

February 2021

The Parishioner



The magazine of the Portland Parish Church of Scotland: Troon



OUR MISSION STATEMENT

With God's support we are developing Portland as a dynamic, Spirit-led Church impacting on our town and beyond through encouragement, nurture and service

As we enter the second month of 2021 much of life looks the same and yet things are beginning to change. The rollout of the vaccine provides hope that one day soon we will gather together. The increased levels of restrictions means that if we all play our part, maybe infection rates will go down. The days grow longer, and we once again turn towards spring and all that warmer weather has to offer. We also look to the church calendar and enter into the traditional Lenten journey.



Embracing traditions from the past help us to understand why we do things in the church. In the early church, alleluia was 'banned' from being said during Lent in order to store up all of the Alleluias for Easter celebrations. Many cultures have non-liturgical celebrations before Lent. In Louisiana, *Mardi Gras*, meaning Fat Tuesday, is a time period leading up to Ash Wednesday with festivals, festivities, and frivolity. *Carnevale* in Brazil literally means 'Farewell Meat,' a way to consume the meat, butter, cheese, eggs and fat, prior to the Lenten period. Finally, in Germanic countries, including here in Scotland, *Shrove Tuesday* or Pancake Tuesday is celebrated. Nutella would probably dispute that they came up with Pancake Tuesday, but in reality, it was the influence of the church and a time to use up all of the oil by frying pancakes.

What do all of these traditions have in common? All of these festivities and preparations help us to remember and know that during Lent, we do things differently.

Lent begins on Wednesday 17 February. You might not remember but last year, I had the children of the church help me bury the 'Alleluias' for Lent. The first Sunday of Lent, I placed pieces of paper with all sorts of Alleluias written on them around the chancel steps. Together we gathered them all up and placed them in a box which, to this day, resides under the pulpit seat. I have yet to dig up the Alleluias. I know that we have been back to in-person worship on occasion, but it didn't feel quite the right time to dig them up. It is my hope sometime this year, we can bring back the Alleluias!

The idea behind burying the Alleluias is to make Lent different than other liturgical seasons. During Advent, we wait with abated anticipation, and we light candles to signify the coming light of Christ into the world. In Lent we also get ready, but in a different way. During Lent we bury the Alleluias so that come Easter morning, our thanks to God is even more joyous.

During Lent we look at words like re-turn, re-flect, re-pond, re-pent, re-mind, and re-member. I use the hyphenation to highlight the RE prefix. *RE* in Latin means 'once more, again, afresh, in return, with intensity and intentionality.' During this season of Lent, I invite you, with intentionality, to enter into a season of reflection.

To help you enter into the season of Lent with intentionality, Troon Old and Portland Church will join together to offer midweek reflections on our websites and Facebook. These short videos will offer time and space to think, worship God, and do things differently.

I do not know when our church doors will open again; however, I do know that we are not contained to the four walls of our building. Being church is a way of engaging, a way of serving, and a path along a journey. While we might not be in each other's presence, may we take time during this season of Lent to be present to God, ourselves, our community, our country, and the world.

God's Grace and Peace

Mary Elizabeth Prentice-Hyers (Mel)

Perfect love

The Very Rev Dr John Chalmers offers words to take into the new year.

After a year like 2020, here's a thought with which to begin 2021:

*“All shall be well,
and all shall be well
and all manner of thing shall be well.”*



These words come to us from the 14th century, from the wisdom of Julian of Norwich. Julian was an anchoress; that is to say she was a woman who, for religious reasons, withdrew herself from secular society in order to lead an intensely prayerful and reflective life. Such ascetic, monastic folk have sometimes been characterised as being withdrawn or escapist, but the truth, in Julian's case, is that her life in Holy Orders left the Christian tradition with an understanding of God which was far more generous and forgiving than that espoused by most of her contemporaries.

In her writings we discover that at one time she obsessed about sin - unable to understand why an all-powerful God would have allowed wickedness and evil to penetrate the world. She knew the only too human tendency to rupture relationships, to dishonour the Divine, to make unfortunate choices, and try to hide our faults. She would say, “If [God] had left sin out of creation..... all would be well”.

It is, however, in her later thinking that she dispenses with the whole concept of sin and replaces it with love. In her *Revelations of Divine Love* she writes: “I believe that sin has no manner of substance, no particle of being nor could it be known except by the pain it causes”. This is a deep truth that, while sin may be known through its impact on others or on creation itself - it has no existential value. She says: “[God] showed me that God does not have one iota of blame for me, or for any other person. So, wouldn't it be unkind of me to blame God for my transgressions since God does not blame”. So Julian could say, with no ifs or buts: “All will be well and all will be well and every kind of thing shall be well.”

This optimistic theology derives from an understanding of the unconditional and unlimited nature of God's love and compassion. Pope Benedict XVI referred in 2010 to Julian's work, saying: “*Revelations of Divine Love* contains a message of optimism based on the certainty of being loved by God and of being protected by God's Providence.”

As we leave behind a year which has disturbed the peace of our relationships and shaken some of the most reliable things about our church life; it is a good time to be reminded of, what is sometimes known as, the omnibenevolence of God. As we stand on the threshold of a New Year in which the future shape of our church is largely uncertain; it is a good time to be reminded that at the heart of all that there is, is the God, whom the Bible describes as perfect love. And in God's love we can rest assured that, “All will be well and all will be well and every kind of thing shall be well.”

“AND IN GOD'S LOVE WE CAN REST ASSURED THAT, “ALL WILL BE WELL AND ALL WILL BE WELL AND EVERY KIND OF THING SHALL BE WELL.”

Too often in our presbyterian tradition God has been portrayed in dark and judgemental tones; a God who scares children and makes little sense to adults. That maybe the God of some ancient traditions but, it is not the God of Jesus. The God of Jesus is the one captured in these words of Minnie Louise Haskins:

And I said to the man who stood at the gate of the year:

“Give me a light that I may tread safely into the unknown.”

And he replied:

“Go out into the darkness and put your hand into the Hand of God.

That shall be to you better than light and safer than a known way.”

So I went forth, and finding the Hand of God, trod gladly into the night.

These too, are words to take into this New Year.

This article first appeared in the January 2021 edition of Life and Work

Services

24 January - Third Sunday after Epiphany - Mel Prentice-Hyers Preaching
31 January - 150th anniversary of Life Boats - Dave Prentice-Hyers and Mel Prentice-Hyers joint worship
7 February - Fifth Sunday after Epiphany - Dave Prentice-Hyers
14 February - Transfiguration Sunday
17 February - Ash Wednesday Worship Service Online
21 February - First Sunday in Lent
28 February - Second Sunday in Lent

We stand at that place, betwixt and between the old and the new.
Looking back to a year now past, and forward to what is yet to be.
But this is not a normal transition between old and new.
We look back on a year in which
the normal patterns of daily life have been disrupted;
where so much has been put on hold, postponed, cancelled.
We look to the new year with dread and anxiety
with its continued uncertainty.
Lives still on hold.
So much we would want to do, would plan to do,
need to do, but afraid to look too far forward for
fear of disappointment.
In all our uncertainty
we come to you, Lord, for you are constant.
In the midst of uncertainty your love is sure.
In the darkness of disappointment you never fail.
In heartbreak and anguish your loving arms enfold us.
We see your constancy and love not only in our lives
but in the world around us.
As year succeeds to year,
as day follows night,
as the seasons change,
from the new life of spring,
to summer's rosy glow,
then autumn's harvest hew
to winter's sleepy rest.
Lord, we long for the world to awaken
not only from winter's rest
but also from the shutdown we have endured
for so many months.
As we wait expectantly for the brighter days of spring,
and for the world to live again
so we turn to you.
Continue to walk with us through these dark days,
assure us of your light which
no darkness can ever overcome
and of your love
by which we are constantly surrounded.



Amen

First Published in the Life and Work January 2021 issue

Housegroup...or should it be Homegroup?

Strange that a name can mean different things yet be very similar. We feel as if we are all at home together, albeit joined by the magic of Zoom.

How does it help ?

It helps by giving us friendship in a safe environment; space to talk through our Christianity; a way of increasing our Bible knowledge ; a group who are all followers of Jesus.

Yet much of what we discussed centred on the difficulty of mission and how intimidating a large Victorian church can be, with regimes, hymns and ways of doing that are foreign to some. We've all been there to a lesser or larger extent. How then, do we enable others? We are all at differing places in our own lives, in our own culture, in our own faith journey.

We read Luke ch 10 1-23 , and agreed it was strange passage, telling about the 72 who went out to heal and to bring others to the gospel. A look back to two thousand years ago, to a different time and a different way of living. We thought about how we judge people on their dress and behaviour and how incredible it can be to find that someone we may disregard because of those things, then unexpectedly turns out to be knowledgeable and interesting.

No, we didn't solve everything.....but it made us think, it drew us together and even without tea and biscuits , we felt more at peace.

Our closing prayer, shortened slightly, was :

Father, thank you for your love revealed to us
And for the love we all share.
We pray for the words sown into our hearts today,
Watch over them, protect them,
May they take root and produce wonderful things.

Amen

If you would like to Zoom with us, we are flowing sessions on the net which help to give us a focus. You are welcome to come and speak or not, as is comfortable for you.
Contact Barbie Short, 315784, or byshort00@gmail.com

Next Housegroup :

Wednesday 17th February , 7.30pm Ash Wednesday.

**I AM THE RESURRECTION
AND THE LIFE**

Recent Deaths

David Neill	7 th December
Ann Lawson	21 st December
Robin Tedford	26 th December
Marjory Hardie	29 th December
Nancy Hay	11 th January
Anna Leith	19 th January
Alec Brown	22 nd January

David Neill died in Ayrshire Hospice in December 2020 following a short illness.

David had been a member of Portland for many years and had always read the Parishioner and followed Portland's fortunes. He sat in the gallery and enjoyed every minute of the service. He loved our church, the music, the hymns, the organ – and he contributed well towards Portland's funds. His life had had some dark and sad times but his love of music, his boat, his dog and his church were the central pillars of his life.

Avril McDonald



Wedding Anniversary Congratulations

Jean and Tony Lackie who celebrated their 65th Wedding Anniversary in December

and

Morag and Mike Holm who celebrated their Diamond Wedding Anniversary on the 12th January

TOMORROW, the sun will rise,
Either in splendour or behind a mask of clouds,
But it will rise.
Until it does, we have no stake in TOMORROW
For it is as yet unborn.

This leaves only one day—TODAY.
Anyone can fight the battles of just one day.
It is only when you and I add the burdens of those two awful eternities
YESTERDAY and TOMORROW -
That we break down.

It is not the experience of TODAY that drives one mad.
It is remorse or bitterness for something that happened YESTERDAY
And the dread of what TOMORROW may bring.

Let us, therefore, live but ONE day at a time.

Anonymous

Ann Lawson died in January after a short illness. This is my tribute to her from a Portland perspective. Mel's eulogy at Ann's funeral was fulsome, detailed and very appreciative of all aspects of her character.

I can't remember when I first knew Ann but I suspect I was a Sunday school pupil and Ann Sweet was my teacher. This was in the 50s and I duly became a Sunday school teacher myself. I really remember her well from those times-- when about 60 children attended Sunday School which was held after the morning service. Ann took her job seriously; she was a teacher in Seafield Hospital during the week. The Sunday School then was very active with barbecues on the beach in summer, Hallowe'en parties, Christmas parties and coffee mornings. Ann took full part in these events, being just as at home washing the dishes as organising the games. The main event was the Sunday School trip, always held on a Wednesday in Troon, going to Sorn or Straiton or Culzean. We all enjoyed these trips, and Ann always had a happy smile on her face and I can still hear that low chuckling laugh.



In 1978 Ann married Jim and moved south. Eventually she and Jim returned to Troon and Fullarton Crescent, which was in my Elder's district, and we easily resumed our friendship. She and I could remember the ministry and sermons of Rev A G Stewart and I was amazed that we had such differing opinions. I respected her opinions and found I could learn a lot from her sympathetic outlook and gentle appreciations. She was the most unassuming person I know, preferring to give of herself quietly and humbly. She would never realise what an asset her constant presence was in Portland.

We miss her.

Avril McDonald



At a Sunday School event - from the left they are Ann Lawson (Sweet as she was then), an unknown, John Chalmers and then a young Ronnie Smith

New Equality and Inclusion Group Seeks Members

A new Church of Scotland group is looking for members who are interested in strengthening equality and inclusion across the Church.

The **Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Group** needs interested volunteers who can help shape strategies and projects that champion Church values, with a clear focus on equality and inclusion. The group will look at a broad range of issues, from buildings, to worship to specific policy areas. As well as highlighting tried and trusted practices, members will explore new ways to welcome and celebrate diversity within the Church. Chief Officer Dave Kendall is encouraging a wide range of people to apply:

“We need input from Church members, attendees and leaders with a clear commitment to the values of equality and diversity,” he said.

<https://www.churchofscotland.org.uk/about-us/vacancies-and-volunteering/nominations/equality,-diversity-and-inclusion-group>

The discovery of Zoom has been one of the few benefits of the lockdown. Many years ago I flirted with Skype and Face time, when these first became popular, but I soon abandoned them, as I found the telephone suited my needs, and I could meet family and friends in person. Various restrictions last year largely put an end to seeing my family, attending church, house group and other activities. Messy Church was an early casualty, with only the first scheduled meeting of 2020 able to take place before lockdown.

Enter Zoom and similar on line programmes for group meetings. No it's not the same as meeting real people. There is no substitute for that. But it does solve problems, particularly in allowing groups of people to meet virtually. As someone living alone with reduced mobility, who can no longer drive, I have found it a useful tool to maintain social contacts in this prolonged period of enforced isolation.

The brief period when worship in church was permitted was soon over and we are back to online services. Our church has decided against live streaming, which means you can 'go' to church earlier on Sunday morning, which I like. It is also possible to 'invite' others to attend, by forwarding the link to those who would not normally attend the service.

We now have a joint virtual choir the singers learning new skills of recording their parts, and uploading their contributions to be synchronised before being broadcast. The house group has gone on line and find it is possible to have times of genuine fellowship as we 'meet' on screen. This is also true of our after-service coffee chats, where people have been able to share news and expertise.

No it's not the same as meeting real people, but it meets the vital criterion of Matthew 18:20. “For **where two or three are gathered** together in my name, I am there among them.”

Sandra McCallum

Published in January 2021 SCDG Newsletter



Messy Church

When planning for our 'take-away and do at home' Messy Church at Christmas, the initial plan was to prepare 100 bags of various crafts that could be done at home with parents, with back-up sessions on Zoom on 6 December. Such was the enthusiasm of the response that a further 20 bags had to be produced. An on-line booking system was organised so that packs could be picked up safely with social distancing.

This year's theme was Love came down at Christmas. A tremendous amount of organisation was needed to prepare the bags safely. Each craft had to be individually packaged with instructions, and a small Messy Church team met to get these ready for collection.

Crafts included making Christmas cards, gift boxes, hearts, spirals. and a wise man. Bags also contained a Christmas greeting card with a handwritten message, the gospel of Luke, a book with the Christmas story and the ingredients for making a hot chocolate drink with mallows. It is a fundamental part of Messy Church that children should be accompanied to our sessions by a parent or responsible adult, as the event is not a children's club, but for all the family. On this occasion their vital contribution was rewarded by including a small thank-you pack.

During the two Zoom sessions on Sunday afternoon, about 27 and 29 families respectively joined in, roughly about 80 children and their parents. There were some technical hitches, but looking round the participants, they seemed to be enjoying themselves. Time for crafts was limited during the online sessions, but little videos had been made to demonstrate the crafts and these are permanently available.

Overall it was a worthwhile exercise, especially in the present conditions and we do hope that it has a spin-off for the future of Messy Church. Discussion is under way about our next event and this will be publicised on Facebook and on our website.

Sandra McCallum



Troon Churches Together

Thanks are due to those who organised the online service of united worship on 27 December. The video went live at 9.15 and was accompanied by dial-a-podcast for those without internet access. The joint Christmas service of Troon Churches together was led by the clergy from Troon and Dundonald and enlivened by the singing of a joint virtual choir.

Sandra McCallum

NOTHING CHANGES

“On hearing ill rumour that Londoners may soon be urged into their lodgings by Her Majesty’s men, I looked upon the street to see a gaggle of striplings making fair merry, and no doubt spreading the plague well about. Not a care had these rogues for the health of their elders!”

Samuel Pepys Diaries
London 1664



AND SO THE DAY GOES....

I needed to do the laundry, but then I realized I was out of detergent, so I went to write a shopping list and realized how unorganized the junk drawer was, and started checking pens for ink. When I went to toss all the junk, I saw that the trash was full but before I took it out I wanted to get rid of old food in the fridge. That's when I realized a juice jug had leaked so I needed to clean it up but when I went to grab a rag, I saw that the pantry closet was a nightmare so I started organizing it. And that's how I ended up on the floor looking at my old photo albums from 1990's and not doing laundry.

This is how I spend my day



LINGUISTICS CLASS

‘In English’, the lecturer says, ‘A double negative forms a positive. In some languages, like Russian, a double negative is still a negative. But, there’s no language wherein a double positive can form a negative’

Voice from the back of the room,

‘Aye, right’

OUR NEXT ISSUE OF THE PARISHIONER WILL BE IN MARCH 2021 POSTED AT THE BEGINNING OF THAT MONTH PLEASE SEND ANY CONTRIBUTIONS TO YOUR MAGAZINE TO — parishioner45@gmail.com

Malawi Partnership Update

The Rev. Asayiwe Mwenitete, minister of Limphasa Congregation in Northern Malawi, has sent the following message:

*Afternoon Bill,
With great joy I am informing you that our Church has been today Monday 18/01/21 connected with electricity. We thank God for your assistance of money which you gave us for this connection. Now is light in the Church. Share this great news to our brothers and sisters there in Scotland.
God bless you all.*

Asayiwe



As we entered 2021 Asayiwe sent greetings as follows:

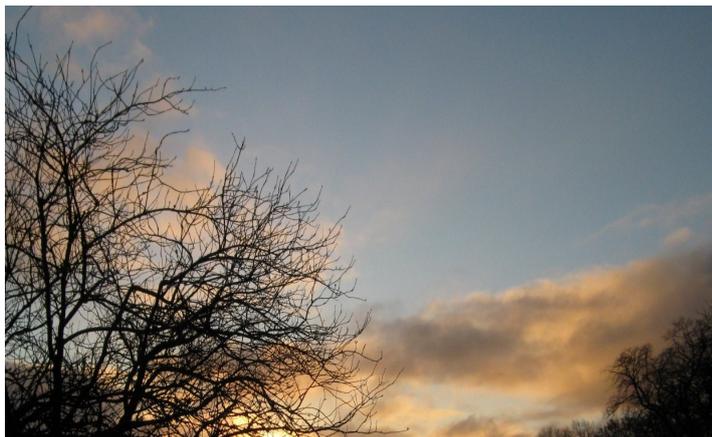
May you start this journey of 2021 year with our Lord Jesus Christ, let him guide, lead, protect and take us to next year 2022.

It was interesting to learn that his congregation had held a special celebratory 'End and the Beginning of the Year' church service on Saturday 2nd January. The accompanying video clip highlighted the great joy of the occasion with typical enthusiastic all age dancing and singing.

In light of the latest government restrictions on travel to and from the UK there is clearly no realistic prospect of a return to anything approaching normality by early summer and accordingly the planned visitation to Malawi by a group of six on behalf of Ayr Presbytery has again had to be postponed. This visit had originally been scheduled to take place at the end of May 2020 and was then postponed for a year. It is hoped that the situation both here and in Malawi will greatly improve in the months ahead to enable fresh plans for this delayed visit to be put in place.

In a follow up message from Rev. Asayiwe received this afternoon he 'sends best wishes as you will be having another Zoom meeting of the kirk session on 21/01/21. Let's keep remembering each other in our day to day prayers'.

Bill Weir – 19 January 2021



Psalms 65:8 *The whole earth is filled with awe at your wonders; where morning dawns, where evening fades, you call forth songs of joy.*

Dial-in to our services

If you know someone without internet access who might enjoy our service then they could dial in at any time on 01292 43 97 91* and listen in to our latest service
*normal local call charges apply

Visit the Troon Portland web page for our Weekly Sunday Service—Choir anthem, prayer, bible reading, sermon and hymn singing—JOIN US.

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