

to glorify God ... to proclaim Christ ... and to serve others

NOVEMBER 2020

No. 823

Remembrance Sunday 8 November 2020



Lest we forget

Remembrance Day Wednesday 11 November 2020



For details of
Remembrance at Blackhall St Columba's
see page 4, 'From the Minister'

Paint a Pebble Poppy and lay it at the war memorial in
the church grounds.



See the transformation

**For a Guide to our
New Look Sanctuary
see pages 5 to 10**

Minister

Rev Fergus Cook
5 Blinkbony Crescent
Edinburgh EH4 3NB
Tel. 466 7503

Session Clerk

Mr Eddie Thorn
Tel. 332 5702

Church Secretary

Mrs Joy McGonigal-Paget
In Church Office from
Mon-Fri, 9.00-12.30pm
Tel. 332 4431
secretary@blackhallstcolumba.org.uk



OPERATION CHRISTMAS CHILD SHOEBOX APPEAL

New arrangements !!

Please now pick up the empty flat pack boxes from Dorothea, the Church Officer, am/pm.

Pack will consist of box, stickers and helpful list of filler ideas.

With no services on a Sunday filled boxes must be returned to Dorothea for collection in Large Hall lobby **by Friday 6 November.**

THANK YOU

Midweek Services

I am sorry to report that it looks increasingly unlikely that we will be able to restart these services in the New Year. With the recent regulations restricting gatherings plus the Church of Scotland's own regulations I think it will be a while before we can resume any kind of normality.

I hope everyone is staying safe. Keep an eye on the Church website for updates.

Elsbeth Williamson

elsbethwilliamson@gmail.com

Or phone 336 2600 or 07946 531619.



From the Minister



Greetings friends,

I hope this letter from the manse finds you well and coping with the present restrictions we find ourselves under as a result of the ongoing Coronavirus Pandemic.

It seems so long ago now since this whole situation started. Can you remember back to before we were affected by the numerous restrictions? Can you remember when the natural greeting we gave was to shake one another's hand and look one another in the face without a mask on? Can you remember when we could visit one another in our houses or at a cafe or restaurant without counting how many people would be there and how many households they would represent?

At the moment we are focused on what we are going through. Although the things I've mentioned might be what we think of at the moment, it will not always be like this. A time will come when what we try to remember is what we had to do to beat the virus. Our children will tell their children and grandchildren about the sacrifices we all had to make to achieve the life we have in the future.

Ever has it been so and ever shall it be.

Our Bibles are filled with this type of remembrance. Threaded throughout the Old Testament is the remembered history of the Jewish people and how God acted in their collective lives to influence where they are now. The Passover is celebrated to this day by practising Jews as a remembrance of when the Lord spared them and facilitated their escape from bondage in Egypt. As Christians, we too have our remembrances. The Lord's Supper commemorates and causes us to remember the sacrifice that Jesus made for us all. Both Passover and the Lord's Supper are important events in the lives of their respective worshipping communities. However, both have evolved over the years and now are marked quite differently from when they were first instituted.

This is November. November is traditionally a month when we take time as a community to remember. In particular, we mark both Remembrance Day and Remembrance Sunday.

The tradition of Remembrance Day evolved out of Armistice Day. The initial Armistice Day was observed at Buckingham Palace commencing with King George V hosting a "Banquet in Honour of the President of the French Republic" during the evening hours of 10 November 1919. The first /

From the Minister continued

The first official Armistice Day was subsequently held in the grounds of Buckingham Palace the following morning, 11 November 1919. During the Second World War, many countries changed the name of the holiday. Member states of the Commonwealth of Nations adopted Remembrance Day while the US chose the name Veterans Day. How we mark this day and indeed what we remember has evolved over the decades. One such evolution came about in 1939. In Britain, the observation of the two-minute silence was moved to the Sunday nearest to 11 November in order not to interfere with wartime production should 11 November fall on a weekday. This became Remembrance Sunday which had not been observed as such until then. In a further evolution, nowadays we try to remember *all* those who lost their lives in wars including civilians.

This year we shall have to evolve again. It is important that we continue to mark and remember important community events and we shall not postpone or cancel our Remembrance. However, we shall need to think carefully about how we mark the occasion and how we share that with our children and grandchildren. This year I am going to invite anyone who wishes to do so to make a 'Pebble Poppy'. Whilst I shall be encouraging our local schools, nurseries and playgroups to have the children do this, it is for anyone and everyone in the community to decide if they wish to participate. People can leave their painted 'Pebble Poppy' at any time up to 11 November by the War Memorial. (More information on 'Pebble Poppies' is contained in the online all-age worship of 25 October.) In addition to our now normal Sunday Worship, I shall be recording a special Remembrance service. This short act of Remembrance will be available via the usual methods and will be available for people to use on Wednesday 11 November. Anyone wishing to can watch this service then.

In whatever way we mark Remembrance and regardless of what evolution takes place, Remembrance Day teaches us that by sticking together as a community we can come through all sorts of difficulties. It teaches us that there are people who are prepared to make sacrifices for the greater good of all of us.

*They shall grow not old, as we that are left grow old:
Age shall not weary them, nor the years condemn.
At the going down of the sun and in the morning
We will remember them*

Robert Laurence Binyon

God bless
Fergus



Pebble
poppies

A Guide to our New Look Sanctuary

by Fay Stirling, Project Manager

It is fantastic that, despite all of the curveballs thrown our way this year, we have now completed the upgrade of the Sanctuary and it is looking great!

I thought I'd give you a commentary for the panoramic tour you can take of the finished interior on the church website.

This was intended for our Open Day but, as we do not know when that can be rescheduled, it should give you a good idea of what has changed.

To see the time-lapse video use the link:

<https://www.blackhallstcolumba.org.uk/refurbishment/timelapse-video-of-works/>

To see a slideshow of photos taken by Donald Stirling use the link:

<https://www.donaldstirling.me.uk/Blackhall-St-Columbas/Building-for-the-Future/>

What you'll see

Even before you come into the church, you'll see we have **replaced the exterior doors and added an image of the St Columba cross to the glass.**

The new doors allow much more light into the building, and also serve to let people passing by see inside.





Inside, there are **new doors from the vestibule into the Church**, embellished with a Celtic design linked to Iona Abbey where St Columba arrived in Scotland.



On the right as you enter is a new **Resource Area**. Designed to be a flexible space for people to meet and chat as they come to Church, this can also be used for small meetings and presentations. The storage units incorporate a screen and other presentation equipment. Also in this space is the **Audio Visual control desk** where the sound and projection systems will be managed by a team of trained volunteers. Throughout the building you'll see new **audio speakers and relay screens** which will ensure that wherever you sit, you'll be able to hear and see what is happening.



Looking to the left you see the main area of transformation.



Suspended from the apex of the roof are **five large light fittings**. These are a stunning addition and provide much improved lighting to the Church. Smaller fittings in the same design illuminate the North Aisle and the Choir Gallery. Other areas have **downlighters** appropriate to the space and lighting requirement. All of these fittings, together with every switch, socket and other installed piece of “hardware” are black to link in with the ironmongery on the original doors – a theme we worked hard to maintain throughout.



The old worn floorboards have been replaced with a **light oak wooden floor** and the pews have been replaced with **chairs**. You'll see two different types of chair. The wooden chairs in the main area of the Nave are covered with a woven wool fabric. If you look closely, you'll see that the fabric depicts sheep's heads. This picks up the Biblical themes of shepherding and of Christ as the Lamb of God. The colour has been chosen to link in with the St Columba Cross in the Apse. The chairs, which can be linked, have racks for hymnbooks and bibles and holders for communion cups.

The metal framed chairs are chosen to be lightweight and easy to stack when not required and are covered in a toning plain fabric.



To store the chairs, we have installed **two large storage units** at the rear of the North and South Aisles. The oak that we've used has been chosen to link in with the flooring and the original wood retained within the Church. The "finned" design on the fronts of these units links with the panelling on the side of the organ chamber above the entrance.



In the South Aisle is a **long storage unit** where tables and other effects will be stored. The **tables** will enable this area to be used more informally if required. Within this unit is housed a facility to enable refreshments to be served in the Church. There is a **small kitchen** incorporating an instant boiling water tap, a fridge and storage for cups etc.

Also in the South Aisle, but hidden from immediate view, are the "**pigeon holes**" where elders and others can collect mail, magazines and other papers for distribution. These are sited on the window end of the tall storage unit.

Moving to the front of the Church, the area known as the Apse or Chancel has been extended with a **semi-circular apron** shaped to mirror the rear of the Apse. This will enable those involved in the service to be closer to the congregation. It will also provide flexibility of this space for different performance purposes.



Looking above this, you'll see a large glass sheet suspended in the archway. This is an **intelligent glass screen** which switches from transparent to opaque when in use, then back to transparent. By using this technology, the screen does not impede the view of the stained glass windows and the St Columba cross on the rear of the apse. You'll also notice that, in both the main Apse and in the North Aisle, the **semi-dome has been painted gold**. Some years ago, the dome was gold, and by returning it to this we pick up the colour theme in the St Columba Cross. Feature lighting picks up the colour wonderfully. This area, together with the Choir Gallery and the Main Gallery, has also been **carpeted**.

What you'll not see

Much of the refurbishment work, in fact more than half of the expenditure, is not visible in the Church. But we hope you feel the benefit.

All heating has been replaced. This includes **underfloor heating** in the Church which can be supplemented by **warm air heating** from discreet fan coil units. These are housed under the black grills at the foot of the stone columns, and within the new wooden storage units. The heating is supplied by new boilers and controls in the boiler house by the halls.

All **electrical wiring has been replaced**. New distribution boards, wiring for both lighting and power, and all sockets and controls have been renewed.

All sound and vision equipment and controls have also been replaced and **cameras** installed enabling us to live stream services or other events. There are many miles of cabling suspended in wire baskets from the joists under the floor.

A new **fire detection system** has also been installed.

Other areas

In addition to the main Church, the **church office, choir room and vestry have all been upgraded**. New carpeting, decoration and lighting have been completed, and the office has a more soundproof space for printers and other machinery.

A **new entry system** has been installed on the **new doors** at Columba Road, and we are even going to have a new post box!

There are many, many people to thank for their efforts to bring this extensive and complex project to completion. In particular, our design team led by Alan Thomson of Lee Boyd architects; the build team led by John Dennis Scotland Ltd; the AV installers, D3; the Steering Group and Kirk Session and the army of volunteers who helped throughout the project.

Fay Stirling, Project Manager

Kirk Session Report

The Kirk Session met on Tuesday 6 October 2020. This was once again a virtual meetings conducted via the Zoom conferencing facility as permitted by the Commission of the General Assembly.

Building for the Future

Fay Stirling, Project Manager, reported that the Sanctuary had been returned to the control of the Church on Friday 11 September, with the Practical Completion certificate issued by the architect, caveated with the few outstanding items to be completed. It was recorded that an excellent working relationship had been enjoyed with both John Dennis & Company (Scotland) Limited and d3 audio-visual (AV) and the various sub-contractors with the quality of their work excellent and the level of finish in the Sanctuary in keeping with the building.

It was noted that we were working with the Quantity Surveyor as he finalises the project costs. However costs are currently within budget, and the team were comfortable that these would remain so.

Fay paid thanks to Jim Bishop for his tireless work in monitoring the cost reports against the project tender and for his dedicated challenging of costs to ensure we were getting appropriate value. She added that it was difficult to single out specific individuals, but particular thanks were due to Ian Templeton for managing a team of volunteers to move effects around the building, Frank Morrice for co-ordinating the move of the church office into its refurbished space and to Pat Macleod and Lynne Bunney for providing newly covered cushions for the Apse seating and Communion chairs. Jonny Coy had also done a great job, ensuring our broadband connections were restored and linked into the AV technology.

The Moderator thanked Fay for not just her sterling work in preparing such detailed reports each month but especially as Project Manager. Fay advised she had named several people in her Report, however, there were many others not named who all assisted in some way to ensure we reached this stage. The Moderator thanked all those involved.

Correspondence

A note was received from Fresh Start - "Thanks again for the fantastic harvest collection dropped off today. What a great array of goods! Thanks again". The Clerk thanked Fiona Cooke, Anne Hamilton and Graizella and Mike Smith for delivering to Fresh Start and Fergus and Shona Cook for delivering to the North Edinburgh Foodbank /continued

Kirk Session Report continued

Elder Retiral

It was noted that Mike Galloway had retired as an active Elder and Trustee. It was further noted that a list of 'Elder Emeritus' is being established and Mike's name will be placed on it. The Clerk was asked to write to Mike thanking him for his many years of sterling service as an Elder of the Congregation.

Link Elder Visits

It was agreed that an Elder be appointed to serve for a period of three years as the link person between the Kirk Session and each organisation (Church and non Church) that uses the Church halls.

October Communion

The Moderator had hoped that October Communion could have taken place in the Sanctuary and streamed as a live event. However, with the new restrictions in place, and the limit of only 50 people allowed in the Sanctuary due to social distancing, this would not be possible. The correct protocols need to be worked on once the AV system is fully working. The Moderator advised he was currently thinking about what could be done and would keep Session advised.

Presbytery Plan

Jim Logan provided a comprehensive report of the Zoominar held on 16 September which was in response to the earlier video presentation provided by Rev. Sarah Ross representing The Church of Scotland, 121 George Street, in which she gave an overview of the radical action needed to respond to the declining membership and finances of the Church.

In summary it is unsustainable to have the current number of parish churches both in Edinburgh and across all of Scotland. The concept of moving forward by means of a cluster of congregations is considered central to achieving the outcomes desired of the Radical Action Plan.

Session considered the following two questions:-

1. How do you see the cluster concept operating in practice and in terms of a shared mission?
2. Is the proposed cluster, namely Palmerston Place, Murrayfield and ourselves a right one and if not, who should we partner with? (The proposed clusters are not set in tablets of stone).

Each group had time to discuss these questions with the outcomes being sent to the Session Clerk for collation into a document which would be discussed at a special Kirk Session Meeting subsequently set for Tuesday 20 October.

Remembrance Sunday/ continued

Kirk Session Report continued

Remembrance Sunday

The Moderator advised that it was important to recognise both Remembrance Sunday (8 November) and Wednesday 11 November. Following discussion it was agreed to record a Service at the War Memorial and issue it (as we do for the Sunday Services at present) prior to the Wednesday to allow people to view it at that time.

Re-opening the Sanctuary

Reference was made to the earlier discussion relative to the October Communion Service. Once it is feasible to open up again then issues like transport needs require to be considered. The Treasurer reminded Elders that there is a "Taxi Fund" that could be used to cover costs for those unable to make their own way or be picked up by those on the Transport Rota. In addition, it was confirmed that the previous versions of the Services in written form would continue with the possibility of live streaming also being considered.

Roll

It was agreed to admit, by Resolution, Mrs Valerie Blair-de Villiers, Maidencraig Crescent.

Eddie Thorn, Session Clerk

Prayer Chain

The Prayer Chain is a group of Church members who keep people and their concerns in our prayers. We do this by praying daily for each person on our Prayer Chain list.

Names often come through a family member, friend or Church Elder but may come from the person themselves.

Those on our list do not have to be Church members.

The list is confidential and requires the permission of the individual.

Reasons for being included are varied, for example things such as health, stress or relationships.

No details need be given.

Whatever may be worrying you or someone you know be encouraged to pass it to the Prayer Chain by contacting:-

Lesley MacKenzie phone 07935327787

or email lesleymack@hotmail.co.uk



Family News

We welcome to our fellowship by Resolution of the Kirk Session:

Mrs Valerie Blair de Villiers

Deaths

October

19 Mrs Violet Troup



To Margaret Brown
Congratulations and best wishes
on your 80th Birthday

To Heather Cook
Congratulations and best wishes
for your 21st Birthday

To Amy Foster
Congratulations and best wishes
for your 21st Birthday

Gardening Team

A Host of Golden Daffodils

The gardening team have planted 100 daffodils in this plot at the side gate which were a donation from Morag Mitchell and we thank her very much. We look forward to a beautiful splash of colour in the Spring.

My thanks to the team.

Frances Douglas

*'And then my heart with
pleasure fills and dances with
the daffodils.'*

William Wordsworth



Violet Troup

24 July 1940 to 19 October 2020



Violet, an only child, was born in North Berwick on 24 July 1940. Having begun her primary education there, she moved to James Gillespie's when her father, a surveyor, began work in the city and the family took up residence in Davidson's Mains. On completing her schooling she entered Moray House to train as a teacher and, on graduating, taught in Davidson's Main's Primary School until Campbell was born in 1973. Thereafter, until the year 2000, she returned to schools as a supply teacher.

Having met at Blackhall St Columba's youth fellowship Violet and Angus married in 1965 and shared 55 happy years together. Violet was a devoted mother to Campbell, a loving mother-in-law to Jennifer and very loving grandmother to Erin.

Violet was a great homemaker. She loved entertaining, and could turn her hand to anything. She was a superb baker, and made countless delicious and beautifully decorated cakes for family and friends and many a special event at Blackhall St Columba's.

Outwith the home Violet was heavily involved in the Scout movement. She began as a cub mistress and moved through the ranks to become commissioner for the Edinburgh area. For her services to Scouting she was awarded the highest order in the Scout movement - 'the Silver Acorn' - and was invited to the St George's Day Parade at Windsor Castle.

Blackhall St Columba's Church played a major role in Violet's life. She had a strong and robust faith and was ordained to the eldership in 1994. Becoming flower convener in 1991 was a huge commitment, even with the support of an enthusiastic team. Flowers for Sunday services; drawing up rotas for donors and for flower delivery after services; decoration of the whole church for Easter, Harvest and Christmas; organising two flower festivals; flowers for weddings; bouquets for presentations, the list goes on. Outwith the church she chaired the Edinburgh Floral Art Club for two separate terms.

Making good use of her talents she was instrumental in raising considerable sums for charitable causes, through coffee mornings - on one occasion organising a pyramid coffee morning which was ultimately supported by a huge number of people - Christmas Fairs, afternoon teas. She was a stalwart member of Watch, the church's charitable fundraising committee.

/ continued

Violet Troup continued

'Venture Week' the church's annual holiday club for children saw Violet at the helm of the craft group. One year around 120 youngsters turned up, some of whom, to Violet's concern, hadn't been registered in advance. So would she have enough material to keep them all occupied? Of course she managed.

Caring for the old as well as the young she was one of a group who gave regular support to the Abbeyfield Care Home across from the church.

One Easter she had arranged to have a donkey in church on Palm Sunday morning. The plan to get it to walk down the aisle at the beginning of the service was thwarted when it took a couple of steps inside the sanctuary and then refused to budge.

Violet was always busy. Nothing was too much bother. She loved life and was never happier than being with her family or her friends. She loved social gatherings. She loved her many holidays with Angus up north. She loved her three dogs Brora, Tara and Clio and taking care of dogs for friends.

Sadly however in the past year she began to suffer from Alzheimers, and the cancer she had fought in 2015 returned. The effects of lockdown made her feel a bit low and depressed. Celebration of her 80th birthday was more muted than it would otherwise have been.

With her health deteriorating she was admitted to the Western General Hospital and it was there that after a few weeks she passed to rest. Already she is greatly missed. Our sympathies go out to Angus, to Campbell and Jennifer and to Erin who will greatly miss her Grandma.

Angus very much appreciates all the prayerful support he has received during this time. It is hoped that at the end of this pandemic there may be a celebration of her life in Blackhall St Columba's Church, the Church that Violet loved and served so well.



Can I begin by once again thanking everyone for the wonderful response to the Harvest thanksgiving appeal. As fewer churches were able to collect goods this year our donation was able to help Fresh Start continue to support people during this particularly difficult time.



We are waiting to see when we will be in a position to receive items at the church halls on a regular basis. In the meantime, please avoid the middleman, and **take your items directly** to the FreshStart warehouse (**22-24 Ferry Road Drive**) as requested in their update below.

Thank you for your continued support.

Fiona Cooke



FreshStart
helping people make a home for themselves



UPDATE

We are delighted to announce that we will be taking donations again from Tuesday 27 October.

Due to quarantine procedures put in place, we will **ONLY** be taking donations on Tuesdays and Thursdays as we do not have the space in our warehouse to store more than what we can take on these days.

Please **RING BEFORE YOU BRING** on 0131 476 7741 to make an appointment between 9.00 - 3.30pm on one of these days - this will assist us in our track and trace procedure, should it be required.

We will be taking **ALL** starter pack items with the exception of duvets, pillows, cushions and bric-a-brac as we do not have space to quarantine these.

[Check our website for a reminder of what we can take.](#)

<https://www.freshstartweb.org.uk/starter-packs>

[or go to our Facebook page](#) [@fresh.start.edinburgh](#)

Please remember to adhere to social distancing rules and wear a face covering when dropping off goods.

Looking forward to hearing and seeing you all!

Let Charity begin 'At Home'

As many of you will already know, the manse family has been involved with the charity, Scottish Love in Action, for quite a few years now. We have been involved in two trips to date to India to see the work that is being done and to help on the ground. We are committed to continue to help in any way we can. (Fergus and our youngest daughter, Lori, were due to return to India last July but, for obvious reasons, that trip has been rescheduled for next Summer). The work this charity does is amazing and we saw for ourselves how that work is transforming lives and bringing hope and opportunity to children who would otherwise be condemned to a life of abject poverty on the street. Words cannot adequately convey the conditions there in normal times far less the situation that exists during the current pandemic. 156 million children in India live in poverty of the most extreme nature. This kind of poverty persists in India because economic growth and measures to reduce poverty have bypassed many people.

Scottish Love in Action is based here in Edinburgh and began when its founder, Gillie Davidson, in 1999, took a youth group from Greenbank Church to the town of Tuni in Andhra Pradesh in India to help an Indian NGO, Nazareth Association for Social Awareness (NASA) build the Light of Love Children's Home and School for originally 120 children.



The experience of helping to create this home and school led Gillie and several of the youth group members to form Scottish Love in Action in 2000 and to create a partnership with NASA. Since then, SLA has formed partnerships with other grassroots Indian NGOs, Asritha Rainbow Home and Voice4Girls. SLA works closely with its Indian partners to tackle all forms of child poverty including physical, emotional, educational and economic poverty to enable children to lead independent, fulfilling lives and to grow into healthy, thriving adults. Many of the children have been "street-children", living in very volatile circumstances and at huge risk of abuse and exploitation. Often the children work as beggars or rag-pickers and receive little or no education. They may be orphaned; they have often been through very traumatic experiences. SLA's partners help rescue these children. They support and nurture them, helping these children to begin to see a life where they can have a choice in the future they for themselves.

As you can imagine, this vital work requires a lot of funding. There is on-going fundraising for SLA obviously but a significant proportion of what is raised each year comes from a hugely successful annual fireworks display at George Watson's in early November. It goes without saying that there can be no fireworks this year. SLA volunteers have been working on coming up with an alternative fundraiser to help meet the expected shortfall and YOU CAN HELP.

Let Charity begin 'At Home' continued

SLA are celebrating the Hindu Festival of Light, Diwali, with a "Diwali Dinner" fundraiser. Here is what it is all about-



We're asking people to organise a Diwali Dinner in their home any night in November (or on the night of Diwali, Saturday the 14th November 2020). The great news is any money raised will be matched pound for pound by our wonderful sponsor **Truscott Property!**

Enjoy with your immediate household, and if restrictions allow, invite friends and wider family, perhaps over Zoom? Or you could treat yourself to a special Dinner-for-One. Each dinner guest is asked to donate an amount to SLA for the meal. You can cook, have a pot-luck dinner, get a takeaway, or buy in a ready-meal – the choice is yours!

Getting started

1. Register now for £10.

2. You'll receive your **Diwali Dinner registration pack**, which includes:

- A fabulous, great-value **'Spice Pots Curry Night Kit'**, with **4 natural curry powder pots** and **8 delicious recipes (RRP £14.95)**.

- **Sparklers and tea lights** to create your own 'Diwali Dinner'.

3. Send in your donation to SLA and you'll be entered into a prize draw to win 4 VIP tickets to the SLA Fireworks Extravaganza 2021!



By registering for £10 and having four "guests" each contributing £10, one family could raise £50 which would be matched pound for pound by Truscott Property, meaning that £100 would be raised.

Multiply that amount by 100, say, and £10,000 will have been raised just like "that". Spread the word and there is no limit to what we can achieve.

LET'S DO THIS!

If you are interested in helping the charity in this way, please contact me at the manse or by email (shonacook505@gmail.com) and I shall be delighted to forward to you all the information that you will need.

Thank you !

Shona Cook

WaTch Committee

There will always be Christmas but

unfortunately, there will be no WaTch Committee Christmas Fair this year. We have had to give up any hope of having over three hundred happy people in the church premises on 28 November due to the continuing pandemic.

However, we will be planning our usual program of events to raise funds to support a local charity next year in the fervent hope that life can get back to some form of normality. We had not chosen a charity for this year as we did not wish to cause uncertainty or disappointment.

In the meantime, please continue to support Fresh Start and the Samaritan's Purse Shoebox appeal. Also, if you are still using cash, please continue to save any loose change for the Summer Coin Collection 2021.

Last year WaTch Committee events raised over £8,000 which was shared between Kindred and Beach Wheelchairs Portobello.

Kindred continue to provide support for families of children with complex needs.

Beach Wheelchairs are using our donation to purchase a new chair and accessories for children. On a recent visit to Portobello I saw some of the wheelchairs including a well-used version of the children's chair.

George Millar
Convener WaTch Committee



GENERAL ASSEMBLY SUPPLEMENT

OCTOBER 2020

www.lifeandwork.org

facebook.com/lifeandwork

Twitter: [@cofslifeandwork](https://twitter.com/cofslifeandwork)

FREE

LIFE AND WORK

THE MAGAZINE OF THE CHURCH OF SCOTLAND



A VIRTUAL ASSEMBLY

- **Congregational contributions and central budgets cut as Church faces £30m loss of income in 2020**
- **Commitment to net zero carbon emissions by 2030**
- **Black Lives Matter affirmed**
- **Moderator calls on Church to be 'outwardly-focussed' / continued**



A VIRTUAL ASSEMBLY continued

HISTORY was made on October 2 when the Church of Scotland convened its first General Assembly held mostly online.

With only the Moderator, speakers, officials and technical crew in the Assembly Hall in Edinburgh, around 730 Commissioners took part, speaking and voting through video conferencing technology. Thousands more watched the livestream on Facebook and on the Church website.

They heard the Moderator, the Rt Rev Dr Martin Fair, open the Assembly with a warning that if the Church were to become overwhelmingly concerned with its own survival, it would fail. Instead, he called for the Church to be outwardly-focussed as it faces the challenges of both Covid-19 and its own historic decline.

He said: “To be outwardly-focussed means, in our language, to be focussed on mission rather than maintenance.

It’s understanding that the same Jesus who calls us to Him sends us out for Him. The Jesus who says, ‘Follow me’ goes on to say ‘Now go and make disciples... be fishers of people as I have shown you.’ He said that being outwardly-focussed meant both ‘doing’ and ‘saying’. The ‘doing’ included ‘sitting silently with the bereaved and the broken’, ‘taking climate justice seriously’ and ‘refusing to brush aside racial injustice’.

“So mission, being outwardly-focussed, is engaging, acting, working, doing. But it is also saying. Sharing, proclaiming, speaking a word in season, always being ready to give an explanation for the hope that is within us.”

During the truncated Assembly, which took place over an evening and a day, there were discussions focusing on the challenges facing the Church, and on the Church’s response to the climate emergency and protests about racial injustice.

GENERAL ASSEMBLY 2020: KEY DEBATES AND DECISIONS

FINANCE

The Assembly approved a reduction of 18% to the amount of money congregations will be asked to contribute to the central church in 2021.

It is hoped the cut in ministry and mission contributions will help struggling churches which have fallen behind in their payments this year due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

The Assembly Trustees report warned that the Church’s total annual income could fall by £30m this year due to Covid-19, although convener the Rt Rev Dr John Chalmers admitted that it was too soon to judge the impact of the pandemic on church life at all levels.

The Assembly also approved cuts of £4m to the budgets of the two central forums – Faith Nurture and Faith Impact – but was warned that £8m would be needed from reserves next year.

The Trustees won the support of the Assembly to explore the implications of unifying the two forums – formed in January - into a single body. /continued

A VIRTUAL ASSEMBLY continued

BLACK LIVES MATTER

The Assembly affirmed that Black Lives Matter, reaffirmed that racism is a sin and committed to a future report on the legacy of slavery and the Church.

However, the Faith Impact Forum's deliverance was not accepted without some debate on the Black Lives Matter organisation and whether it was compatible with Christian values.

The Rev Dale London said that while he approved of the sentiment of the deliverance and condemned racism, the phrase 'black lives matter' had been co-opted by a political group and become associated with disorder and violence. He proposed replacing 'Black Lives Matter' with 'all lives matter to God'.

Faith Impact Convener, the Very Rev Dr Susan Brown said: "We have to be very careful about the message we convey. All lives matter, but we have not lived as though they do. We have a system in which, because of the colour of their skin, some people are treated unequally. Saying 'black lives matter' is not about excluding every-body else. It's about focusing on deepest need. Jesus had a particular passion for the poorest and the most marginalised and those who were suffering most, and he focussed on them above all others."

The motion passed by 315 votes to 116.

ZERO CARBON

Although there was concern that a report on the climate emergency originally intended to be presented to the Assembly had been withdrawn due to lack of time, a motion was passed calling for the church at all levels to work towards achieving net zero carbon emissions by 2030, and to bring an outline strategy to the General Assembly of 2021; and for Faith Impact to report next year 'on the ethical, scientific and theological arguments for and against urgent disinvestment from oil and gas companies'.

YOUTH

The Moderator of the last National Youth Assembly (NYA), Dana McQuater, said it had been difficult for those involved in the NYA to understand why it had been brought to an end, but added: "We look forward in hope to young people finding new ways to become involved in the decision making of this church."

In response to a question from a youth delegate, the convener of the Legal Questions Committee, the Rev Dr Grant Barclay, committed to keeping youth representation at the General Assembly at at least current levels.

QUEEN'S LETTER

In her letter to the Assembly, the Queen praised the Church's response to the pandemic, both in moving services online and in providing practical support. The letter states: "We greatly admire the ways in which the Church of Scotland has responded to these difficult days. /continued

A VIRTUAL ASSEMBLY *continued*

“Care has been offered to the bereaved whose grieving has been constricted by restrictions on funerals while churches have kept open their doors to feed the poor and offer safe space to the children of key workers.

“Many congregations have taken their worship online and touched the lives of people who did not in normal times attend church services.

“The Kirk’s care workers have remained faithful in sustaining the services upon which so many older people and their families depend.”

SPEECHES

Chief Officer Dave Kendall told the Assembly that, when asked whether he saw a positive future for the church, his answer was ‘a resounding yes’, and that ‘what will matter most in taking us forward will be the vision, quality, enthusiasm and ambition of the staff and the willingness of the Church... to engage with the changes on our journey’.

The Convener of the Faith Nurture Forum, the Rev Rosemary Frew, urged the church to build on the innovations that have been forced upon it by the Covid-19 epidemic.

She said: “As we look to the future, a future with fewer buildings and fewer ministers of word and sacrament, we must continue to explore new ways of being church and build on our lockdown learnings.

The General Trustees presented its report on ‘well-equipped spaces in the right places’, with chairman Raymond Young urging the Church to be willing to ‘prune’ its building estate, while dealing sensitively with the disposal of unneeded buildings, and to work in partnership with other denominations and community groups on new buildings

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What follows is an edited extract of the Church of Scotland's announcement that the Rt Hon Lord Wallace of Tankerness QC (Jim Wallace) has been chosen as Moderator Designate for the year 2021 - 2022. To read more of the man most of us will know better as a politician see the C of S link <https://www.churchofscotland.org.uk/news-and-events> or C of S Facebook.

Former Deputy First Minister, The Rt Hon Lord Wallace of Tankerness QC (Jim Wallace), has been named Moderator Designate for 2021-22



Lord Wallace will become the Kirk's ambassador at home and abroad next May. The 66-year-old life peer from Orkney is the second elder in modern times to take up the 12-month role which will see him speaking out on issues important to the Church and its mission to follow and proclaim the example of Jesus Christ.

He has been a Kirk elder since 1981.

A member of St Magnus Cathedral in Kirkwall, he said: "I am delighted to have been asked to take up the role and feel humbled and honoured that people have put their trust in me. I am both excited and daunted about the challenge of the task and to be honest I have had to pinch myself that this is actually happening."

Lord Wallace grew up in a Christian family - a so-called "cradle Presbyterian". In his youth, he was a member of the Boys Brigade, involved with Scripture Union and confirmed in the faith while a law student at Cambridge University in 1973.

Ordained as an elder in what was St Bernard's Church in Stockbridge, Edinburgh in 1981, he has been a member of the Session of St Magnus Cathedral since 1990. Lord Wallace, a former leader of the Scottish Liberal Democrats, said he hoped to use the position of Moderator to inspire and encourage people. "As an elder, I hope my year will be a source of encouragement to other elders and members of congregations who already play a very full part in the life of their church and communities."

Married with two grown-up daughters, the trained Advocate and past deputy leader of the House of Lords said his faith is one of the things that "drove" him into politics. "I went into politics to make a positive difference to society and my motivation is grounded in my Christian faith," he added. "It is a core belief that if people are to live life in all its fullness, as promised by Jesus, this has implications for the kind of society we want to have." "People have to have good health, a sound education, rewarding employment and a healthy environment."

"I hope that my years of experience in public life as an MP for Orkney and Shetland then as MSP for Orkney will stand me in good stead as I carry out the duties of the Moderator of the General Assembly." /continued

Moderator Designate continued

Lord Wallace said having a Moderator from Orkney demonstrated that the Kirk is a national Church. “Hopefully I can reflect some of the spirit of island life. When I read Archbishop Desmond Tutu describe the meaning of ‘ubuntu’ – ‘I am because we are’ – I recognised it as describing the ebb and flow of our island life.”

Earlier this month, the General Assembly approved a range of measures to ensure that the Church operates more effectively and efficiently. Asked if he thought the Kirk had a positive future, Lord Wallace said he is hopeful that it will continue to reform and grow. “The Kirk lives by the power of God who has a mission for the Church and, if we are to be the instruments of God’s mission, then we must have a future and it is incumbent on us to get it right and live up to the challenge of that mission.”

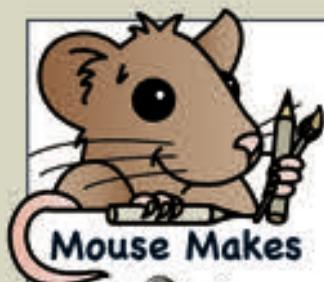
“The COVID-19 pandemic has led to real challenges for the Church and I would like to try and help ensure that we harness all that has been positive out of the experience.” Lord Wallace said it is encouraging to see so many congregations developing an innovative style of online worship which has engaged more people than would ordinarily be walking through the doors on a Sunday morning. “Many people have a spiritual longing and the Church has to be nimble, innovative and imaginative as to how it meets that need,” he added. “But it’s not only through forms of worship that we’ve witnessed positive reactions. During the last six months, people redoubled their efforts to step up to the plate, going out of their way to help one another and vulnerable members of our communities. That spirit of service to one’s neighbour is something I would like to help the Church build on.”

“As an elder, I hope my year will be a source of encouragement to other elders and members of congregations who already play a very full part in the life of their church and communities. “We are living in a time when we will probably be called on even more than ever, given the decreasing number of ministers in charges and the challenges that lie ahead as we slowly emerge from this pandemic. I hope to help encourage elders and congregation members that they have an important role to perform which will be valued.”

Lord Wallace said he is conscious that many lives have been turned upside down by COVID-19 through sickness, bereavement, the loss of a job or uncertainty. “I believe that the Church must play a key role in helping to heal and renew Scotland after this virus emergency subsides.” The Moderator Designate said he hoped to use the role to try and promote the theme of justice - social, economic and climate – as the country rebuilds.

“Climate justice is a very real challenge and we have an opportunity, given the UN Climate Summit is to be held in Scotland next year, for the Church to be a relevant and powerful voice,” he added. “Churches should be at the forefront of campaigning and people will hopefully make the connection that this issue is very relevant to Christians. We are the stewards of God’s creation and it is absolutely fundamental that the Church seeks to safeguard its integrity.”

At present a working peer, Lord Wallace will move to the non-affiliated benches in the House of Lords during his time as Moderator.



REMEMBERING

How do you remember things?

In bible times God's people would remember what God had done for them by building monuments made of stones and by holding festivals and celebrations to give thanks to God.



READ Joshua 4:1-9 and Exodus 12:1-14

Today we too build monuments to remember and hold services of thanksgiving like **Harvest** and **Remembrance Sunday**.



Is there anything you would like to thank God for?



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BLACKHALL
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CHURCH OF SCOTLAND

'Although our buildings are shut, the Church is not a building! The Church is the worshipping community and we are as strong as we were before this crisis began'
..... Fergus Cook, Minister

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Deadline for the January 2021 Kirk News has been given below in the usual way but please check online for updates.

DEADLINES

Kirk News - Sunday 6 December

Please send all items to the Editor:
Christine Denham c/o Church Office
Home tel: 336 5943 or email
kirknews@blackhallstcolumba.org.uk

Blackhall Bulletin - Deadline for December issue was 25 October

All items, including advertising enquiries, should be sent to the Editor, Barbara Wilson
c/o Church Office
Home tel: 312 6035 or email
bulletin@blackhallstcolumba.org.uk