

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

FEBRUARY 2021

No. 825

World Day of Prayer Zoom Service on Friday 5 March at 2 pm

Written this year by the Christian women of Vanuatu The World Day of Prayer service will have to be different. Due to Covid restrictions we have been unable to plan a service, as we usually do, in one of the Churches in our group. However technology has saved the day and organisers invite you to a Zoom service at 2 pm on Friday 5 March.

It is being hosted by Augustine United Church with folks joining in from across the country.

10 Days of Prayer from Tuesday 23 February

'10 Days of Prayer' are planned starting on Tuesday 23 February. These will be posted on the WDP Facebook site each morning.

The national leaders of ten denominations will share a 'Thought for the Day' with the focus on Vanuatu.

**More details of these events
on pages 7 and 8.**

Lesley MacKenzie



Bible Study Friday 12 February

In preparation for WDP there will be a Bible Study on Zoom with
Eco Chaplain,
Revd David Coleman

Minister

Rev Fergus Cook
5 Blinkbonny 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, 9.30 -12noon
Tel. 332 4431
secretary@blackhallstcolumba.org.uk

Blackhall St Columba's Church**Stated Annual Meeting****Sunday 21 March 2021 at 11.15 am on Zoom**

The Stated Annual Meeting of the Congregation will be held on Sunday 21 March at 11.15 am after the morning Service.

The meeting will be conducted through the medium of Zoom. The Zoom link will be sent out nearer the time.

The SAM papers will come out in electronic form in due course. I will arrange for a small supply of paper copies and anyone wishing a copy should contact me.

Eddie Thorn, Session Clerk
sessionclerk@blackhallstcolumba.org.uk

MENTAL HEALTH MATTERS

It is usually good to talk, to name the things that are bothering us and know that we are all listened to and heard.

Whilst we can always talk to God in prayer sometimes we also benefit from speaking directly to another person with whom we can share our own unique situation.

For support please phone
0131 466 7503 to speak to our Minister Rev Fergus Cook.

See 'MENTAL HEALTH MATTERS' leaflet on pages 12 to 15

From the Minister



Greetings friends,

I hope this letter from the manse finds you well. By the time you read this we shall be in a new year, 2021. I am confident that Hogmanay will have been as different a one as any of us has ever known. Nevertheless, I hope you managed to mark and enjoy it in some way. Most of us will be glad to see the back of 2020 with all the troubles and uncertainties that Brexit, the American election and, of course, the pandemic brought. Whilst, at first glance, the start of 2021 may not look that different from what we experienced in 2020, there are, I believe, signs of hope for a more stable year. Although we still have the tier restrictions, the requirement to wear masks and, specifically for us, a limited ability to use our sanctuary, there are signs of light at the end of the tunnel.

I need to counsel myself here not to revert to the pessimistic attitude that sometimes was prevalent in my old job at the Police Firearms Training Department. If anyone suggested there was light at the end of the tunnel, it was usually countered by the comment, "it's probably a muzzle flash!" Leaving aside such pessimistic humour, I think that we have a lot to be grateful for.

In the last Kirk News, I spoke about the art installation created by Nathan Copley entitled "There Will Be No Miracles Here". For this edition, I thought I would revisit my trip to the Scottish National Gallery but comment this time upon another sign in neon which is erected on the other side of the road. This sign is a piece of work by the artist Martin Creed mounted on the actual gallery building. His 'Work No. 975 EVERYTHING IS GOING TO BE ALRIGHT' is one of his most iconic works. According to the National Gallery website *"It characterises his desire to communicate and*



interact with the viewer – to create a reaction and stir an emotion. For Creed, experience is fundamental to understanding his work and he asserts that his art is "50% about what I make and 50% about what other people make of it." This statement has two aspects to it. Whilst, on the one hand, it is reassuring and potentially comforting, /continued

From the Minister continued

on the other, as suggested by the Gallery, *'it plays on our personal insecurities and gently suggests that everything might not be alright'*.

As Christians and people of faith, we can have a confidence that everything will indeed be alright. Whilst our faith does not offer us a pass from troubles, either individual or corporate, it does offer us a reassurance of an eternal benevolent God who understands the human condition (he came down to earth and lived it) and who promises us a time of peace.

Probably one of the greatest sources of comfort when people feel things are not entirely alright is the book of Psalms. It is written by people who experienced the full range of human emotion and feelings and they all speak of the comfort they receive from knowing God and having a relationship with him. Psalm 23 is one of the best known with words such as; *"Even though I walk through the darkest valley, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me."* Less well known but equally as powerful is Psalm 91 which includes the words; *"Whoever dwells in the shelter of the Most High will rest in the shadow of the Almighty. I will say of the LORD, "He is my refuge and my fortress, my God, in whom I trust"* or Psalm 121 which says; *"My help comes from the LORD, the Maker of heaven and earth. He will not let your foot slip— he who watches over you will not slumber; indeed, he who watches over Israel will neither slumber nor sleep."*

Earlier, I mentioned that we have a lot to be grateful for. We have a Brexit deal. Regardless of what any of us, as individuals, may think of the merit of either the deal itself or even the decision to leave the European Union at all, Brexit is now a fact. We now know what we are dealing with and we can and shall make our decisions accordingly. We have a settled Presidency across the pond in America and, again, regardless of what our own political feelings are about this, I feel that all countries and their peoples will benefit from having a more stable personality at the helm of one of the most powerful and influential countries in the world. We have a vaccination programme in place to deal with Covid-19. It may take time for this programme to take full effect and it may even take a while yet for us to return to 'normal' but we are definitely on our way.

All these factors are signs of an improving situation. As Martin Creed put it 'Everything is going to be alright' or as the psalmist puts it, I think better, in Psalm 27; *"The Lord is my light and my salvation – whom shall I fear? The Lord is the stronghold of my life – of whom shall I be afraid...I am still confident of this: I will see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living. Wait for the Lord; be strong and take heart and wait for the Lord."*

God bless all, Fergus

Kirk Session Report

The Kirk Session met on Tuesday 19 January 2021. This was again a virtual meeting conducted via the Zoom conferencing facility as permitted by the Commission of the General Assembly.

Charities to be supported from retiring offerings

It was agreed to support the following charities from the retiring offerings.

February 2021 Communion	Kids Love Clothes
Easter Services	Mary's Meals
June 2021 Communion	Mission Aviation Fellowship
October 2021 Communion	Bethany Trust
Christmas Services	Scottish Bible Society and FreshStart

Congregational Roll

Kirk Session approved the admission to the roll of Mr Ian Palmer, Hillpark Avenue, Edinburgh.

Fabric

Jim Bishop has retired from the role of Fabric Convener after five years faithful and devoted service in that important role. The Moderator thanked Jim for all his work and dedication over that period. Mike Whiteside has kindly stepped in to take over the role of Fabric Convener.

Convener / Role changes

Following the appointment of Mike Whiteside as Fabric Convener it was noted that Ruth Laidlaw had graciously agreed to replace Mike as our Health and Safety Co-ordinator while Betty Watt would continue to take charge of the defibrillator, first aid and the wheelchairs.

Finance

Adrian Johnston, Congregational Treasurer, reported that for the twelve months to 31 December 2020:-

- Congregational giving is up by 7.6% compared to 2019 although this was heavily influenced by the Kirk Session appeal. On the downside, there were no plate offerings from March onwards as a result of the 'Lockdown'.
- In terms of general income, although the use of premises was negligible during the year, a few organisations still made a financial contribution. We had the benefit of grants from the UK Government's job retention scheme and a £10,000 legacy from the Shaw Charitable Trust. /continued

Kirk Session Report continued

- On the expenditure front there was significant exceptional expenditure for the Manse.
- There is a resultant deficit for the year of £7,000.

Long Service Awards

It was agreed that instead of issuing long service awards to Elders on an ad hoc basis, we should adopt a standard approach based on the number of years an Elder had served since Ordination. The Moderator and the Session Clerk will discuss more detailed proposals on the different lengths of service (e.g. 25, 30, 40 years) which would trigger a long service award and report back to Session. The Moderator also made the point that long service awards need not apply only to Elders.

Mission

Although opportunities were limited due to Covid the Moderator had engaged with the Scouts and had laid on 2 magic shows for the Cubs, fast establishing a reputation as Minister of Magic! Videos he had sent to Blackhall Primary School for use at Assemblies and to Blackhall Nursery had been well received and there had been good feedback from the Advent conversations held across our new Cluster.

Presbytery Plan

We are now part of the West Forth Cluster of Churches, the others being Cramond, Davidson Mains, Drylaw, Granton and Old Kirk Muirhouse. There have been three meetings of the Cluster so far and a draft plan requires to be with Presbytery by the beginning of March.

Eddie Thorn, Session Clerk

Family News

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

Mr Ian Palmer

Deaths

November

15 Mr Stanley Young

December

13 Mrs Margaret Martin





**World Day of Prayer
City of Edinburgh Committee**



Build on a strong foundation

The material is written by the Christian Women of Vanuatu

Bible Studies

**Study Two: More Positive Teaching
Matthew Chapter 6**

Date Friday 12 February 2021

Speaker: Revd. David Coleman BA BTh PGDip
David is the Eco Chaplain

Bible study material can be downloaded from the Scottish Wdp website: wdpscotland.org.uk

The meeting will be via Zoom from 10.00 am until noon.

Join Zoom Meeting:

[https://us02web.zoom.us/j/85997640710?](https://us02web.zoom.us/j/85997640710?pwd=cWxuakNISUV3cFdsTTNYUjUwbGpGdz09)

[pwd=cWxuakNISUV3cFdsTTNYUjUwbGpGdz09](https://us02web.zoom.us/j/85997640710?pwd=cWxuakNISUV3cFdsTTNYUjUwbGpGdz09)

Meeting ID: 859 9764 0710

Passcode: 498083

One tap mobile

+441314601196,,85997640710 # United Kingdom

Dial by your location

+44 131 460 1196 United Kingdom

Meeting ID: 859 9764 0710

Find your local number: <https://us02web.zoom.us/u/kmLYN7wEt>



Build on a strong foundation

Written by the Women of Vanuatu



World Day of Prayer Scotland

Friday 5 March 2021

An easy access Zoom service with internet and telephone links.

The Scottish Committee invite you to join them in a live Zoom service at 2.00 pm. It is being hosted by Augustine United Church in Edinburgh with participants from across Scotland.

For joining details see WDP website or Facebook or use the Zoom link

Webinar ID: 895 9398 3883

Passcode: 901656

If you do not have internet access you can join using a landline 0131 460 1196 and you will be asked for the above webinar and passcode.

The service will then be available on the website and Facebook after the service.

10 Days of Prayer Starting on Tuesday 23 February we are planning “10 days of Prayer” which will be posted on our Facebook site every morning and on our website. We are inviting the national leaders of 10 denominations to share a Thought for the Day focusing on Vanuatu and one of the Scottish Committee will end with a prayer.

Kirk's Chief Officer looks back at 2020: 'Covid-19 challenged us at every level'

Published on 28 December 2020

After a "challenging" year in the life of the Kirk, Dave Kendall, the Church of Scotland's chief officer, looks back at 2020 and ahead to what's to come in 2021.



This article first appeared in the Life and Work magazine of the Church of Scotland.

It's a year now since I started as Chief Officer with the Church of Scotland and what a year it has been. When thinking about writing this short article about the challenges ahead I couldn't help but reflect on where we find ourselves at the end of 2020 and at the beginning of a new year.

Most notably we have made major strides towards meeting [the targets set by the General Assembly in 2019](#). Expenditure has been significantly reduced, we have downsized the number of central staff without resorting to making posts redundant and improvements to both accountability and governance have been achieved.

Our Faith Action Plan was endorsed at the 2020 General Assembly to help with alignment and prioritisation, whilst [development of an operational plan](#) is enabling an integrated approach to the challenges ahead.

The business plan for 2021 is at an advanced stage of preparation and looks necessarily demanding in a way unimaginable just a year ago. The pandemic has been a horrible time in so many ways but has forced our hand on the pace of change. Covid-19 has challenged us at every level but has been particularly felt in the local church.

The closure of our church buildings and halls coupled with difficulties in maintaining many of our community activities felt devastating – but it led to an amazing response which meant that Church was always “open” even when the buildings were closed. So much innovation has been on show as we embraced many new ways of being Church, and served others through examples such as food banks, youth work and community outreach and then gradually reopened our buildings in an environment where safety has to come first.

2021 brings with it uncertainty about our finances and the shape of our day to day operations, but, given the resilience shown in congregations, presbyteries and the national office, I am confident that together we can come out of this stronger and better equipped.

Whilst the challenges we face have been exacerbated by the pandemic, they are little different from those reported by the Special Commission in 2019. In practical terms we need to plan ahead to become an institutionally smaller but practically more vibrant and influential Church. A clear focus on securing our financial sustainability, including the need to make some hard decisions on what we can set aside, will enable us to plan for and invest in future growth. /continued

Cof S News and Events continued

Our vision is to be a Church that inspires the people of Scotland and beyond with the Good News of Jesus Christ through enthusiastic worship, witnessing, nurturing and serving communities. So, the main areas that will enable our transformation are:

- Our worship – how, where and when; with approaches that engage people of all ages.
- Our ministries – developing the life of people at every level in our Church so that they can translate our vision into meaningful service.
- Our leadership – [resourcing inspirational leaders](#) who can be a Christian voice that is heard and respected at all levels.
- Our mission – witnessing to the Gospel in the local community, speaking truth to power and supporting the poorest at home and abroad.
- Our values – at the centre of all we do in support of the local church.
- Our buildings – providing ['well-equipped spaces in the right places'](#) while reducing our commitment to unsustainable buildings.

I couldn't have had a better welcome and, having listened intently, I now have an understanding both of what we face and our potential for transformation. I am looking forward to 2021 with optimism and enthusiasm as we work together to take forward our goal of inspiring the people of Scotland and beyond with the Good News of Jesus Christ. Given the pressures that this pandemic has inflicted on us, displaying Christian love and support to each other and our neighbours has to be our top priority at every level of the Church today and every day in the future.

General Assembly 2021 will be held online in May

Published on 8 January 2021

The Church of Scotland General Assembly for 2021 will be held online for a second year. The annual event will begin on 22 May with commissioners and other attendees joining together remotely from across Scotland and around the world.

Rev Dr George Whyte, Principal Clerk for the Church said:

"We regret that we cannot join together in person as usual given the uncertainty about the Covid restrictions that may still be necessary this spring. However we intend to make our online experience as good as it possibly can be."

In ordinary times the event brings around 800 commissioners and visitors to Edinburgh to debate on Church matters and the issues of the day.

Details of the 2021 General Assembly are still being finalised and more information will be released in the coming months.

Find out [more on the General Assembly pages](#).



LEJOG: A Fresh Start for 2021 - Kirsty Cassidy

Approaching the end of 2020 I found myself reflecting on the past 12 months and feeling that I had little to show for the year. Some might think that the physical, mental and financial survival of myself and my family through a global pandemic was in itself an achievement but I felt the need for a different challenge this year.

During the first lockdown, in addition to (very early) exercising most mornings, I had a daily lunchtime walk with the buggy for the triple benefit of exercise for me, a nap for the twins and some much needed peace for Granny and Grandad with whom we lived for the first 4 months. In recent months I have got out of the habit of regular exercise and the boys no longer need a nap (otherwise bedtime can be even more torturous than it already is!) so there hasn't been the same incentive to get out. Therefore, in addition to needing the feeling of a challenge, it was clear I needed to step up my exercise levels.

Facebook often bombards you with adverts for an assortment of organisations, most of which I ignore. However one which caught my attention was The Conqueror Challenge, an organisation which allows you to sign up to complete virtual challenges of various distances while tracking progress on their app. I decided that if I wanted to challenge myself, it needed to be a substantial distance and opted for the Lands End to John O'Groats virtual challenge (LEJOG to those on the journey). I signed up to complete the distance of 1,084 miles across the year although it transpires the route on the challenges is approximately 200 miles longer than the most direct route in real life!

Completing the distance in the year requires an average of 3 miles per day, no doubt easily achievable by many but home-working as a lawyer for 7 hours in front of a computer and caring for very lively three year-old twins who really miss their friends and the stimulus of nursery adds considerably to the challenge. My start was hampered by the recent icy weather and treacherous pavements and unfortunately one of my darling boys managed to break Granny's exercise bike. Fortunately for me it has been replaced with a treadmill which has helped me get extra miles in despite the conditions outside.

To add to the personal challenge, I decided to do something for others by seeking sponsorship and Fresh Start is the charity I have chosen to support. We all know the exceptional work they do and it is currently made more difficult by the latest lockdown and their inability to receive donations. Financial support is therefore a significant help to them at the moment. Should anyone wish to help me support Fresh Start and motivate me through Cornwall at the start of my virtual journey, donations can be made via the following link and will be hugely appreciated by Fresh Start and by me. Thanks, Kirsty.

<https://www.justgiving.com/fundraising/kirsty-cassidy4>

Distance completed - 72 miles Distance remaining – 1012 miles

MENTAL HEALTH MATTERS

In these days many of us are
feeling isolated and lonely

TAKE CARE

is something we often say to
others and right now it is
something we need also to
say to ourselves

Different things help different people.
Have a look at the list inside and see what
helps you or what you might try

-
- Phoning someone each day, maybe different people on different days



- Sitting outside or at an open window or door, looking at nature; growing plants, birds & wildlife, watching clouds in the sky



- Creating a routine – get up and dressed for the day; have your meals at the same time, going to bed at the same time, having a walk. The rhythm of a routine can help to create a feeling of security and safety you can rely on



- Limit the amount of time listening to the news and social media, restrict to once or twice a day for a set time

-
- Spend several minutes each day feeling grateful for all the people helping in your life and in the hospitals, in the supermarkets, delivering things or driving buses.



- Putting on music and dancing either literally or in your imagination



- If you want to be more energetic do a workout, 10 minutes workouts available at <https://www.nhs.uk/oneyou/for-your-body/move-more/home-workout-videos/>

- Doing jigsaws, word-searches, crosswords



- Remembering good times, people you have loved, jobs you enjoyed

There are many organisations offering help at this time.
You can find more information at -

Mental Health Helplines

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/stress-anxiety-depression/mental-health-helplines/>

For support please phone
0131 466 7503 to speak to our minister
Rev. Fergus Cook

It is usually good to talk, to name the things that are bothering us and know that we are listened to and heard. Whilst we can always talk to God in prayer sometimes we also benefit from speaking directly to another person we can share our own unique situation.



**BLACKHALL
ST.COLUMBA'S**
CHURCH OF SCOTLAND



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

It is also possible to use Facetime, or Zoom
Wishing you all peace and hope

Blackhall St Columba's Parish Church
Columba Road, Edinburgh EH4 3QU
Scottish Charity No. SC008756

secretary@blackhallstcolumba.org.uk

**Facebook and Web-site. Sunday Services on-line every
Sunday with 'zoom' fellowship at 11.15am
See website for joining details or email above**



**BLACKHALL
ST. COLUMBA'S**
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

Keep up with news of
the Blackhall St Columba's Church community,
our online services
and the various Zoom meetings
by regularly checking
our website
www.blackhallstcolumba.org.uk

our Facebook page -
search for 'Blackhall St Columba's Church'

and

Follow us on



@BstCC_EH

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

DEADLINES

Kirk News: Sunday, 21 March

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: Sunday, 31 January

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