

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

AUGUST 2021

No. 828



Our Minister
back from his
break, battery
fully re-charged

(More about batteries on
page 3, more about the
garden on page 12)

BStC's Church garden

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, 9.00-12.30pm
Tel. 332 4431
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SUNDAY PUBLIC & LIVE STREAM WORSHIP

Update



Live Stream link:

[https://www.youtube.com/channel/
UC0NV5u4XD9kCq6STiFndyJg?view_as=subscriber](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC0NV5u4XD9kCq6STiFndyJg?view_as=subscriber)

Due to the reduction in social distancing measures we are now in a position to welcome you into our church without an official booking. Just turn up!

We still require to take your details for 'track & trace' so please provide your details at the church desk when you arrive. Thank you.

Please note the Church Office remains closed.

After our 10 30am Sunday service join us for Zoom coffee and fellowship at 11 30am

To join in, follow the link: <https://zoom.us/j/97694542508>
or log into Zoom and enter the meeting ID: 976 9454 2508

You can also join the meeting by landline or mobile 'phone by dialling 0131 460 1196

From the Minister



'Charging your batteries'

Dear Friends,

Almost all of us nowadays know the effects of a low battery on our smart 'phones, laptops and other electrical devices. We start to worry about whether or not our device will be able to complete the tasks we need to do. If, like me, you sometimes use your 'phone as a satellite navigation tool, then you can begin to wonder whether or not you will reach your destination before the charge runs out completely. My girls regularly find themselves wondering whether or not their 'phones will retain enough power to last 'till the end of the night when they may need to call for a lift. I have also had my laptop computer suddenly reach the end of its battery life and close down whilst I was still working on a document. The result was, annoyingly, that I lost all the work that I had been doing.

It is also noteworthy that the older a device gets the quicker it seems to run out of charge. I had one laptop so long that the battery got to the point that it failed to hold any charge whatsoever. It was so run down that it had to be kept plugged into the mains for it to work at all!

All of this reflection about battery life and recharging can be applied to us as human beings as well, of course.

'Health Forensics' is a book, written by Steven Magee, that examines the many aspects of society nowadays that may lead to unusual behaviours occurring in human beings. Modern society has adopted habits that are well known for their ability to affect mental functioning and human health. In his book, Steven Magee writes: "It is my conclusion that the human mind and body is essentially a single cell rechargeable battery that is charged from the atmospheric DC voltage and the Earth."

However, we don't need to turn to recent books to teach us this kind of thought process. As people of faith, we should all recollect the words of Exodus 20:8-11;

"Remember the Sabbath day, and keep it holy. Six days you shall labour and do all your work. But the seventh day is a Sabbath to the Lord your God; you shall not do any work—you, your son or your daughter, your male or female slave, your livestock, or the alien resident in your towns.

/continued

From the Minister continued

For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but rested the seventh day; therefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and consecrated it.”

All of us need to take time to recharge our batteries. More and more, even for those who go to church on a Sunday, each day becomes as busy as the last with there being very little difference in the amount of rest we take on a daily basis. People may not do their actual paid work on a Sunday but they replace that work with other activities that can be just as stressful and exhausting.



Dee Waldeck, a motivational writer, suggests; “Take a break from the stresses of life and use that time to rediscover the important things that matter to you most. We all deserve an anti-stress day to recharge our batteries.”

Again, whilst this comes from a modern writer, we have the above mandate, in Exodus, from God to take a break, a mandate that was reinforced by Jesus when he said, in Mark 2:27,

“The Sabbath was made for humankind, and not humankind for the Sabbath.”

Indeed, this reaffirmation of the importance of the Sabbath break was essential enough to have been included in all three synoptic gospels.

Recently, the moderator of Edinburgh Presbytery, the Very Revd. Dr Derek Browning, sent out a letter commenting about the need for holidays. In reflecting on how much, after the year we have all had, he himself needs a holiday, Mr Browning wrote;

“I am drawn to the words of Jesus at this time, well-known, but with a particular application for each one of us:

“Come to Me, all who are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you, and learn from Me; for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy, and My burden is light.” (Matthew 11:29-30)

However, wherever and whenever you find that time to take a break, refresh your life, your ideas, your heart, I pray that these summer weeks will allow that necessary change of focus we all require in order that we may find the strength, the courage, and the hope, to continue moving onwards into God’s continually unfolding Kingdom.”

As I write this reflection for the Kirk News, I have just returned from a short break. The opportunity for a change of scene, to meet up with family and to read for pleasure rather than for work has been wonderful. /continued

Family News

Deaths

- 30 April Mrs Catherine Nicolson
8 May Mr William (Bill) McLeod
28 May Mrs (Helen) Isla Greenwood
17 July Mrs Nancy Colville



A Message from John Greenwood

I would like to express my great appreciation to all those who sent cards and other expressions of sympathy following Isla's recent death. Also to those who gathered outside the Church to speed the cortege on its way to the crematorium.

Many thanks. John

From the Minister continued

It has been made even more pleasurable by the wonderful spell of weather we have been having. We all find different ways to switch off, to unwind and to relax. We all find different ways to recharge our batteries. I would like to take this opportunity to echo Mr Browning's comments and express my hope and prayer that each and every one of you at Blackhall St Columba's manages to take some time to have a break, whether at home or away, and to find time to recharge your battery. Our God is always with us, even when we relax, and, if God saw fit to rest on the seventh day, then surely so should we.

God bless all,

Fergus

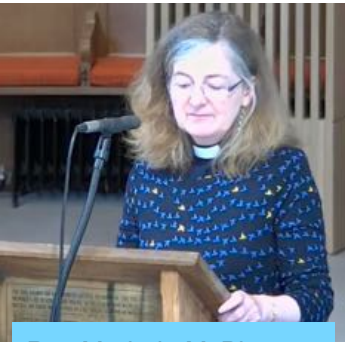
July at Blackhall St Columba's



The 'young team' at the AV desk



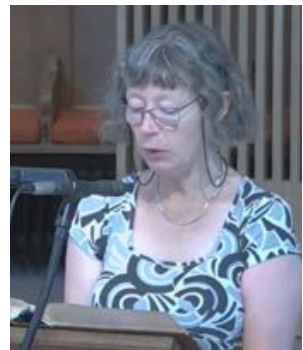
Rev Gordon Farquharson



Rev Marjorie McPherson



Rev Tom Cuthell



Rev Fergus Cook and Jill McIntosh in a joint service with Drylaw Parish Church

Kirk Session Report

The Kirk Session met on Tuesday 4 May and Tuesday 1 June 2021. These were again virtual meetings conducted via the Zoom conferencing facility as permitted by the Commission of the General Assembly.

Accessible Toilet

A working group had been established to investigate options for an accessible toilet (disabled toilet) located off the Sanctuary. It was noted that a wide range of options had been considered and discussed with the architect who had earlier been engaged for the Building for the Future project. After due deliberation the option unanimously recommended by the working group is to convert part of the equipment cupboard in the Office to become the accessible toilet with an electrically operated door. After a number of questions were raised and all satisfactorily answered Kirk Session agreed to proceed with the work as recommended within a budget of £30,000 (including VAT which will be reclaimable).

Correspondence

A letter was received from the Monte Cassino Society thanking the Minister for conducting the Service on Saturday 15 May and enclosing a cheque in the sum of £100 for Congregational funds.

Elder Resignation

It was noted that Mrs Lesley MacKenzie had intimated her wish to resign as an Elder due to her impending move out of the area. The Session Clerk paid tribute to the contribution that Lesley had made to the life of the Congregation through the many roles that she had undertaken.

Finance

Adrian Johnston, Congregational Treasurer, reported:-

Income

Offerings for the three months to 31 March are down on last year but a little ahead of Budget. Other General Income is down against both last year and the 2021 Budget. The main reason is that currently no rent is being received from Hall Users except Blackhall Playgroup. However, the overall total has our income for the year to end March down on last year but very close to our Budget. We have also benefitted from a legacy of £5,000 from the James & Jessie Shaw Charitable Trust.

Expenditure

Total expenditure for the three months is well down on both last year and on Budget. The main reasons are that there has been very low Fabric expenditure and we have had no printing and delivery costs for the Blackhall Bulletin and Kirk News. /continued

Kirk Session Report continued

Progress against Budget

The net result is that our income exceeded expenditure by £5,331 and if the legacy is excluded, we still had a surplus over this period of £331. The Budget is not an exact comparison as a number of items are assumed to accrue in equal monthly amounts when in fact the income and expenditure arises in varying amounts throughout the year and when comparing one year with another. However, it is pleasing that this year, we had been expecting to have a deficit of £6,000 by this stage and we actually have a surplus of £5,331.

Statement of Funds – The total funds balance at the 31 March was £111,953. This is marginally ahead of the position at this time last year and, of course, £5,331 ahead of where we were at the start of the year.

Roll

Norma Gregor and Mrs Shirley Gregor, Queens Road, were admitted as members by Resolution of the Kirk Session.

Presbytery Elder

The Session Clerk was re-appointed as the Congregation representative to The Presbytery of Edinburgh.

Eddie Thorn, Session Clerk

New Presbytery Plan

For some months now I have endeavoured via the Kirk News to keep members posted as regards the work being done across Edinburgh Presbytery to eventually create a new Presbytery Plan. This exercise is being done at the request of The General Assembly and basically being driven by the declining financial resources of The Church of Scotland.

This year at The General Assembly of the Church of Scotland, the sombre tone of some of the debates revealed the present state of the Church as an institution. The difficult but necessary decisions made will have very real consequences for the national Church, and also for the future of our own Congregation.

At The General Assembly, the Assembly Trustees set out the problem: presently the Church is using £11million of reserves annually to meet its commitments. This cannot continue indefinitely. To live within its means, the Church could now afford only 600 ministry posts (parish ministers plus Ministries Development Staff), plus maintain 60 vacancies (presently that number is over 200). To achieve this number the presbyteries across Scotland were allocated a number of posts, and instructed to achieve that number by 2025. **At present Edinburgh Presbytery has 78 posts and the allocated number is now 48 – a reduction of 30 ministerial posts.** /continued

New Presbytery Plan continued

Two quotes from the Conveners who presented these proposals are worth repeating here: The Very Rev Dr John Chalmers, Convener of the Assembly Trustees said, *“We are well aware that this is not an easy ask. Every one of us is a member or minister serving in parishes that will be affected by this. We know reshaping the Church around this will involve painful decisions. But in the goodness and grace of God we trust.”*

The Rev Rosie Frew, Convener of the Faith Nurture Forum said, *“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.”*

Later this year Edinburgh Presbytery will have its first look at the draft Plan that seeks to achieve not only the reduction in numbers, but also the reduction in the buildings being considered necessary, plus enabling the local church to fully engage in the Five Marks of Mission which is at the centre of national planning: 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 seek 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 Plan will outline the future of our own Congregation in all these respects, and we should be prepared for change and be ready to see how we may creatively respond to the challenges of this changing time.

It will be recalled that congregations across the Presbytery were put into clusters to discuss ways of working together and how resources could be shared. (We are part of the West Forth Group which also takes in Cramond, Davidson’s Mains, Old Kirk Muirhouse, Drylaw and Granton). The clusters were based on geography with no firm intention that these would create any form of permanent groupings in the future.

It is clear that we are in a time of rapid change and seeking in the cluster areas and within the Presbytery Planning Strategy Team (of which I am a member) to imagine ways of being church that take into account some of the losses and reductions that are coming. However it is important not to lose sight of new possibilities that may also emerge. Many have expressed the need for training whether in leadership, worship leading, pioneering, discipleship, and change can be an impetus to growth. While the pattern of one minister, one congregation, one set of buildings may no longer be the norm, there are surely many gifts within congregations to be developed and put to service in mission.

I will continue to keep you informed of pertinent developments.

Eddie Thorn, Session Clerk

‘THIS IS NOT AN EASY ASK’

- Church told that progress so far will be for nothing unless reforms continue
- Cut to 600 charges, plus 60 vacancies, by 2025.
- Deficit budget of £11m agreed but losses ‘not sustainable in foreseeable future’
- Three presbytery mergers agreed
- Disinvestment from fossil fuels companies welcomed
- Same-sex weddings in Church of Scotland a step closer
- Joint declaration with Scottish Episcopal Church



To read **LIFE AND WORK’s** full summary of the May 2021 General Assembly, download it free using the link below -

<https://www.lifeandwork.org/resources/general-assembly-2021-special-supplement>

LIFE AND WORK

Digital Subscription OR single issue purchase
6 months £11.99 | 12 months £20.99 | single issue £1.99

NEWS FROM THE JUNIOR SINGERS

Like all choirs, this last year has been very different to normal for members of Blackhall St Columba's Junior Singers. In the session '19 - '20, we had been learning the songs of the musical, 'Captain Noah and his Floating Zoo' with a view to putting on a public performance in June'20. We had actually progressed to rehearsing on stage and discussions for costumes had taken place - when Covid-19 put a halt to everything. For some of the singers, it was doubly cruel as this was to be their last performance with The Singers before moving on to Secondary School.

With the discovery of Zoom, we had a few sessions on-line (never as satisfactory as group singing) which culminated in the children making individual recordings at home of one of the Noah songs, which were then mixed to form one video of the children singing together. Then in late spring '21, restrictions lifted sufficiently to allow the remaining primary-aged children to meet in Amy Donaldson's garden, while observing all the Covid rules, after school, to sing and hopefully prepare for a possible church performance. Then - finally! - on Sunday, 20th June, a small group of children sang 'Did You Ever Talk to God Above' during morning worship. It was an emotional moment to see and hear them once more in church singing out in their usual enthusiastic fashion.



As was said at the beginning, it has been a difficult year for the Junior Singers as we couldn't really recruit for new members under such circumstances. These, however, may hopefully have changed by the time our new session starts on Thursday, 2nd September (3.45 - 4.30pm). If you have children in the P3 - P7 age group, or know of any who may be interested, please feel free to phone Amy Donaldson (332 1354) and we'll provide any extra information. All boys and girls in the above age group are welcome - the only requirement is an enjoyment of singing.

Church Garden

In May a small group of willing volunteers set about “spring cleaning” the church garden. Weed growth and bits of litter as well as some broken branches and dead wood were all dealt with. The photos show the before and after appearance.

The benefits of the pruning and clearing done last year are evident with lots of new fresh growth, buds and blossom. As ever with a garden, there is more to do, so another session in maybe a couple of weeks, then once a month should keep it under control.

Thanks to David, Pat and the two Mikes who helped out, and also to Pat for the lovely begonias.

Fay Stirling

But in July !!!!!



Flowers in Church

Those of you who have been able to worship in church and those of you who have been watching services on-line will be aware that there have been flowers in Church every Sunday since we were able to re-open.



These flowers are donated by Members of the Congregation either by contributing money or by doing the flowers themselves.

The flowers are distributed after the service to those in the Community who would appreciate them whether they are ill or celebrating or just need a boost under difficult circumstances. Elders and others let us know who might benefit.

As you all know, the Church of Scotland runs on rotas for this, that and the next. The Flowers are also subject to rotas and the Flower Team would like to reinstate 2 rotas. One for arranging the flowers and one for distributing them.

The Flower Distribution rota is for a month at a time, so if you volunteer to be on the rota, you will be allocated a month. This worked well in the past, so we'll resurrect it as it was. I shall contact everyone who was on the rota and ask them if they would like to continue but I know there are some gaps, so if you would like to join this group of people please volunteer. People really enjoy receiving the flowers so you will be welcomed.

The Flower Arranging rota needs new blood as some people who did the flowers can no longer do so. At present, we have 4 people which means that they are called upon about once a month. If the list were longer the volunteers would have longer between stints. The arrangers are a friendly bunch and again you would be very welcome.

Please come and help.

Alison Hewat (rajahewat1@btinternet.com or contact the church office)

Edinburgh Floral Art Club

Edinburgh Floral Art Club hopes to meet for an AGM and a floral art demonstration on Friday 10 September 2021 at 2pm in Blackhall St Columbia's Church hall. This will depend on the guidelines from the Scottish Government and the Church of Scotland regarding the Corona virus.



Members will be notified before this date if it will be possible.
New Members are always welcome.

Isabel Ingram

Midweek Services

In a period of yet more uncertainty about normal activities we need to think about when and how we restart having the fortnightly services with lunch, a speaker and chat.

I have not discussed them with Fergus and he may have ideas. However in the hope that we may manage to get together in the Autumn I need to make sure that the teams are still up for this. **PLEASE email or phone** me to let me know. I already know there is an appetite for them to restart from some of those who regularly attend. On the assumption that we carry on as before we need the regular teams to provide soup etc.

I look forward to being inundated with messages!

Hope you are all keeping safe and well.



Elspeth Williamson elspethwilliamson@gmail.com tel 0131 336 2600

Tuesday Topics

We at last have good news regarding resuming our meetings. Plans are now underway to start up on 11th January 2022! Obviously this will depend totally on any restrictions that might still be in place at that time. As current restrictions do not allow us to meet in the small hall we may be gathering in the Church Sanctuary but full details will be sent to all members nearer the time.

We do hope you are all well.

Very best wishes.

Eleanor Lowrie, President
Jacky Cowie, Secretary



Mouse Makes



Read the full story in
Luke 10:25-37

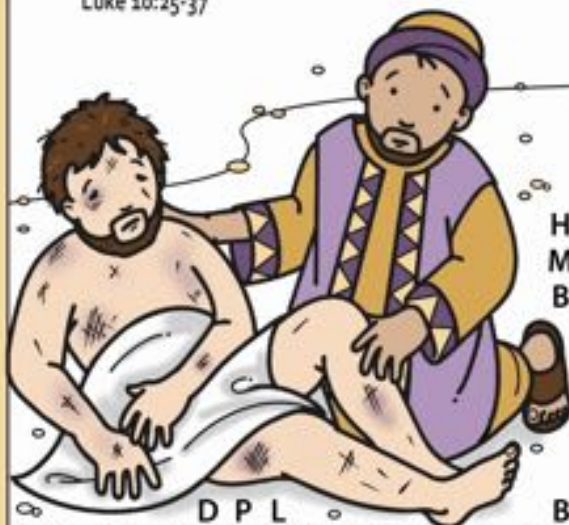
The Parable of the Good Samaritan

A man asked Jesus "Who is my neighbour?" and Jesus replied with this parable:

A man was attacked by robbers, they tore his clothes, beat him and left him almost dead. A priest saw him but walked by on the other side. A Levite saw him but walked by on the other side. A Samaritan saw him and took pity on him, he poured oil and wine on his wounds and then bandaged them. He lifted the man onto his donkey, took him to an inn and cared for him.

The next day he gave the innkeeper two denarii to look after the man until he returned.

Which of the three travellers do you think was the neighbour to the man who was attacked?



C L O T H E S P
H N J E S U S R A
M E R C Y S L O S
B I R O B B E R S
G J M P W V A E
H E P A O I J D
B R A R U T E C
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U C S B D E U R
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JESUS • PARABLE • JERUSALEM • JERICHO • JOURNEY • MAN • ROBBERS • SAW
CLOTHES • DOWN • ROAD • PRIEST • PASSED • PLACE • SIDE • LEVITE • CARE
GOOD • SAMARITAN • COMPASSION • BOUND • WOUNDS • POURED • OIL
WINE • MERCY • INN • TWO • DENARII • REPAY • BACK • NEIGHBOUR • GO DO



BLACKHALL
ST. COLUMBA'S
CHURCH OF SCOTLAND

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

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@BstCC_EH

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

DEADLINES

Kirk News - Sunday 12 September

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 1 August

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