepted and even supported this barbarism because Christians had accepted violence as tragically natural; and the churches would have to express repentance politically so that the true nature of war guilt might properly be understood. The Churches institutionally were not yet prepared in 1945 to take up such a clear political position: they did not see that it was their theology that had enabled the acceptance of fascist demands before the war, and they did not confess Christians bore guilt for the war. The Stuttgart Declaration of guilt made by the Evangelical Church in Germany in 1945, drafted by Martin Niemöller and others, was criticised for omitting any condemnation of, or gesture at responsibility for, the Nazis' aggressive war and the genocide of Jews. The time was not yet ripe for such political theology

at an institutional level.

The notion that churches would contribute to peacebuilding from a space outside politics work has nevertheless often been useful. It was not the case that the institutional churches across the postwar decades saw themselves as motors for a consistently idealistic campaign for peace. Yet, taking advantage of their non-political status, churches were at work in many of the great peacebuilding moments following 1945. German clergy were active participants in Ostpolitik in the 1960s, for instance, enjoying a space for action across the Cold War blocs when politicians could not. Pope John Paul II would be credited with using this bridging capital to erode the Communist Bloc in its last years. In the mass anti-nuclear demonstrations of the 1980s, notably in Germany, churches played a prominent role in generating grassroots public activity transcending party political divisions.

More recently, the resistance to distinctive religious political discourse has eroded in many European countries, such that leaders from all faiths are expected to address the political frameworks we use to justify war and advance peace. Pope Francis and a range of Church leaders – Protestant, Catholic and Orthodox – have spoken increasingly of replacing just war theory with a just peace theory. They are essentially reviving the early twentieth century movement to abolish war: save in the most limited defensive sense, they view war as an object of just political calculation as outdated. Some advocates of this shift see their religious peace activism must



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necessarily express itself through a committed, idealistic campaigning movement against state power, taking the mantle of the prophets and even triumphing against the historic surrender of Christianity to the militaristic pagan state at the time of Constantine. Yet even amongst the most committed religious campaigners for peace, the nature of the battle between right and might, and between humanity and inhumanity, has become the subject of less and not more consensus over time.

There are two respects in which revulsion against brutality in warfare has shaped political opinion beyond movements that profess to campaign against war itself. First, against the assumption that our politics can be reduced to a fundamental opposition between might and right, between statist militarism and Christian idealism, many Europeans view VE Day as confirmation that it is a reality that democracies need strong militaries, and co-operation between them. For these 'realists', nuclear deterrence and NATO's Article 5 kept the peace since VE Day, not idealistic activism. While this argument is commonly made by 'strategic' thinkers who oppose their 'realism' to 'moralising' and 'idealism', the first generation of 'realists' who argued for nuclear deterrence were heavily influenced by Protestant theological realism. Built into their calculations about the use and escalation of hard power, many European and American realists have relied on the notion that power is communicated through signals which reflected Protestant eschatology; they based calculations about the resort to power on a moral realism that distinguishes long-term rational restraint from the cloud of unreasoning passion which drives military escalation. British sceptics of the theory of Mutually Assured

Destruction, with General Sir Hugh Beach, for instance, have often deliberately drawn on this moral realism as well.

Second, among committed peace activists, there is less and less agreement about what stopping war entails, and who should be the target of anti-war pressure. As the historian Boyd Van Dyke has noted, the connection between opposition to war and opposition to brutality is not to be taken for granted. This can be seen through divisions over whether anti-war movements should stop genocides and prioritise protection for civilians. These divisions, once over Bosnia and Kosovo and now over Syria, complicate discussions of the moral meaning of 'the end of war'. They also join an increasingly complicated legal situation created by the fact that states since 1945 have largely avoided declaring war. Legal recourse to making war has been so rare that many lawyers argue war has been effectively outlawed. And yet this has not ended brutal warfare; far from it. There is much here that religious peacebuilders ought to be campaigning on. If wars are not declared, the costs and benefits of fighting may still be gauged in terms of a just peace: what understanding of costs and benefits in war fit a religious appraisal of life after an undeclared war, most likely arrived at through a peace process which is based on evading key issues necessary for justice?

And what form of coherent peacebuilding vision can avoid the recognition that after VE Day the shapers of the post-war order left entire categories of civil war and victim untouched, while they focused on the area of consensus they shared with respect to inter-state warfare. The profusion of the most brutal forms of undeclared war since the Cold War was prepared by seventy-five years of inter-

state politics: inter-state politics meant that the Geneva Conventions, and the additional treaties extending the laws of war to civil wars after that, failed to provide for many categories of civilian, such as rape victims, and paid little attention to the perspectives of women. This power politics continues to divide peace movements, and Church campaigns no less than party-political campaigns. The more that state and campaigning actors seem to select what rights fit their cause, the more thoroughly language about ending war through rights talk seems to have become hollowed out.

Certainly, seventy-five years after VE Day, public moral revulsion against war is evidently widespread across European churches, if we may now also complain of compassion fatigue. Inside the churches and beyond them, aggressive warfare is increasingly described as criminal and immoral, as illegal and morally unjustifiable. Yet Europeans are still divided in their views of which aggressors must be combatted, and which not; which forms of brutality we can hope to end, and which are accepted as tragically natural. The legacy of European humanism may continue to be important in public debates over the meaning of the end of war as we confront newer forms of war, though for the time being at least we cannot assume we will see a consensus over what ending brutalising warfare entails as a matter of principle. ■

Dr George R Wilkes is the Director of the Project on Religion and Ethics in the Making of War and Peace. He is a member of the advisory board of the Centre for Theology and Public Issues at New College, The University of Edinburgh.



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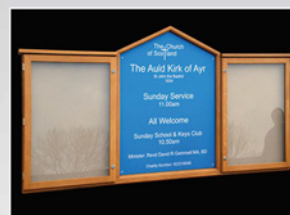
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Merrylea connections

John R Hume reflects on the history of a church on the south side of Glasgow.

THE suburb of Merrylee is on the 'south side' of Glasgow, in the former parish of Cathcart, whose history can be traced back to the 12th century.

The family which was allocated this parish at that time was Breton, speaking a language similar to that of the British (p-Celtic) inhabitants of this part of west-central Scotland. The name 'Cathcart' is in fact based on 'Caer Cart', the British for 'the fort on the Cart', which was probably situated on a headland above the river, later the site of Cathcart Castle, below which was the village of Old Cathcart, on the east bank of the river Cart, on an ancient route from Glasgow to the south. In the 18th century a second village, named 'New Cathcart' was established on a new road from Glasgow to the south. To the west of this new road lay farmland, with by the mid-19th century a scatter of 'improved' farm steadings. A paper mill had been established on the Cart in the 17th century, but remained an isolated example of industrialisation in the area.

Suburban development of what is now known as Merrylee began with the opening of the Cathcart District Railway in 1886 and its extension to form the Cathcart Circle in 1894, with a station on the latter at Langside. The first houses in the area were large detached or semi-detached villas; later neat red-sandstone terraces began to be built. In 1886 a carpet factory at the east end of what is now Newlands Road was replaced by the Holm Foundry of G and J Weir, which became a major employer. Senior staff presumably lived in houses in

what is now Merrylea, though many of their neighbours were 'commuters' (holders of season tickets) travelling to and from central Glasgow on the Cathcart Circle.

Church provision for these growing suburbs began in the 1890s, when Cathcart United Presbyterian (Cathcart South, now Cathcart Trinity) and Cathcart Free (later New Cathcart) churches were constructed. The former is on the edge of the original village of New Cathcart, and the latter was close to the burgeoning Holm Foundry. The new Merrylee was a considerable distance from the only 'established' church, Cathcart Parish, in Old Cathcart, so following the union of the Free and United Presbyterian churches in 1900, forming the United Free Church, with two places of worship, the landowners (heritors) of Cathcart Parish decided to construct a 'chapel of ease' in Merrylee. Accordingly an iron temporary church was built, opening on October 4 1903. It was replaced by the present splendid stone church, designed in his favoured Romanesque style by Peter Macgregor Chalmers, then the leading Scottish church architect. The new building, beautifully fitted out for 'Scoto-Catholic' worship, was dedicated to the Holy Trinity, and opened on March 15 1915. On March 15 1918 it was

given its own parish 'quoad sacra' (for ecclesiastical purposes).

When I was born on a Sunday evening in February 1939 my father was playing the organ in this church. Later in that year I was baptised by the Reverend John McLagan, beginning for me a life-long connection with the 'Universal Church' in Scotland, and a deep feeling for the triune God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

I write this at the beginning of the Coronavirus Covid-19 pandemic, when we are all acutely conscious of our mortality. Here, therefore, I pay tribute to all in the Church in Scotland who have throughout my life helped and nourished me.

Merrylea Church has no tower or steeple, but with its sheltering Romanesque masonry it evokes the 'charity (love), humility and godliness' which are at the heart of my Trinitarian belief. ■



I think things can get better

Thomas Baldwin meets Nick Guttman, head of the humanitarian division at Christian Aid.

WE'RE all familiar with the depressing feeling of waking up to radio headlines (or these days, notifications from our news apps) announcing that there has been a major earthquake somewhere in the world. Most of us will sigh and go about our day, possibly pausing to donate to a fundraising appeal.

When Nick Guttman, head of the humanitarian division at Christian Aid, wakes up to such news, he knows that his team will already be reacting.

In meeting him before the Coronavirus Covid-19 pandemic he said: "If it's in a country where we are working, we have quite a well-oiled machine that can jump into action, just like all the other aid agencies," he says. "The first thing is that we always have local partners in those countries, so we would get information from them about what was needed. We would allocate immediate funding – we have a reserve of funds we can release to partners to get the work going.

"Then internally within Christian Aid we would have an organisation-wide meeting to agree to level of response, and whether or not we should have an appeal. We would know because of our generous supporters we could get immediate funds in, and we could immediately plan what we will receive from the appeal to scale up the response.

"We would send in a team of people to support our partners – providing technical support for water and sanitation, for instance – but more often than not it's providing cash to affected communities so they can use it for what they need to do."

Nick began managing logistics for

Concern Worldwide in the late 1980s, initially in Ethiopia and then for more than a decade in one trouble-spot after another: Iran and Iraq during the first Gulf War, Rwanda during the genocide, Burundi, Democratic Republic of Congo, Somalia, South Sudan, Syria, Liberia, Mozambique, and Kosovo in the aftermath of the conflict in former Yugoslavia.

After that, by his own admission, he was burned-out – "I saw some horrible things in Kosovo and Albania and almost blanked them out. We did a very good, professional job, but the anger wasn't there, the frustration about man's inhumanity to man, and I thought 'that's wrong, it must make you angry'."

Three years living in Kenya followed, before Nick and his family returned to the UK. He took a masters in development studies before joining Christian Aid, for whom he estimates he has managed the responses to over 50 situations – everything from volcanic eruptions, earthquakes and typhoons to armed conflict.

When not dealing with immediate emergency response, a lot of the work is in helping communities to improve their disaster resilience, to leave them better able to cope with future events.

"If we look at Typhoon Haiyan, which happened in the Philippines in 2013, obviously the immediate thing is providing emergency humanitarian assistance: food, shelter, water, sanitation, healthcare, whatever is required.

"But at the same time, you're thinking about how can those communities be

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I think things can be made better... we have to do something about this suffering and we can. It's in our power to do something, so we must do it.

stronger in the future. How can we get things in place so that if a similar thing was to happen in the future, they wouldn't be so badly affected? So when you're rebuilding houses you're making sure there's some barrier between them and the sea, or they're on high land.

"That also includes making sure the community themselves are involved in what is being done, talking to them, engaging with them, asking what are the things that make them more vulnerable, what can we do to make them stronger and better able to cope. If people are involved and engaged in the decisions that are affecting them, they will be stronger in the long run.

"It's also about empowering and including the people who are often excluded from decision-making – women, the disabled. And that happens at a very early stage, and is something Christian Aid has pioneered and pushed very hard over the years."



Nick Guttman



Nick visited Scotland in February to talk to Christian Aid supporters, encouraging them both in their fundraising efforts but also to engage in the organisation's campaigning work, particularly on the climate emergency.

He draws in particular on the experience of Kenya, which is a country he knows well and the focus of this year's Christian Aid Week campaign. "Throughout the Horn of Africa, there are ever-increasing severe weather events linked to climate change. Droughts are longer and more severe, people lose their livelihoods more frequently. In the past it used to happen once in 20 or 50 years, but we had intense droughts in 2006, 2011, 2017 and 2019. And that's having a huge impact on people's ability to survive and manage, and we need to be providing help to those communities, to help them get over each crisis but also to help them be more resilient to future ones.

"There's always a lean period when water

supplies are low and fodder is low, and we can do pasture protection, building sand dams which keep water in place. That's fine for normal and slightly harder years, but when you get two or three seasons of failed rains even the things we've put in place won't work. And these very extreme situations are happening more and more often, and the consequence is widespread animal deaths, human malnutrition and people basically starving.

"So you have to put in more expensive measures, for example deep boreholes with animal troughs, but then you have more people coming to those areas so you have to put in more of them. With the ever-increasing severity of these events, it's getting harder to mitigate them and more expensive."

He says that Christian Aid Week is 'hugely important', not just for the money donated directly but for the funding that can be leveraged from elsewhere. "It's absolutely fundamental to the organisation, it provides

us with the funding we need to enable the work to take place, and it's an opportunity to really publicise what we do. And we can use the Christian Aid Week money to leverage support applications to governments, to the UN and to other organisations which will then give us an awful lot more."

Having stepped back from Concern because he was losing the anger, these days Nick has no problem getting angry and frustrated – from seeing well-off people living next door to suffering, to corruption, and well-intentioned anti-terrorism and money-laundering laws, which he says have had the unintended consequences of making it difficult for aid agencies to work in some of the hardest-to-reach areas.

However, he describes himself as an optimist: "I think things can be made better... we have to do something about this suffering and we can. It's in our power to do something, so we must do it." ■

God is with you

In a time of great uncertainty, Danielle Duncan reminds readers that church is not just a building for Sundays.

I DON'T know about all of you, but society is pretty panicked just now over the Coronavirus Covid-19.

I know what you're thinking: where am I going with this and what good can I bring to this situation..absolutely nothing. BUT I just want to remind you that, in the midst of all this, God is with you. He has been since the day you were born and even before that, and he is with you now, and he will be with you tomorrow and forever. He isn't done with you yet!

"Being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus." (Philippians 1:6)

I am not saying this isn't bad, but it shouldn't make us lose faith. Yes, churches have been closed but can I just remind you that the church is not a building. It is not something we just do on a Sunday. It is who you are and who we are called to be. Church isn't a museum for the saints, but a hospital for the broken. At the end of the day, we are all broken and flawed, but God cares for us regardless of all that we have done and continue to do.

I am not going to say everything will be OK or that this time isn't going to be difficult for some of us, but what I will say is this: think about what this 'lockdown' period can give you: the opportunity to do spend time with your families, to spend time with God, to talk to Him, tell him your fears. Spend some time alone with your Bible, alone in prayer.

What God always teaches me is, in the storms of life remember two things:

- God isn't going to hurt you



Danielle Duncan

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Take courage in the fact that God is in control and he knows what he is doing to look after his children. Draw close to God and he will draw near to you!

- Be still and focus on him.

When you've done everything you can do, that's when God will step in and do what you can't. (2 Corinthians 12:10)

This may be a scary time for many of us, and it's understandable, but we are all in this together. Paul says it best: we are a body, the head can't say to the arm 'I don't need you'. We all need one another. So I'd encourage you all not to cut off all communication with people, even if you are in self isolation. God never intended for us to do life on our own, that is why we are all

here. Take courage in the fact that God is in control and he knows what he is doing to look after his children. Draw close to God and he will draw near to you!

I know life seems scary at this moment in time, but in days like this we have to be thankful for who and what we have. We will get through this together.

Sending prayers, hugs and love to you all in this time of uncertainty. ■

Danielle Duncan is a member at Aberdeen: Stockethill.

Uncertain times

The Rev Martin Johnstone reflects on life at the edge in the wake of the Coronavirus Covid-19 pandemic.

IN early March – in what seems like a lifetime ago – a colleague from South Africa came to stay with us for 10 days. I had never met Wayne before, but we have a mutual friend who assured us that we would appreciate one another's company. And he was right.

Wayne works primarily alongside churches in some of Cape Town's informal settlements. He had heard great things about what was happening in Scotland and was keen to explore for himself what was going on in the life of the Church and wider society. He had ten days of meeting a lot of remarkable people which re-affirmed that sense that God is doing amazing things amongst us. Sometimes we are the last to notice. Most of his time was spent in and around Glasgow but he even managed to squeeze in a couple of trips to Edinburgh.

Thanks to friends in WEvolution, Glasgow University, Vox Liminis, Homeless Network Scotland, St Paul's Youth Forum, The National Lottery Community Fund, Faith in Community Scotland, the GK Experience, Bridging the Gap, Grassmarket Community Project, churches in Pollokshaws, Cranhill and Castlemilk, and the Bert Community. You were inspirational hosts and are outstanding human beings.

Each day when he returned home, normally soaked to the skin, he would tell me how inspired he had been. Perhaps the greatest tribute he paid was when he said that he had walked into one building and had, instantly, felt at home. For someone who chooses to live his life committed to those at the edge in his own society, that

was powerful and humbling.

Wayne flew back to South Africa on the March 16 and, by that date, the world was already beginning to change for many of us. I dropped him in the airport car park but did not give him a hug. I did not enter the terminal building to wave him off. He flew back to his family, who were desperate to see him, but were also fearful that he might be carrying Covid-19. Although showing no symptoms, he was instructed to self-isolate for two weeks.

In recent days, I have reflected that we have grown used to the fear of carrying deadly disease from the global South to countries in the rich North. But Wayne's fear, and the fear of many within the poorest parts of the world, is that the virus spreads where there is only the most rudimentary of health provision. And people do not have the luxury of being able to wash their hands in clean water.

When the editor of this magazine discussed the possibility of me writing a series of articles about the struggles (and the creativity) that I was finding alongside people and communities who lived their lives 'at the edge' none of us had any idea that within months we would all be experiencing such precarious living. For right now, we are all 'at the edge'.

Words have become completely inadequate. My only reflections come out of a lifetime of learning alongside those who struggle for life and an end to the indignity of poverty and a deep belief, strengthened throughout my adult life, that Jesus is present in the chaos, hardship

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and brutality of daily living.

There, like Wayne, I have found remarkable people and awe-inspiring organisations. These are people (and places) that have remained largely resilient amid wave after wave of misfortune and hardship. In the uncertain times in which we are living, and will continue to live, they are our teachers. We encounter the Gospel at the edge. We always have. It's just that in recent days, it has become easier to hear and to see because more of us, tragically, are there. ■



Battlefield robots

In the continuing series marking the 50th anniversary of the Church of Scotland's SRT, the Rev Dr David Coulter reflects on the increasing use of artificial intelligence on the battlefield.

WHEN VE Day dawns, on May 8 2020, it will be 75 years since the guns fell silent at the end of the war in Europe.

Years of carnage and destruction had come to an end and millions of people took to the streets to celebrate peace, mourn their loved ones and to hope for the future. Of course, World War Two continued until August 15 1945 when Japan surrendered. This conflict was fought on an industrial scale which ended in the shadow of nuclear weapons.

For generations human beings were seen as the first weapon of war. With club and spear, bow and arrow, warriors went to war. They went to defend their homeland and to put themselves in harm's way to bring about security and peace. As with WW2, this means being willing and able to apply or not apply, lethal force. Today this is governed by the strict moral and ethical code of the Geneva Conventions and the Laws of Armed Conflict, the limits of which have been tested over the years. For many, the biggest post war military issue was the Cold War nuclear arms race upon which the Church's SRT has kept a weather eye for 30 years.

For most in the military the questions are more personal and immediate. Lt Patrick Bury of The Royal Irish Regiment, reflecting

on his tour of duty in Afghanistan states: "Most soldiers do not want to kill per se. Almost all of us have an inherent belief that killing is wrong. However, the situations we find ourselves in often mean we are forced to consider the use of lethal force. Our training helps us differentiate between threat and appropriate use of force... Killing, whatever its form, can be morally corrosive." Thankfully, everywhere our armed forces go, our chaplains go with them to deliver pastoral care, spiritual support and moral guidance, to the young servicemen or women who have to make the right decision on the bad day, often when no one else is looking. It is understandable, then, that across the globe militaries are looking at autonomous technologies to relieve this pressure.

Inevitably, difficult moral and ethical questions are being asked about the implications of this. The challenge is how best to use this new technology without losing our humanity. In many walks of life autonomous robotic technology perform tasks that require levels of precision and application that are beyond human capacity. However, when this kind of technology is weaponised, when the utterly fearless, emotionless robot can be

programmed to fight and to engage targets with a greater or lesser degree of human control, significant moral, ethical and spiritual questions are raised.

SRT is well placed to examine the use of artificial intelligence and to consider the cause and effects of deploying robotic technology in battle. The SRT can help explore the corporate and personal moral responsibility that is carried by human designers, programmers and operators of such machines. Today's military is already fully engaged in the development and use of autonomous technologies that can provide the strategic and tactical edge. Because of that, our servicemen and women continue to carry immense moral responsibility, challenge and risk in the use of lethal force and its consequences, but this comes at great human cost. Our chaplains, ministering in this context, also carry immense responsibility. It is a good thing, therefore, that the SRT, on behalf of the Church of Scotland, continues to provide a much-needed voice. ■

The Rev Dr David Coulter is minister of Guernsey: St Andrew's in the Grange and served as Chaplain General to HM Land Forces 2014-18.

God bless and keep safe

Thomas Baldwin reports on the closure of the Church of Scotland's central offices in the wake of the Coronavirus Covid-19 pandemic.

THE Church of Scotland's administrative offices in Edinburgh have been almost entirely closed in response to the Coronavirus Covid-19 pandemic.

The majority of staff at 121 George Street were told to work from home from Wednesday March 18, with only a skeleton of about 30 remaining in the building. A full closure was announced after the implementation of stricter distancing rules the following week.

The office is currently open for just one morning a week for departments to collect mail and to retrieve files or documents for critical work.

In a statement on March 18, Chief Officer Dave Kendall said: "The last few weeks have seen the whole world hugely impacted by the Coronavirus which is now taking a foothold in the UK. It is a time of anxiety for many. The spread of the virus is unprecedented in modern times.

"Our primary concern is the safety and protection of our church members, staff and all those using our facilities whilst ensuring that the central office staff can still provide effective support to our Church over this challenging period.

"Following the latest Government announcements on Monday March 16 it has been decided that we should move to having the majority of our central office staff working from home. This was our anticipated outcome during the contingency planning phase to deal with the virus and work has been progressing in the background to enable this to be an effective strategy.

"In making this decision we have embraced the following principles:

- We have been monitoring the developing situation on a daily basis whilst establishing the necessary arrangements that would enable us to move quickly and decisively in response to events and advice
- The welfare of our congregations, staff and visitors is our primary concern – we are determined to look after our people first and foremost
- We need to equip our central staff with the necessary tools for effective homeworking to enable continued progress with our work and retain the ability for effective interaction with the wider Church infrastructure
- Communication has been a priority, with the goals of being open and honest – this requirement will continue throughout the period of homeworking when continual communication with all staff will remain critical.

"The staff have been fully briefed on what is required of them during the period of homeworking, during which there will be a range of restrictions imposed for safety reasons as well as tight controls on expenditure in mitigation of the financial situation that we are facing. In terms of staff welfare there will be regular interactions between the line management in the central office and the homeworking staff.

"At the present time we have no way of accurately predicting how long home working will be necessary. However, a 12 week period has been assumed as the initial timeframe for strategic planning

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The last few weeks have seen the whole world hugely impacted by the Coronavirus which is now taking a foothold in the UK.

purposes which would take us to June 2020.

"The intention is to continue to provide all our current high priority services to the Church and in support of this all the normal communication lines continue thanks to the fact that a system is in place to divert calls to a number of primary contacts. As a result we can be reached by the usual telephone numbers and email addresses. The bottom line is that we remain open for business to help in any way that we can.

"Finally, I want to thank both the central office staff and the broader Church for the sensible approach and understanding that you have shown over these last few weeks as we respond to this ever changing situation. I know you will understand the urgent need for action.

"All of us will have some personal concerns regarding our health, family, friends, work, finances or simply the fact that this virus is going to massively disrupt our everyday lives. For this reason it is critical that we look after and support each other.

"God bless and keep safe." ■

At the time of going to press, some central office staff were placed on furlough, reflecting the impact of the Coronavirus Covid-19 pandemic.

CHRISTIAN AID EVENTS CANCELLED

Christian Aid events have been postponed or cancelled, and plans for Christian Aid Week scaled back in response to the Coronavirus Covid-19 outbreak.

Among the events to have been put back are the Christian Aid Week book sales in Edinburgh and the bridge crosses that were to have taken place on April 25.

The convener of the largest Sale, at St Andrew's and St George's West Church, said she hoped the event could be held later in the year. Mary Davidson said: "The Sale organisers have made this decision with profound sadness, not only because of the

tragedy that has befallen the world but also because of the adversity we must all face after the years when we have been richly blessed. We very much hope still to be able to hold the 48th annual Sale when we will be delighted to welcome our many friends and supporters".

The organisers have asked donors to hold onto their books and other items until details about rescheduling are available.

Christian Aid has also said that house-to-house collections and events for Christian Aid Week (which this year is from May 10-16) such as Big Brekkies will not be able to go ahead. Its latest guidelines state: "We

are looking at alternative ways to virtually meet, share and pray with supporters over the coming months in the likely absence of physical church services.

"We are working on alternative plans that will allow people to take part in Christian Aid Week in different, creative ways – by post, by text and online that strengthen our communities during this challenging time. Christian Aid Week is our single-most important fundraiser, so we would welcome your ideas on how we can creatively show love for our neighbours at home and abroad, as a community."

SERVICES GO ONLINE

Churches throughout Scotland took to the internet as their buildings were closed due to the Coronavirus Covid-19 epidemic.

Ministers used their own websites, Facebook Live, YouTube and other platforms to livestream services to their members and the wider community.

While a growing number of churches already livestream or record their services, for others it was a first time, and many ministers and worship leaders had a steep learning curve as they got to grips with the technology.

The Rev Joanne Hood of St John's Church in Hamilton used the videoconferencing service Zoom to lead her service, and said it had been 'an uplifting tonic for body, mind and soul – just what we need'.

Mrs Hood said: "It was great fun and everyone really appreciated the opportunity to see and hear each other, particularly those already having to self-isolate.

"We had all ages, and some of our younger adult members who live and work further away now joined us, which everyone appreciated.

"There were some comedy moments of folk not realising their conversations were

also being seen and heard by a wider audience but it all added to the joy of the thing and I got a lot of messages and emails afterwards saying how welcome all these elements of the time together truly were.

"Some might even say it's potentially (given a bit of time to master the medium) better than what we're able to offer from our buildings... but I couldn't possibly comment!"

St Ninian's Church in Dunfermline used Facebook Live, an experience which the minister, the Rev Carolann Erskine, described as 'both a challenge and a blessing'. She said: "Our church does not have, nor can we afford, the technology that we need for recording services; and in any case, technology is not my strong point.

"However, God is good. After a time of prayer, I decided to rise to the challenge of these difficult times and be courageous. Another church very kindly lent us a digital hymnal so I was able to learn how to programme it with the choice of hymns.

"This first attempt was not perfect but, like a baby bird learning how to fly, improvements can always be made.

"I felt strange, but not alone, like a sense that people were praying for me. Having

gathered the kindling, the spark was there to nourish the flame that will not be put out. Feedback has been overwhelming. I'm humbled at such encouragement and for such kindness which in itself is a mode of blessing. I felt that God took my simple awkward offering and blessed it."

A list of churches which livestream their services is available on the Church of Scotland website, or visit your local church's website or Facebook page to see if they are offering anything locally.

Nationally, the Weekly Worship team based in the Faith Nurture department of the Church will be providing a short act of worship online, led by a range of people from across the Church. The videos are available on YouTube (search for Church of Scotland Weekly Worship).

The online pioneer ministry Sanctuary First is also offering daily worship and a 'virtual coffee shop' at www.sanctuaryfirst.org.uk

The Priority Areas team is running a series of free online Community Check-in events for conversation and worship for their congregations, running between March and June. As well as sharing news, they will join together in prayer.

BB LAUNCHES ONLINE ACTIVITIES

The Boys' Brigade has launched an online programme of activities for young people stuck at home during the Coronavirus Covid-19 epidemic.

The #BBatHOME programme will provide a weekly pack of six activities for each of the BB's three age groups (4-8, 8-11 and 11+), and will continue during the period that the outbreak means BB groups cannot meet face-to-face.

The BB is encouraging people to share their engagement with the programme online using the hashtag #BBatHOME

A statement from the Boys' Brigade said: "Following on from face to face BB activities and events being suspended and the recent school closures, it has been great to see leaders coming up with different ways of reaching out to our members. We are incredibly proud of the determined response from leaders to the challenges that we are all facing. We all want the BB adventure to continue for every child and young person in the



Brigade in the weeks and months ahead.

"To help support leaders in doing this, we are excited to launch #BBatHOME – a new programme concept to enable us to continue to engage our members with opportunities to learn, grow and discover through a balanced programme of activities in their own homes, supported by their parents/carers."

The packs, along with guidance for

parents/carers are available from www.boys-brigade.org.uk/bbathome-parents-carers

Another youth organisation, the music charity Fischy Music, is holding online assemblies at 11am every Monday through its YouTube channel. These will continue under the latest, tighter lockdown rules, with each of the musicians joining in from their own homes.

'WITH GOD'S HELP WE WILL GET THROUGH THIS TOGETHER'

As the scale of the Coronavirus Covid-19 crisis became clear, the Moderator of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland urged Christians to show the world that their faith is more than just words.

The Rt Rev Colin Sinclair said the speed that normal life had been put on hold due to the Coronavirus pandemic had caught everyone by surprise.

Speaking on the first Sunday that traditional church services were suspended, Mr Sinclair said the future for many people is 'very challenging' with no immediate prospect of a return 'to business as usual'.

He said: "Now is the time to stand up and show that our faith is more than words.

"It is the rock on which we stand and the driving force in our lives.

"We need to practise faith, hope and love and not just recite them as a creed.

"With God's help we will get through this together and who knows perhaps the divisions in our communities and country that emerged over the last few years can now be healed as we work together."

Mr Sinclair and his wife, Ruth, are broadcasting daily messages on their Facebook page.

For more news follow us at www.lifeandwork.org

CLIMATE FILM SCREENING

There was an encouraging response to the recent screening of *Before the Flood*, a documentary film shown by Hope Park and Martyrs Church of Scotland as a fringe event of the St Andrews Green Film Festival. The film features Leonardo DiCaprio in his role as UN Messenger of Peace, travelling across five continents and highlighted the devastating effects of climate change.

Following the film, members of the audience were invited to submit questions to the three panellists, the Very Rev Dr Sheilagh Kesting, former Moderator of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland, Mr Alistair Macleod, Project Manager of Transition St Andrews and The Rev David Coleman, Eco Congregation Scotland chaplain. Those attending also had the opportunity to chat over tea and coffee.



The Rev Allan McCafferty, minister of Hope Park and Martyrs said: "We were delighted to welcome around 75 folk to our green film afternoon with representation from local churches, University and those who live or work in the town. We recognise there are many initiatives addressing climate change within St Andrews and hope the event may have helped us explore

how we can work together on environmental issues as part of the local community".

For further details on Hope Park and Martyrs' eco activities or to express an interest in working on inter-church initiatives around environmental issues, contact the church's Green Shoots Development Worker, Lorna Hutcheon, email greenshoots@hpmchurch.org.uk



FAIRTRADE AWARD

Anne Robertson from the Aberdeen Fairtrade Steering Committee is pictured presenting the Helen Kelbie Award to the Fairtrade Team at Woodside Parish Church.

The award, in memory of a local Fairtrade campaigner, is in recognition and appreciation of the team's work, running a regular Sunday morning and early afternoon Fairtrade stall, and promoting Fairtrade in the congregation and community for many years.

STILL SERVING AT 100

A church elder from Bishopbriggs in East Dunbartonshire celebrated her 100th birthday with a party.

A Valentine's Day baby in 1920, Margaret Young was born in Rothesay on the Isle of Bute, but her family soon moved to Bishopbriggs. During the Second World War, she was part of the Auxiliary Territorial Service in the Royal Corps of Signals, working in a gun operations room on the south coast. Only very recently she applied for and received a war medal which she now wears with pride.

Margaret became an elder at Cadder Parish Church in 1990 and is still active, fulfilling her Sunday duty team role every six weeks.

Depute Provost Gary Pews, who has known Margaret for a number of years, attended her celebration and presented her with flowers and a card on behalf of the Council and the people of East Dunbartonshire.



SESSION CLERK RETIRES

Southend Parish Church, in the Presbytery of Argyll, thanked Neil Ronald on his retirement as Session Clerk after 32 years of service on February 23. Mr Ronald was given a presentation Bible and glass picture, and his wife Jen a gift and flowers. Malcolm Ronald, the incoming session clerk, thanked Neil for his guidance and hard work over the years.

Neil is not disappearing: he will continue as church roll keeper and elder.



ISLAND GUILD CELEBRATION

The Church of Scotland Guild on the Isle of Cumbrae celebrated its 125th anniversary with a thanksgiving service at the island's new parish church.

Among the 90 guests were members of Guilds from Largs and Fairlie, along with the Guilds Together North Ayrshire leadership team. Friends from the Cathedral of the Isles, Our Lady of Perpetual Succour, also attended.

The guest speaker was Iain Whyte, general secretary of the Guild, who gave a talk on the history of the organisation.

The cake was cut by Christine McCubbin, co-ordinator of Cumbrae Guild, who is pictured with six past presidents.



END OF AN ERA

The Deacons Court of Stirling St Columba's Church met for the last time on February 5 2020. The congregation united with that of Allan Park South Church on April 1 to form Stirling Park Church, and adopted the Unitary Constitution.

The Church has its roots in the disruption of 1843, and was formerly the North United Free Church before the 1929 Union with the Church of Scotland.

At the meeting in February, the church's interim moderator, the Rev Gary McIntyre, paid tribute to those who had served as members of the Deacons Court through the years.

How is your church responding to the coronavirus crisis?
Let us know on magazine@lifeandwork.org

Churches respond to pandemic

Thomas Baldwin and Jackie Macadam highlight the response of local churches to the pandemic.

DURING the Coronavirus Covid-19 crisis, churches have often been at the vanguard of helping people in their communities, sometimes with innovative ideas, sometimes using their knowledge of their local areas to make sure help gets where it needs to be.

South Leith Church in Edinburgh is doing its best for the community – and the community is keeping its own spirits up too. The Rev Iain May said: “Leithers are a proud lot and have a great sense of identity with their town of Leith. Recently, as people are self-isolating and just trying to lift their own spirits and those around them, the Proclaimers song *Sunshine on Leith* has been heard more and more in the most unlikely of places. Recently I was walking down a local street, and someone had placed loudspeakers on the window ledge of a tenement building and as I walked by, on hearing this Leith anthem being broadcast in the street, my sense of wellbeing was lifted a bit higher.

“These are challenging times. Churches have suspended services; church halls have closed; numerous church and community activities have ceased. Community cafés are closed. Youth and uniformed groups suspended for the duration.

“Yet, there is so much still happening. Social media is being used to keep in contact with members of the church and the numerous church and community groups. Technology is being used to stream services, to ensure folks still have a connection, a sense of belonging, with their church and wider community.

“There will be difficult times ahead. There will no doubt for many, be a great deal of sorrow. Hearts will be broken. Yet, by being present and available, be it by telephone, via the web, we as the church, as the people of God, can show all in our community that the church is alive and there for them.”

The Mill Café at Balerno Parish Church, near Edinburgh, has done a trial run of a ‘soup kitchen’. The Café itself had to close, but the staff will now aim to offer a free homemade soup and scone, in disposable cups, to make a healthy meal available to vulnerable members of the community. For those self-isolating, healthy friends can collect and drop off a cup to those at home.

Athelstaneford Church in East Lothian, via the Village Hall Committee, are mobilising people to be aware of, supportive of and keep contact with the elderly and housebound. The Rev Tom Gordon says: “The church community – which is quite small and older too, will simply ‘piggy-back’ on the hall committee and give it as much support as possible, rather than starting a different initiative and possibly duplicating what’s already in place.”

A minister in Angus found a novel way to serve her community when she volunteered to man the doors at her local pharmacy. The Rev Donna Hays of Fowlis and Liff linked with Lundie and Muirhead churches, took a turn standing outside preventing people from entering the building and keeping order in the queue of

people waiting for their prescriptions she said: “Some were still trying to grasp the idea of social distancing, but on the whole it was good-natured, quiet and subdued. Folks were very patient with me trying to get through the questions on the clipboard.

“One person who thought he would become somewhat unruly was quickly dealt with by an old lady who told him to behave and stand in the queue like everyone else!

“It was wonderful seeing people wanting to comply and help out in whatever way they could.”

This is not the only way Donna’s churches are helping in the crisis. “We are also helping the local volunteers by supplying the lists we use for distributing our Christmas magazine (a 2100 print run to all homes in our linked parishes) which they used for a community leaflet with contact help for the vulnerable and elderly. Two of the churches are being used for storing food.” ■

Is your church
responding
to the pandemic?

Please let us know on
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ECUMENICAL ORGANISATIONS' CORONAVIRUS STATEMENT

In a historic joint pastoral statement released on March 26, the World Council of Churches and Regional Ecumenical Organisations affirmed the urgency of standing together to protect life amidst the Covid-19 pandemic.

For the first time ever, all regions in the ecumenical movement around the world are standing together with a common message that urges both prayers and action for one world to protect life.

"We urge people everywhere to give highest priority to addressing this situation and assisting in whatever ways we can in our collective efforts to protect life," the statement reads.

For the sake of God's love, "It is important and urgent that we adapt our modes of worship and fellowship to the needs of this time of pandemic infection, in order to avoid the risk of becoming sources of viral transmission rather than means of grace," stated the global ecumenical leaders.

The ecumenical leaders recalled: "Our faith in the God of life compels us to protect life... Let us manifest God's unconditional love in safe, practical ways that protect life, alleviate suffering, and ensure that churches and public services do not become hubs of transmission of the virus."

The leaders of the global and regional ecumenical organisations affirmed that physical distancing does not mean spiritual isolation, and they urged churches all over the world to review their role in society by safely ministering to, providing for, and caring for the poor, the sick, the marginalised, and the aged – especially all those who are most at risk due to Covid-19.

The general secretaries further stated: "People in many parts of the world have become homebound these days. Being

homebound does not mean that we cannot experience a deep spiritual solidarity with each other, by virtue of our baptism into the one body of Christ."

The statement suggests praying at home, giving thanks to God for strength, healing, and courage. "We can show our love for God and our neighbour by not gathering in person for public worship," reads the text. "Many congregations can share their worship gatherings online or digitally. Members and pastors can also stay in touch with each other and provide pastoral care by telephone."

The coronavirus pandemic has reached all the regions of our planet, the text adds. "There are fear and panic, pain and suffering, doubt and misinformation, about both the virus and our response as Christians," the text reads. "Amid stories of suffering and tragedy, there are also stories of simple kindness and extravagant love, of solidarity and the sharing of hope and peace in innovative and surprising ways."

The general secretaries also urged all to consider the needs of the most vulnerable people in the world. "In the midst of this grave crisis, we lift up prayers for those providing leadership and for governments around the world, urging them to give priority concern to those who live in poverty as well as to the marginalised and refugees living in our midst," the statement concludes.

(WCC)

MILLIONS JOIN POPE IN LORD'S PRAYER

Millions of Christians around the world responded to Pope Francis's invitation to join him in saying the Lord's Prayer, at 12 noon Rome time on Wednesday March 25.

Making the call, Pope Francis said: "Let us unite our voices to beseech the Lord in these days of suffering, as the world is

sorely tried by the pandemic. May the Lord, good and merciful, grant the concerted prayer of His children who, with trustful hope, turn to His omnipotence."

The call was quickly taken up by other Church leaders. The Archbishop of Canterbury, Justin Welby, said: "When the disciples asked Jesus to teach them to pray he taught them the words that we know as the Lord's Prayer or the Our Father. This prayer gives us words to pray even when we don't know how or what to pray.

"I will be joining with Pope Francis and with Christians all round the world to pray the Lord's Prayer... commending the world into God's merciful care at this difficult time."

The Rt Rev Colin Sinclair, Moderator of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland, said: "At a time when normal life is falling apart it is wonderful when Christians come together.

"The Lord's Prayer is a wonderfully comprehensive prayer and within it can be found all we need to say."

The Rev Dr Olav Fykse Tveit, general secretary of the World Council of Churches, said: "As people across the globe are in their scattered working places at home, we will have the opportunity to unite our voices in praying to God with the words that our Lord Jesus Christ taught us."

For more news follow us at
www.lifeandwork.org



Photo: iStock

Born to be reconcilers

In the first of a new series, Ruth Harvey considers creation as a story of conflict, change and reconciliation in the first three chapters of Genesis.

WE were born to be reconcilers.

The first three chapters of Genesis, with two versions of the story of creation, and the Garden of Eden narrative, orientate us around both the goodness and diversity at the heart of creation and the conflict, pain and bitterness that is part of the human story. In other words, Genesis 1 – 3 affirms three ‘creation commitments’: 1) God is present within each one of us 2) God welcomes diversity and 3) God gives us freedom.

First, God is present within each one of us. Made ‘in the image of God’ (Gen 1: 26) or ‘Imago Dei’ we are ‘imbued’ with God’s very breath (2:7), and ‘called to live compassionately and justly in the midst of all creation.’ To live justly and compassionately we seek right relationship with ourselves, with the other, with all of creation, and with God. God’s presence in our very breath reminds us each moment of every day that this call to reconciliation is part of our core charism, our ministry in everyday life. To be in right relationship with our neighbour is to “answer that of God in everyone.”

Second, God welcomes diversity. Humans are created into a world of rich plurality, (“in

our image... according to one likeness’ (1:26)) and diversity. Lest we forget this root teaching, Genesis 1 repeats the phrase ‘of every kind’ nine times (1:11, 1:12 twice, 1:21 twice, 1:24 twice, and 1:25 three times). The multi-coloured, pluralistic world into which humans are birthed is a world defined by diversity, by embracing the ‘other’. It is into this world that humans, made in God’s image, are created. Our godly path, or calling is to nurture and steward this diversity, not to fear it (1:26 – 30).

Third, God gives us freedom. We know from daily life that living together can be hard. This piece is being written in the midst of a viral pandemic. Never have we had to rely more on, or re-configure right relationships in the home, in the street, with the homeless, the vulnerable, the isolated. We don’t need the story of Adam and Eve to tell us that we live with patterns of blame, loss of identity, othering, shame, curse, punishment, fear and acts of retribution (Genesis 3). The freedom with which we are gifted is a freedom daily, and with God’s help, to right these relationships, to come close to tough stuff and to make decisions that are just,

compassionate and loving for all.

Our Hebrew scripture opens with a classic ‘he said/she said’ conflict: which version of the creation story is correct? Genesis 1, or Genesis 2? We may instead approach this binary not as an ‘either/or’ conundrum, but as a ‘both/and’ invitation. The opening books of our Christian testament offer us the same dilemma/gift, each book written from different perspectives and for different audiences. In the world of faith-based reconciliation, seeing the good in the other, while finding the questions to probe under the surface to uncover the complexity of feelings, history, assumptions and hurts is the journey of hope and reconciliation. ■

For weekly lectionary-based resources, prayers and sermon ideas on reading the gospels through the lens of conflict, see www.spiritualityofconflict.com.

Place for Hope accompanies and equips people and faith communities so that all might reach their potential to be peacemakers who navigate conflict well. www.placeforhope.org.uk

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The Royal Naval Benevolent Trust

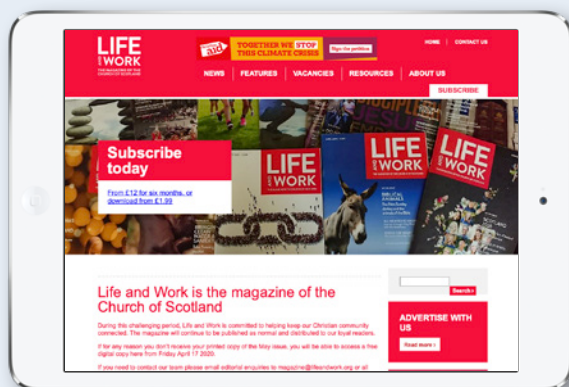
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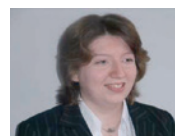
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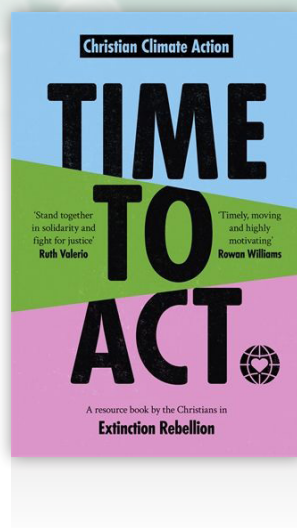
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TIME TO ACT

A Christian Climate Action

Edited by: Jeremy Williams

Published by: SPCK

Price: £9.99

Climate change has become the issue of our age. Whilst for decades it has been discussed, it is now firmly on the agenda of many people, Christian and non-Christian alike, particularly as change is impacting some of the poorest people in the world.

In endeavouring to state the case for urgent change, this is essentially a resource book which has been developed to demonstrate the moral and religious case for joining the movement against climate change by Christian Climate Action, a community of Christians committed to prayerful action and witness.

Editor, Jeremy Williams is a Christian campaigner who has worked with Extinction Rebellion, but also many other charities, and has pulled together contributions from many members of CCA, including Ruth Valerio (Global Advocacy and Influence Director at Tearfund) and Ruth Jarman, the founding member of CCA.

This book traces the journey of Christian climate activism and offers practical advice. It is divided into three parts: head, heart and hands, covering theological reflection, emotion and practicalities and in a foreword Williams expresses the hope that the book will act as a 'bridge' to encourage others to join the movement and understand the importance and need for long-term and meaningful change (notwithstanding current challenges) in 21st century lives.

Endorsements for the work have come from Amanda Khozi Mukwashi, the head of Christian Aid who has written: 'The climate crisis is the biggest issue facing humanity today and it is unjust that those least responsible for causing it are facing its full effects. The scale of the emergency facing our world demands a just response from every one of us.' A positive endorsement for the book has also come from Rowan Williams, the former Archbishop of Canterbury.

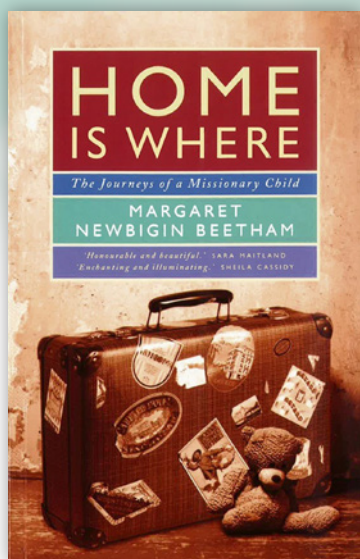
HOME IS WHERE

The Journey of A Missionary Child

Written by: Margaret Newbiggin Beetham

Published by: Darton, Longman and Todd

Price: £12.99



The name of Lesslie Newbigin and his wife Helen are familiar to readers of this magazine. Born in Newcastle-upon-Tyne, but ordained as a Church of Scotland minister by the presbytery of Edinburgh in the 1930s, he spent much of his life as a missionary in India, serving with the Church of South India and the United Reform Church, becoming one of the Church of South India's first bishops. Although he died in 1998, his legacy as a theologian and missiologist has not been forgotten – along with his missionary roots in the Church of Scotland.

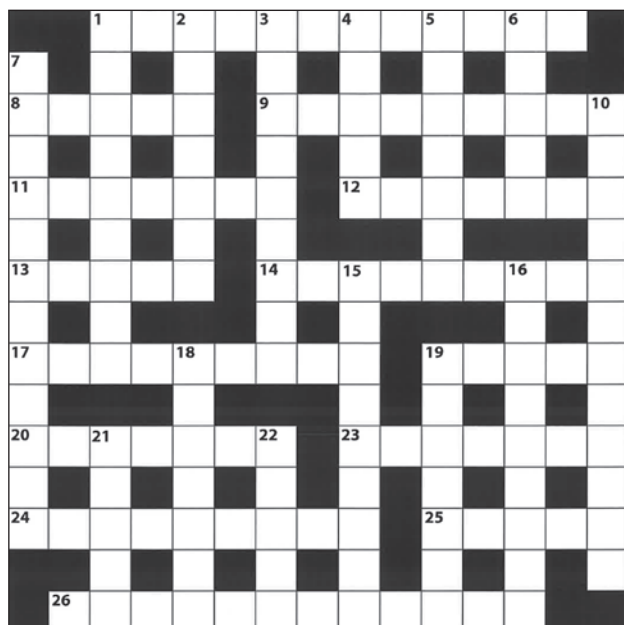
This book, however, is not a portrait of the renowned 20th century missionary, by his daughter, but rather a touching and at times, moving, account of life as the child of missionaries – one minute dwelling happily side by side with friends in the warmth, colour and safety of India, followed by departure for a staid boarding school in a rainy and windswept Britain, where she was charged to look after her younger sister. Perhaps the most stark and revealing moment comes when her mother is asked when she will return and is told 'five years', meaning the end of education. This was not callous, but rather an expectation and a burden carried by missionary families of the mid-twentieth century: that

their children would simply return to the UK for education and leave their parents to continue with their work. The author was perhaps fortunate in having an aunt and a grandmother who could be visited during holidays and provide some family comfort and support. This is a story of sacrifice, but also of the profound lifelong bond of care formed with her younger sister, and additionally a portrait of a family existing continents apart at a time when communication took weeks (unimaginable in the world of today where there can be instant contact with friends and family on the opposite side of the world). The bond formed with her sister (who died in 2005) lasted until the end, with the author caring for her and their shared experience as missionary children strengthened their relationship.

This is a fascinating insight into the lives of missionaries in a different culture from the perspective of children, but also reflecting on the impact of having to sacrifice precious time with parents for schooling and education.

Lynne McNeil

May 2020 Crossword – Compiled by Jeannie Hollands



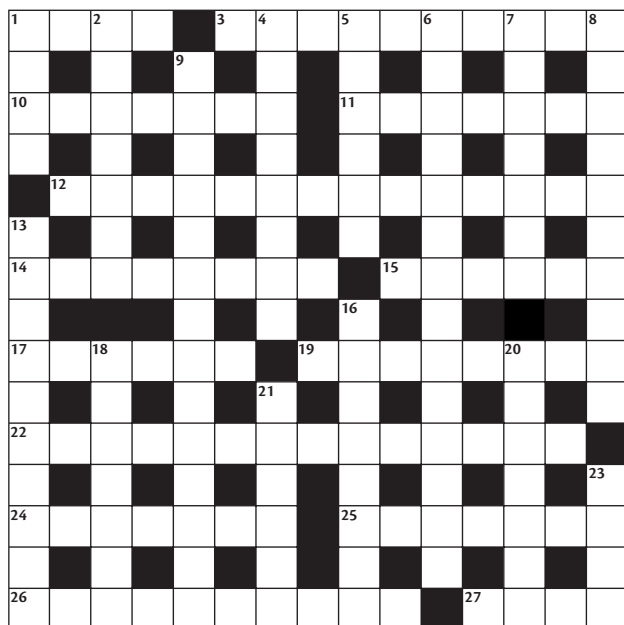
Across

- 1 'In Christ there is -----', (hymn) (2,4,2,4)
 8 Church passageway (5)
 9 Simple melody (9)
 11 Any of the four Gospels (7)
 12 Given a permanent post especially as a lecturer (7)
 13 Stiff (5)
 14 Bad breath (9)
 17 Two books of the Apocrypha (9)
 19 Capital of Egypt (5)
 20 Of a Greek lyric poetess (7)
 23 Reconsider (7)
 24 Dissenter (9)
 25 Old milk container (5)
 26 'All people that on -----', (hymn) (5,2,5)

Down

- 1 Sentimental (9)
 2 Appeared (7)
 3 Tomb (9)
 4 Abstract style (2,3)
 5 Type of fastener (4,3)
 6 Scrub (5)
 7 'O Jesus I -----', (hymn) (4,8)
 10 '----- His purpose out', (hymn) (3,2,7)
 15 Purified by sacrifice (9)
 16 Religious song (9)
 18 Non-believer (7)
 19 Dead skin (7)
 21 Turkish title (5)
 22 Statement of belief (5)

May 2020 Cryptic Crossword – Compiled by Peter Chamberlain



Across

- 1 Man, the Parisian, going round Britain (4)
 3 Scarlet had reorganised large buildings (10)
 10 The merit I included form retired title-holders (7)
 11 Explorer at home with Italian composer (7)
 12 Mr Bull, the churchgoer, was a well-known cousin (4,3,7)
 14 Discordant not having solution (3,2,3)
 15 During tremor, guests went to a deadly place (6)
 17 Hit man with bandage (6)
 19 Many a bird I left with the French yarn (8)
 22 Former C of E body forming the congregation? (6,8)
 24 Justification for poor specimen (7)
 25 Musicians take time dressing (7)
 26 Not a hard way to get state of financial security (4,6)
 27 Garden flower (4)

Down

- 1 Gave a false impression in song (4)
 2 Unwelcome sign for potential visitors (4,3)
 4 Got down when one struck a match (8)
 5 By means of this now, heartless boy concluded (6)
 6 Tam's pinpointed disastrous failure (14)
 7 A big noise inside that's permanent (7)
 8 Repeat isn't troubling disciple (5,5)
 9 Gesture given during songfest choirs rendered (4,2,3,5)
 13 Other cones on box set apart for holy use (10)
 16 Charlie exchanged blue garment (8)
 18 Some of the opaque Ouse is watery! (7)
 20 50 dollar exchange for religious follower (7)
 21 Solicitor from Warley (6)
 23 He comes up at Christmas (4)

Due to the Coronavirus Covid-19 pandemic, this month's crosswords will be for fun.

Solution to April 2020 Crossword

ACROSS: 1 Edentate; 9 Nehemiah; 10 Blur; 11 The Lord's side; 13 Eternal; 15 Tell off; 16 Laban; 17 Banjo; 18 Papal; 20 Still; 22 Taxiway; 23 Easiest; 25 Ride on ride on; 27 Iraq; 28 Scapular; 29 Annotate.

DOWN: 2 Dalmatia; 3 North rejoice; 4 Arsenal; 5 Endor; 6 Chidden; 7 Kiwi; 8 Cheerful; 12 Salvationist; 14 Laity; 15 Table; 17 Buttress; 19 Abstract; 20 Sainly; 21 Lateran; 24 Tiara; 26 Drag.

Winners of March 2020 Crossword – R.A. Newton, Dunfermline; Peter Cromar, Fochabers; Mrs S Johnston, Banchory.

Solution to April 2020 Cryptic Crossword

ACROSS: 1 Ascension Day; 9 Carry on; 10 Tsardom; 11 Unorthodox; 12 Sing; 14 Candelnut; 16 Nohow; 17 Prang; 19 Trimester; 21 Reed; 22 Deathwatch; 25 Deified; 26 Eaten up; 27 Red-letter day.

DOWN: 2 Sirloin; 3 Egyptology; 4 Sunbonnet; 5 Outdo; 6 Dean; 7 Yiddish; 8 Image-worship; 9 Church-parade; 13 Underwater; 15 Twistiest; 18 Atelier; 20 Titania; 23 Endue; 24 Find.

Winners of March 2020 Cryptic Crossword – Fraser Sanderson, Dalbeattie; Helen Dale, Dundee.

MINISTRIES

Compiled by Faith Nurture

DEATHS

Rev James E Hunter, formerly of Blantyre:

Livingstone Memorial, on February 3

Rev James G S Blyth, formerly of Glenmuick,

on February 11

Rev Peter J Macdonald, latterly of Edinburgh:

Broughton St Mary's, on February 12

Rev Donald A MacLennan, formerly of

Kinloch, on February 17

Rev James H Sinclair, formerly of Auchencairn and

Rerrick with Buittle and Kelton, on February 25

Rev Thomas J G Seath, formerly of

Motherwell: Manse Road, on February 27

TRANSLATIONS

Rev James F Gatherer, from Colvend,

Southwick and Kirkbean to Kirkcudbright

Parish, on March 18

Rev Alistair S May, from Rutherglen: Stonelaw

to Motherwell: Dalziel St Andrew's, on

February 25

INDUCTIONS

Rev James W Milliken, to Dreghorn &

Springside, on March 12

Rev Mark R S Smith, to Dunscore linked with

Glencairn & Moniaive, on March 24

Rev Alastair S Duncan, from Glasgow: St

George's Tron as Transition Minister to

Glasgow: St George's Tron, on March 31

ORDINATION AND INDUCTIONS

Rev William A Boyle, to Port Glasgow: New,

on March 18

MINISTRIES DEVELOPMENT STAFF – NEW

APPOINTMENTS

Susan Whyte, with Argyll Presbytery as Argyll

Youth Worker/Team Leader, on March 2

DEATH OF A DEACON

PRESBYTERY OF DUNDEE

Jane M Martin, DCS., formerly of Dundee:

Chalmers Ardler, on February 26

ELDERSHIP

Alves and Burghead: Ordained: Mrs Anne

Milligan, Mrs Janet Ralph and Mr Eric Towns

Dunfermline St Ninian's: Ordained: Marie-

Thérèse Baldwin, Thomas Baldwin, Margaret

Davidson, Elizabeth Fulton, Anne Marshall,

David Murray, Elizabeth Oliver and James Turpie

Monifieth: Admitted: Andrew Jack and Neil Morton

Stirling St Ninian's Old: Ordained: Sally

Andrews, Thelma Jamieson, Elaine Mackay,

Janette Peterson and Lorraine Reid

Upper Donside: Ordained: Jill Pratt

LONG SERVICE

The following have received long service certificates

Edinburgh Carrick Knowe: Lynda Manchester (Sunday Club Teacher 30 years)

Greenlaw: Valerie Robertson (Eldership 30)

and David Stark (Church Organist 45)

Lenzie Old: Richard Bell (30), Norman Girven

(40), Martin Hanson (30), Ian Hector (40),

Robert Martin (40), David Shearer (30), Jane

Stirling (Organist 30 years) and Anne Willet (30)

Lockerbie Dryfesdale, Hutton & Corrie:

Alison Conchie (30) and Charles Conchie (30

years, 26 as Session Clerk)

Monifieth: Steve Allardyce (30), Ron Grace

(50) and Alex Lamont (30)

Uddingston Old: Mima Herd (30), David Lang

(30), Grace McKirdy (30) and Ken Storrier (30)

Upper Donside: John Coutts (50)

Westruther: Mary Macfarlane (Sunday School

Teacher 30)

OBITUARY

The Rev Peter Macdonald, minister of Broughton St Mary's Church in Edinburgh and a former leader of the Iona Community, has died aged 61.

Born in Dumbarton, Peter was engaged in both religion and politics from an early age. He studied for Church of Scotland ministry at both Trinity College Glasgow and New College Edinburgh, and his ministry career started as an assistant at the Old Kirk of Edinburgh, West Pilton.

From 1986-90 he worked as Young Adult Advisor for the Church of Scotland, before becoming minister of Torbain Parish Church in Kirkcaldy. After eight years there, he moved back to Edinburgh, to the city centre St George's West church, where he oversaw a refurbishment and the church's establishment as a Fringe venue.

A member of the Iona Community since the early 1980s, he was elected leader of the organisation in 2009, taking it through a period marking several key anniversaries and helping set up the appeal to safeguard the future of Iona Abbey. At the end of his term as leader, he returned to full-time parish ministry at Broughton St Mary's.

It was on a visit to Iona in 1982 that Peter met the theologian and activist Lesley Orr (now Research Fellow at the Centre for Theology and Public Issues at the University of Edinburgh). They were married within the year and had two sons, Callum and Lorn.

Lorn, now an actor, tweeted after Peter's sudden death on February 12: "I will miss his wisdom, the way he always tried to make a joke with the cashier at his sons' expense, his unparalleled enthusiasm for everything and everyone and so, so much more. He believed in people. He gave them hope. He was the definition of a people person."

Eldership entries can be submitted via email to magazine@lifeandwork.org
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Parish profile and application form available at the church website:

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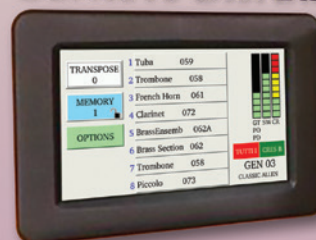


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Living water

The Very Rev Dr John Chalmers reflects on the impact of the Coronavirus Covid-19 pandemic.

DEALING with the spreading pandemic of Covid-19 has brought with it an air of uncertainty, insecurity, anxiety and fear. It is remarkable that an unpredictable force of nature has had the power to sweep away any sense of economic security and has resulted in a Chancellor of the Exchequer saying, “this is not a time for ideology and orthodoxy.” He’s right, we are moving into new territory, life will never be quite the same again and many of us are wrestling with questions about the long-term impact of this virus on the life of the Church.

Already we have seen the worst and the best in human nature. On the one hand supermarket shelves emptied by hoarders and on the other hand acts of generosity, neighbourliness and imagination ensuring that the vulnerable, the housebound and the lonely are not forgotten.

In our time we have advanced medically, scientifically and socially beyond the imagination of our ancestors, but when the chips are down we are still people who can become prisoners to the same fears, doubts, suspicions and worries that have captivated and constrained women and men throughout the centuries. We may think that life is very different now (and in so many respects it is) but there is a layer of the human psyche that hasn’t changed. We harbour stuff in our heads and in our

hearts, in our consciousness and in our sub-consciousness that are the self-same as those of previous generations.

Back in the middle of our Lenten journey the lectionary took us to the story of Jesus sitting by the side of a well (John 4). He meets a woman there who has been too ashamed to come to the well when others come. She is from the despised edge of society. She has found survival very hard and she is nobody’s friend. He is a Jew and she is a Samaritan so they should not really be in contact, but that doesn’t stop Jesus from wanting to engage her in conversation. Her fears are so close to the surface that it takes no time to discover that she is a prisoner to her insecurity and that freedom from what possesses her, freedom from what she fears most – lies deep inside.

The material circumstances of her life might be changed by a win on the lottery, but the underlying thirst in her life will not be quenched by the water that she can draw from Sychar’s Well. She needs to acquire deeper qualities – such as peace, composure and tranquillity. These are the things that will make a difference and Jesus suggests that she should try breaking into the aquifers of God to find the peace that has escaped her.

He describes what she needs as living water and I believe that that living water

“

Already we have seen the worst and the best in human nature.

was already flowing in the care, concern and empathy that Jesus had for her.

Right now most of us need some of that living water.

I think of the frontline workers who are battling to save lives. I think of the people who need spiritual comfort and sustenance, but their church is closed, and they have been told they are too old to go out. I think of the people who are trying to maintain businesses or those struggling to pay their rent, and I conclude that there has never been a time when it was so self-evident that we are deeply dependent on one another. This is a key moment; social distancing may have changed the way we live, but it mustn’t be allowed to stop the living waters from flowing among us.

And when this crisis has passed I hope that we remember the depth of our connectedness and that we did not wash our hands to keep ourselves free from illness but we washed our hands to keep others safe. ■

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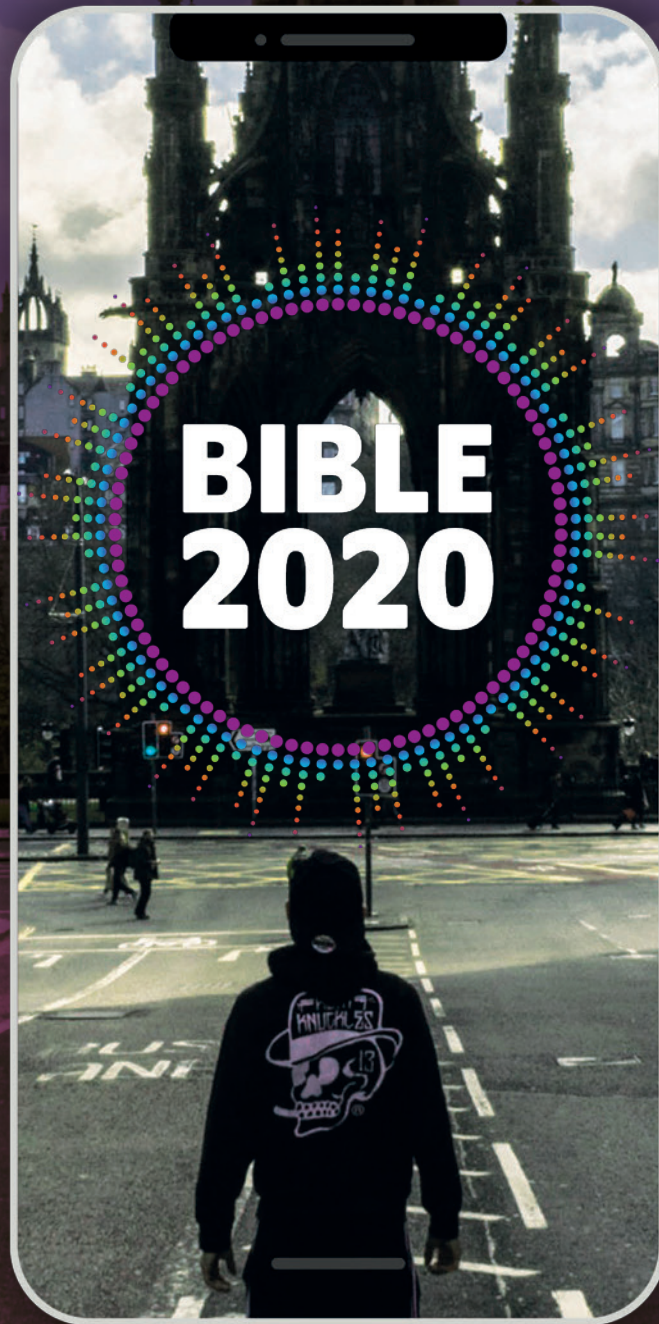


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