

June 2021

The Parishioner



The magazine of the Portland Parish Church of Scotland: Troon



Welcome Home Children of God, Welcome Home

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

A word from the Interim Moderator.

General Assembly 2021



I had the privilege of ‘attending’ the meetings of the 2021 General Assembly. Given the restrictions associated with COVID-19, this was once again an ‘on-line’ General Assembly via ‘Zoom’ and meetings were held on five days over the period 22nd-27th May 2021.

This year was a clear opportunity for the Church of Scotland to ‘bite the bullet’ and make a number of difficult decisions that will not only help to ensure its survival, but also ensure that it takes a new and innovative approach to mission – to spread the Good News of Christ and also to commit to the work that Christ calls us to do.

The Assembly sought to promote a vision

“The Church of Scotland seeks to inspire the people of Scotland and beyond with the Good News of Jesus Christ through enthusiastic worshipping, witnessing, nurturing and serving communities”

The vision is seen to be fulfilled in the mission of the church

The five Signs of Mission

1. To proclaim the Good News of the Kingdom
2. To teach, baptise and nurture new believers
3. To respond to human need by loving service
4. To transform unjust structures of society, to challenge violence of every kind and pursue peace and reconciliation
5. To strive to safeguard the integrity of creation, and sustain and renew the life of the earth

The challenge to every Presbytery, congregation and member is to engage in this mission imaginatively and intentionally.

Within the context of significant financial pressures within the Church, an excess of buildings, declining membership, and a shortage of full-time stipendiary ministers, I would like to outline some of the key decisions taken at the General Assembly.

Finance: the financial challenges of the Church were highlighted as the Assembly passed a budget with a deficit of £11m, and approved a new scheme to replace the system of Mission and Ministries allocations. The Assembly also agreed to the establishment of a new Pioneer Mission Fund to support local church growth, with a particular emphasis on church planting and the establishment of new worshipping communities.



Presbytery Mission Action Plan: Presbytery reform continues with the Assembly agreeing to three further presbytery mergers – merging Edinburgh with West Lothian, Hamilton with Lanark, and bringing together six presbyteries (including Ayr Presbytery) in south-west Scotland.

A plan was also passed to cut the number of ministry posts to 660 by 2025 – the number of associated posts in each presbytery was also outlined. It was further explained that the church currently has 837 ministry posts including 137 ministry development staff. There are however 299 vacant charges, and 36 congregations under the guardianship of their presbytery, resulting in the need for 335 interim moderators. The convenor of the Faith Nurture Forum stated: “We are draining the resources of the church – people, morale, finance – just to keep this broken system going. Without a radical treatment plan the Church of Scotland will not survive.

It was further agreed that church vacancy procedures will be suspended as Presbyteries begin the process of allocating their reduced numbers of ministries under the new plans. It was agreed that no church will be granted permission to call a Minister after June 1, except with the agreement of the Faith Nurture Forum. Churches going through the process will have until December 31, 2021 to find a sole nominee before the process is stopped. All Presbytery Plans have been suspended and Presbyteries (including the newly formed ones) have until December 31 2022 to submit a new plan for approval.

Same Sex Marriage: The Assembly voted to send draft legislation on the solemnisation of same-sex marriages to presbyteries for consideration. The legislation will now be considered by presbyteries later this year and, if a majority agree, the issue will return to next year’s General Assembly for final approval.

Westminster Confession of Faith: The Theological Forum will bring to next year’s General Assembly firm proposals on the confessional standards in the Church of Scotland. Taking into consideration the Forum’s report into the place of the Westminster Confession of Faith, the Church’s subordinate standard, Presbyteries and Kirk Sessions are to discuss the options presented before next year. The Theological Forum has said its preferred option would be an approved book of confessions, to include the Westminster Confession along with various other confessions and creeds.

Faith Impact Forum: The Assembly welcomed the fact that the Church no longer holds investments in oil and gas companies and welcomed the agreement that ‘in principle’ no future investments will be held in fossil fuels companies unless the investments are agreed to align with efforts to keep global heating below 1.5°C.

Kirk Sessions were ‘urged’ to take part in the training offered on violence against women.

The Assembly agreed to call on the UK Government to restore the commitment to 0.7% of GDP in overseas aid and adding that the Assembly ‘Deplore the decision of the UK Government to cut overseas aid programmes’.

In his concluding remarks, Lord Wallace the Moderator of the General Assembly suggested that ‘significant progress’ had been made during the week. He said: “The challenges are very real and five days of debate, deliberation and deliverances do not make them disappear. But our prayers and our hopes must be that as we emerge from this Assembly we are better equipped and better prepared to deal with them”. He said that the Assembly had demonstrated “An awareness of the need for flexibility, a can-do rather than a ‘it’s never been done this way before’ attitude, that must surely augur well for the future.”

Added to this is the small matter of a global pandemic which we are still living through.

Changes indeed are coming!

One phrase which was used several times at the Assembly was “The task ahead of us is not greater than the task behind us “ In church life the next five years are going to be challenging and formative, however I for one refuse to embrace the sentiments of Private Fraser of Dad’s Army who frequently declared “we’re doomed”. Rather I think we must be faithful, renew our vision and look for the new opportunities of service.

From these testing times the church of the future will emerge.

Stay safe
God’s blessings on all.

Bill Duncan
Interim Moderator

**OUR NEXT ISSUE OF THE
PARISHIONER WILL BE SEPTEMBER 2021 POSTED AT THE
BEGINNING OF THAT MONTH PLEASE SEND ANY
CONTRIBUTIONS TO YOUR
MAGAZINE TO —parishioner45@gmail.com
THANK YOU TO ALL THOSE WHO CONTRIBUTED OVER THE LAST MONTHS—
MARGARET SHORT**

**WE WOULD BE VERY GLAD TO HEAR OF ANYTHING YOU WOULD LIKE TO
SHARE—YOUR THOUGHTS AND EXPERIENCES AND NEWS!**

Zooming on with Housegroup

we looked at Matthew 28 v 16-20 and Acts 1 v 1-8

‘ And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.’

The Eleven are being told to wait for the Holy Spirit and to then go out to everyone. Not just Jews, not just people of the same culture. Something we might all find difficult today. How do we reach folk who are different from us?

We also talked about speaking in tongues and this led to an interesting and diverse discussion.

Anything that makes us think about our faith, may lead us down different paths and can only expand our own personal horizons. In a supportive, caring environment where we can trust each other.

We are thinking of having a party or gathering later on when we are all allowed out - so watch this space or at least the website.

Meetings will continue but as Parishioner will be on a well earned holiday, contact me, Barbie, if you would like to join us.

Next meetings will be :
Wednesday 9th June 7.30pm
Wednesday 23rd June 7.30 pm

All welcome, contact byshort00@gmail.com

And have a happy summer

Barbie

CONGRATULATIONS

Housegroup would like to offer sincere congratulations and best wishes to David Kerr as he joins Session as an ordained Elder.

David is a valued member of our group and we are all looking forward to being together in reality rather than virtually.

Until then we are zooming along.

Marr Cappella have released two Spring videos on YouTube and are hoping to use these to raise funds for RNLI. You are invited to view the videos by clicking on the links below and to consider donating to this worthwhile cause by clicking on the Just-Giving link below,

<https://youtu.be/FTjDUcWgZ3Y> - Fix You

<https://youtu.be/XWT5POikmqE> - Don't Rain On My Parade

<https://www.justgiving.com/fundraising/marr-cappella1>

WELL DONE.....



The Portland Plodders set out to walk or run 1.2 million steps between them over the month of May. Each of us has completed the 300000 steps, and the final number of steps is 2,077,157. We are delighted to have raised over £1050 for Christian Aid. Thank you to everyone who has donated so generously to this worthwhile cause.

Jane, Christine, Julie and Clare

Take care of yourself like a human plant

ALWAYS STAY HYDRATED

CATCH SOME DAILY SUNSHINE

NOURISH YOURSELF WITH WHAT YOUR SOIL NEEDS

USE SUPPORT WHEN YOU NEED IT

GIVE YOURSELF SPACE TO GROW

LET GO OF THINGS THAT NO LONGER HELP YOU

REMEMBER, LIFE CAN CUT YOU DOWN, BUT YOU'LL ALWAYS GROW BACK STRONGER

KNOW THAT NOTHING IS MEANT TO BLOOM ALL THE TIME

martha brook
LONDON

The infographic is a vertical poster with a light pink background. At the top, the title "Take care of yourself like a human plant" is written in a dark, serif font. Below the title are nine illustrations, each with a corresponding text message. The illustrations include: a hand watering a plant, a plant in a pot under a smiling sun, a packet of plant food, a plant in a yellow pot with a support stake, two potted plants, a plant in a pink pot with a heart, a pair of scissors, and a single pink flower with a smiling face. Small red hearts are scattered throughout the design. At the bottom, the name "martha brook" and "LONDON" are printed in a simple, lowercase font.

PORTLAND PARISH CHURCH
St. Meddans Street, Troon



PLANT SALE
Saturday 12th June 2021
10am -12noon
In Church Grounds

Bedding plants, hanging basket plants, perennials, house and vegetable plants and much more for sale at reasonable prices



All Welcome

Charity Number SC003477

We plan to have an outdoor plant sale in the church grounds from 10 am to 12 mid-day on Saturday, 12th June. There will be no café this year, but come along and buy a few plants for your garden or window box and enjoy the fellowship.

Proceeds will go towards a new computer for the church and also to Crossreach.

If anyone has any extra plants which they have brought on, or if anyone could lend a gazebo for the morning, please contact Jane Potts. We will also be pleased to hear from anyone who is willing to help on the day.



Since March 2020, everyone's travel plans have had to change dramatically; holiday plans have been either curtailed or cancelled. I have been asked to share a bit about one of my covid lockdown projects. Instead of going on a trip of a lifetime across the Atlantic and back on the Queen Mary 2, my only overseas trip was five days in Millport in late August, staying at the Cathedral of the Isles.

My story, *In Search of the Vikings*, was inspired by the Cumbrae setting and it was very exciting to see it appear on Amazon last week, both as a paperback and an ebook. I used a pen name, Margaret MacGregor, the name of one of my great grandmothers. As a family we had a little house on Cumbrae and spent all summer there. It is a marvellous island. You would have seen in the news how day trippers flocked across on the ferry when restrictions eased a few weeks ago. I am sure the islanders took Haakon in their stride.

My book is a light reading novel based on the 1263 Battle of Largs, I used the Norse accounts, as the Scots monks at Melrose Abbey did not give it much room in their records. Writing it was great fun and I intend to give all the proceeds to charities that benefit Cumbrae in some way. There are three that I regularly support, Friends of the Cathedral, the community owned toilets at Fintry Bay and FSC Millport, an environmental charity, aiming to bring environmental education to all, with courses and adventure activities, like rock climbing and rafting. Their regular posts are well worth following.

A glimpse at the plot -

When a young team of students start on an archaeological dig, they hope to find evidence of the Vikings on the Scottish Isle of Cumbrae. They do not expect to find a body of a young girl who vanished thirty years before, as well as a hoard of Viking treasure. Is it too late to solve the mystery of her death and find the perpetrator? The lives and loves of young people in modern day Scotland are blended with the fate of a royal rebel, a Norse princess, who refuses to accept a traditional role in thirteenth century Norway and chooses a husband and a life of her own far from her native land. A Scottish historical novel based on the Battle of Largs, fought in 1263 to settle whether Scotland or Norway ruled the Western Isles.

Share the tension as the story builds to a dramatic conclusion which could end in tragedy.

Sandra McCallum

Ayrshire Cancer Support

This year Ayrshire Cancer Support (ACS) is running a fundraising "cycling challenge", and Bob Faulks who is one of the volunteer drivers is cycling the equivalent of 150 journeys between Troon and the Beatson Cancer Centre from 1 January to 31 August. This amounts to 5250 miles in 243 days or over 21 miles per day, every day. So far, Bob has recorded over 3000 miles and is on target.

As everyone knows, the weather since January has not been at all kind to cyclists, and frozen hands and feet were very much the order of the day to start with! The weather is now thankfully getting (a bit) better, and Bob is looking forward to some warm longer rides when he can get well up towards and reach the total. Bob will keep us in touch with progress.

Bob's charity page is: <https://www.justgiving.com/fundraising/robert-faulks>

The Scottish Government has recently announced that from **Monday, 31 May 2021**, congregational singing can resume for those areas in levels 1-0. Whilst this will currently only apply to a few areas such as the Islands, it means that other areas can prepare for the proposed move to level 1 for the majority of Scotland on **7 June 2021**. Where congregational singing can take place, face coverings must still be worn by those singing.

The Guidance on organised activities for children - <https://www.gov.scot/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-organised-activities-for-children/pages/overview/> - has also been amended with the effect that numbers for certain groups such as Sunday Schools and Toddler Groups will be limited only by physical distancing and other mitigating measures following a risk assessment.

Finally, we are expecting new guidance to be published shortly on organised adult indoor activities which will be permissible in levels 0-2 areas. There will be strictures placed upon organisations, and they will need to follow the same rules as indoor organised sport and exercise which require them to have a Covid Safety Officer and follow physical distancing capacity rules. This relaxation does not include informal social activities. The guidance on this will be updated in due course and this is simply a signal that congregations can be thinking about a return for such activities.

As always, our guidance has been updated to reflect these recent announcements and congregations should regularly review the guidance to ensure they are complying with good practice and keeping within the boundaries of what is permissible. The updated guidance can be found here: https://www.churchofscotland.org.uk/resources/covid-19-coronavirus-advice/reshaping-church-life/_nocache.

If you have any questions, please get in touch with the COVID-19 Working Group at covid19guidance@churchofscotland.org.uk.

Extracts from the May newsletter of the Scottish Councils Disability Group
The full text of the newsletter is on the SCDAG website.
<http://scdg.org.uk/>



Helping Churches to be More Inclusive

A few months ago Barbara Urquhart told us that the Presbytery of Irvine and Kilmarnock would appoint six Pioneer Ministry workers and that one of these would have a focus on enabling disabled people to participate more fully in all aspects of church life. Katrona Templeton has now been appointed to lead this project.

Recently, Katrona and the other Pioneer Ministry workers led a session for the full Presbytery on the Five Marks of Mission. This concept was created by the Church of England to ensure that the mission of churches is aligned to the mission of Christ. The following message is taken from Katrona's presentation.

Mission Mark 4: To transform unjust structures of society, to challenge violence of every kind and pursue peace and reconciliation

Mark 4 of mission is quite a big ask. There is a lot of discrimination, poverty and hate in the world. How do we fulfil this mark? Do we storm Parliament protesting injustices? Take to the streets in demonstrations against wars and violence? Hold peace conferences and negotiations?

That can be part of it, but are we just treating the symptoms rather than the root cause? Everyone has bias, conscious or unconscious, caused by influences which are not from God. By taking a closer look at ourselves and our churches we can identify these biases, and re-educate ourselves.

Thank you Sandra for keeping us up to date with SCDG news

One of the inclusion project's core values is **the recognition of the equality of all individuals in the sight of God.**

We hope to achieve this in three ways:

1. by education and opening up discussion within churches, to raise awareness of what disability inclusion means in practice;
2. by reaching out to our wider communities to show disabled people of all ages and their families that churches genuinely extend a welcome to all people;
3. by providing opportunities for non-traditional worship formats for disabled people who are best served by alternative settings and styles of worship.



Keep doing online church services. I need online services to be interactive and participatory.

I'm sure others do too. So here are 3 things that would make online church services interactive and participatory for me.

Having a virtual chat after the virtual service

- for anyone who wishes to discuss the service, e.g. share responses to the sermon or Bible reading. These might work best in random break-out groups, so that people don't feel exposed in front of the whole group, and so that people can meet each other and have a shared experience.

Having church services by Zoom, real-time, rather than pre-recorded videos

This lets more people take part, e.g. read a lesson or contribute a prayer, because people might be happy to do this in a Zoom call but not in a pre-recorded service that will go online. It also lets people see who else is 'there'.

Giving a week's notice of the Bible reading

- e.g. on the church Facebook page, so that people know a week in advance what it will be. This lets people interact with it during the week running up to the service, e.g. read it in their preferred translation, and look for something on it such as a commentary, sermon or reflection.

Sometimes you need to
look at things from a
different perspective.



Locum Minister: Rev. M. E. Prentice-Hyers

Interim Moderator: Bill Duncan

Session Clerk: John Reid

Treasurer: Catriona McKellar

Church Officer: Ruaridh McKellar

Church Office:

Organist/Music Convener: Dorothy Howden

Hall's Convener: Catriona McKellar

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