

THE PARISHIONER

June 2023



Troon churches working together at Christian Aid Soup Lunch—photo by Avril

***Join them together into one stick so that
they will become one in your hand
Ezekiel 37:17***

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

Dear friends,



On Sunday the 14th May when we met in Troon Old Church we had a chance to think about what we are doing when we talk about our future. I spoke about the challenges that face our congregations in Troon at the moment, and felt that it would be beneficial for people to see the information which was shared that day in print.

A word cloud is a collection, or cluster, of words depicted in different sizes. The bigger and bolder the word appears, the more often it's mentioned within a given text and the more important it is.

A few Sundays ago, on what will be known as 'post-it-note Sunday' to many of you, you were challenged to come up with the answers to some tricky questions. Even if you've blocked it out, let me remind you – we spoke about what the church means to us, what our vision is for the future, and how we – the collective 'we' of our gathered congregations - can achieve this. This conversation is happening all over the Church of Scotland, in congregations big and small. The questions of what we do to support our future congregations are real and present. They aren't going away any time soon, and if we are honest, we face some really tough times in the next few years as we adapt to what the Church of Scotland will be. And this isn't just for future generations, this is for us now. In the next few years.

Saturday 20th May saw the Church of Scotland's annual meeting to discuss our future. The deliverances for the General Assembly made for very scary reading this year. We know that all is not good with our national church: here in Troon, we are facing unprecedented change and it is very hard indeed, but these changes reflect changes that have been happening over all of Scotland for decades and we feel quite powerless to effect change, particularly when we are a bit crippled by the existing structures of church and how they restrict what we are able to

The question remains, however, how are we to achieve this? Is it possible that we have the strategies, but are just a bit too slow with putting these things into practice? Are we maybe feeling a bit constrained by the unknown as we wait in this hinterland of planning and coming together and are we reluctant to start anything until we have some more certainty? Are we perhaps still being a little introspective as we worry about our future? Could it be that we need some help to give us a push-start? Because if nothing else, we need to start to put our plans into action as soon as possible – if we don't, when will it ever be the right time? Can we find support and perhaps inspiration in our ancient texts, our Bible passages to encourage us to find our starting point?

Psalm 66: 8-20

Bless our God, O peoples,
let the sound of his praise be heard,
who has kept us among the living,
and has not let our feet slip.
For you, O God, have tested us;
you have tried us as silver is tried.
You brought us into the net;
you laid burdens on our backs;
you let people ride over our heads;
we went through fire and through water;
yet you have brought us out to a spacious place.

I will come into your house with burnt-offerings;
I will pay you my vows,
those that my lips uttered
and my mouth promised when I was in trouble.
I will offer to you burnt-offerings of fatlings,
with the smoke of the sacrifice of rams;
I will make an offering of bulls and goats.

Come and hear, all you who fear God,
and I will tell what he has done for me.
I cried aloud to him,
and he was extolled with my tongue.
If I had cherished iniquity in my heart,
the Lord would not have listened.
But truly God has listened;
he has given heed to the words of my prayer.

Blessed be God,
because he has not rejected my prayer
or removed his steadfast love from me.

Throughout the ages, Psalms has been the most urgently, personally present of all the books of the Bible in the lives of many readers. Both Jewish and Christian tradition made it part of the daily and weekly liturgy. Untold numbers have repeatedly turned to the Psalms for encouragement and comfort in those moments of crisis or despair.

Some were obviously used as liturgical texts in worship, some celebrate a national victory, others pray for God to intercede in a disaster. Many of them, however, have a personal, individual focus rather than a collective focus – prayers of thanksgiving after an individual has escaped a deadly illness or some other danger, and there are Psalms of supplication imploring God to intervene on behalf of someone threatened by enemies or ailments. There are yet more Psalms which are general reflections upon the nature of human existence or on the role of morality in human affairs.

Psalm 66 is a hymn of praise giving thanks. I wonder how often we feel able to write our own songs of praise—in fact how often we are good at sharing our joy in God with others? This Psalm, this hymn, is a good reminder that as people of God we come from the tradition that we should and could tell everyone of our relationship with the Divine, but we are often reluctant to do so. Perhaps our Presbyterian roots and more than a hint of a shadow of John Knox prevents us from sharing our joy, but aren't we doing our Christian ancestors a disservice by not getting out there and telling the world about God, Jesus and how our lives have been enhanced by our faith?

Maybe *this* is our starting point? We can put in place different things that change our worship patterns, our ways of coming together as church communities. We can gather in different locations and create new groups and ensure our pastoral care is spot on. But if those outwith the church community don't see the joy we can gain from time spent in the company of each other, then why on earth would they join us? Why would they come along to the new patterns of worship, or to the new group or to volunteer to be part of a visiting group if they don't see us tell of our joy in God?

For me, it is in the sharing in the joy of the God of life that I often find meaning. It is in the quiet conversation when someone tells me of how they delight in the God of Love that I feel inspired to go and share my own joy in God. It is in the noise and enthusiasm of our youth work that I see the God of inclusion. It is in the questions about a book that has challenged us that I encounter the God of the Sacred. It is in the shared chatter over coffee that I see the God who cares.



Because in the passing on of that joy, that inclusion, that sacred, love and that caring, we tell people about God. We extend our own horizons, and we expand theirs. Often, our presbyterian background means that we are reluctant to not only share, but to speak confidently. Perhaps now, as we face our biggest challenges as church communities, the time is come to share our joy, to write our own Psalm of thanksgiving and joy. Perhaps it is time to truly do as we sang earlier – to lift up our hearts and voice and sing alleluia, alleluia, alleluia. **Amen**

FORMING A CHURCH UNION – UPDATE

The congregations of Troon Old, Troon Portland and Troon St Meddan's voted on Sunday the 21st of May to decide on a new name for our new united church.

Troon Church of Scotland was, by far, the most popular name and will now be adopted as the name for the new church.

The next step is to send this information (the Basis of Union) to the South West Presbytery for approval. It will also be sent to the Law Department of the Church of Scotland and the Principal Clerk for approval.

They will either approve this or suggest changes.

The Kirk Sessions and the congregations must then approve the Basis of Union by voting before we can proceed to form a union.

We are moving slowly forward in faith.

John Reid
Session Clerk
Portland Church
for all ages





CHRISTIAN AID

It was so good to have many of us gather for the Lunch at St Meddans on the 14th May where over £600 was raised.

Thanks to everyone who came, baked , made soup and/or served.

More information on the final total after the coffee morning on the 27th, and envelopes and individual donations.

It is ever more important to support our brothers and sisters struggling with war, famine, drought . If our money can just get them back on their feet, we have done something worthwhile.

Barbie Short



HOUSEGROUP

Yes, we met again..... and believe it or not, our subject was GENDER EQUALITY.

How does that affect our faith? You may very well wonder. It most certainly does. We discussed gender with regard to The Bible, with regard to Jesus and his preaching, and with regard to the Church.

We read from Genesis, Leviticus, Mark and John. We discussed translation difficulties e.g. woman as 'helper' in Hebrew can mean she is strong in areas in which man is not. Translations generally can provide confusion rather than elucidation. It can be : Mankind's interpretation of divine inspiration.

And , of course, much of the Bible was written by men with a purpose in mind.

Where does that leave us?

Only too happy to move on believing in gender equality, including of course transgender people, and being ever grateful for the diversity and talent of the many men and women who lead us in the ministry, understanding and having studied the varied translations.

Next meeting: **Wednesday , June 14th 7.30pm**

New members are warmly welcomed, and can take their time in whether to join in or sit quietly.

Contact Barbie Short on
office@troonportlandchurch.org.uk



MORNING PRAYER

Good morning, dear Lord! I thank you for a new day full of good work to do. Yesterday has come and gone, along with any regrets, mistakes, or failures I may have experienced. Today is a good day to be thankful, and I thank you for our daily bread, Lord. Thank you for helping me today, for a new opportunity to love, to give, and to become the person you want me to be. I praise you today Lord for you are our Father. In Christ's name,



Amen.

MICAH PROJECT

A small group of us from Portland are working in St. Meddan's on Tuesday afternoons under the aegis of this Project. Our remit is the sorting of clothes for children aged 12-18 months and 18-24 months which are then made up into bags to be given at the request of supporting services to families in need in the Ayrshire area. As with the Foodbank there is a growing, continuing need for this support, and so donations of cared for clothes for all ages are very welcome and can be handed in to St. Meddan's.

Margaret Short

**OUR NEXT ISSUE OF THE
PARISHIONER WILL BE FOR
JULY/AUGUST
PLEASE SEND ANY
CONTRIBUTIONS TO YOUR
MAGAZINE TO —parishioner45@gmail.com**

By TUESDAY 20TH JUNE

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