

KINGSWELLS PARISH CHURCH



'HE IS RISEN!'



EASTER NEWSLETTER 2021

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EASTER FROM LAURENE

'Seen'

A BLESSING FOR EASTER

You had not imagined
that something so empty
could fill you to overflowing,

and now you carry the knowledge
like an awful treasure
or like a child that roots itself
beneath your heart:

how the emptiness
will bear forth a new world
that you cannot fathom
but on whose edge, you stand.

So why do you linger?
You have seen, and so you are already blessed.
You have been seen, and so you are the blessing.

There is no other word you need.
There is simply - 'to go and tell'.
There is simply - 'to begin'

Jan Richardson

Regrettably as we were preparing copy for the Newsletter Laurene developed shingles and is currently indisposed but with her Easter blessings she sent us this poem to contemplate as we celebrate Easter. It is so apt at a time when we hope to be released progressively from 'lockdown' and enter a new sense of freedom and joyous anticipation. Easter is regarded by Christians throughout the world 'as a new beginning'. It takes place in the northern hemisphere at the beginning of spring when nature responds to longer days and warming sunshine; and we are part of nature. We respond to the breathtaking beauty of God's creation as it impacts upon our psyche and, as Christians, upon the hope that Easter brings.

As Bishop Swain of Sioux Falls points out, 'Christians have been referred to as Easter people. There is much in our world and culture today that make many worry, even despair. **That is not the response of Easter people.** It is in our

power, with Christ's example and continuing presence in His Church, to bring light and life into our own lives, and from us, light and life to those whose lives touch ours. We need to be like the cab drivers referred to in this instruction from Archbishop Romero, "Cab drivers, listen to this message; if you work with honesty, consecrating that taxi of yours to God, bearing a message of peace and love to the passengers who ride with you, you are a priest at the wheel, my friend!" So, this Easter let us too be priests at the wheel!

We wish Laurene an early restoration to full health!

Editor

From the Session Clark – Re-opening of Church

It is hard to believe that it is one year since we last met to worship together. We have been fortunate to be able to share weekly worship together with the congregations in our Cluster Group on Facebook and YouTube. Throughout Lent there has also been a daily reflection on Facebook. While we all appreciate the weekly services and are thankful for the work by all the ministers to put together the services and are grateful for the technology which enables us to worship together virtually, I am sure that many of you are keen to get back to worshipping together in our sanctuary.

With the successful roll out of the vaccines, and gradual easing of the restrictions over the coming weeks, we hope that it will not be very much longer before we can be together again. Even if things are very different to "before Covid" it will be wonderful to join in communal worship again. It may be that given the size of our sanctuary the congregation will have to be seated differently, with some in the sanctuary and some in the halls connected by an audio link. It may also be necessary to book a seat, so that we do not exceed our maximum capacity.

The Kirk Session will be discussing at their next meeting, the options to resume some form of worship, while at the same time complying with the current guidance and keeping everyone safe. Please be assured that the Kirk Session will be working to ensure we can meet safely within the guidelines as they evolve over the coming weeks.

Until we can be together, keep safe and well.

Lorna Graham

CLUSTER GROUP

During the period when churches have been closed, the ministers in our Cluster Group of Kingswells, Craigiebuckler, Cults, Mannofield and Peterculter have worked closely together to provide the weekly online services which many of us have all found essential Sunday viewing. When the churches were able to open in a limited capacity from the summer onwards, Laurene has been assisting at services at Cults and Craigiebuckler. The close co-operation of the ministers during this pandemic has seen the links between the five churches grow closer.

There have been ongoing discussions within the Cluster Group about how best to formalise the arrangements currently in place and a paper entitled “Basis of Parish Grouping: Aberdeen West” has been prepared. The Kirk Sessions of all five churches will be discussing this proposal, with our Kirk Session meeting by Zoom on 30th March. Following this, the congregation will be given the opportunity to read the proposal and have 14 days to raise any queries. The proposal will be sent out to you in early April. There then requires to be a congregational vote on the proposal, and ballot papers will be sent out to all members of the congregation. Please do return your ballot paper to the address provided. If you would prefer to have the ballot paper by email, please let me know. (lorna.graham15@btinternet.com)

Once the ballot papers have been returned, the votes will be counted by the Presbytery Clerk and the results will be announced by mid-May. Assuming every congregation is in agreement the proposal will go to the June meeting of Presbytery for approval.

Lorna Graham, Session Clerk

NEWS FROM PRESBYTERY

Presbytery has continued to meet via Zoom during pandemic restrictions, and it is likely to be September before there will be a face-to-face meeting. Because of the lockdown restrictions the annual visit to Aberdeen by the Moderator of the General Assembly which usually takes place in February could not go ahead.

The Union of the congregations of Mastrick, Summerhill and Northfield was approved, and the new congregation will be known as Aberdeen North. At the most recent Presbytery meeting Rev. Mark Rodgers Head of Spiritual Care and Lead Chaplain of NHS Grampian updated Presbyters on the work of the hospital chaplains during the pandemic. They have had to adapt their working practices to ensure they were able to provide support for all those in need, both patients and staff.

After two years in the role, Rev. Hutton Steel will step down as Moderator of the Presbytery of Aberdeen and Shetland. Rev. Maggie Whyte of St. Stephen's has been nominated as the next Moderator for 2021 – 2023, and this will be confirmed at the June meeting of Presbytery.

As part of the Radical Action Plan approved at the General Assembly in 2019 discussions are progressing on the formation of a North East Presbytery which will include Aberdeen and Shetland, Gordon, Kincardine and Deeside, Buchan, and part of Moray and Orkney. The expected date for the formation of the North East Presbytery is January 2023.

Lorna Graham, Presbytery Elder

PASTORAL CARE

The year has been very challenging in delivering meaningful pastoral care during the pandemic and the resultant lockdowns. Regular newsletters have been produced, as scheduled, but delivery has been primarily via Royal Mail. Visits to Members' houses have more or less been suspended but telephone contacts with them was instigated and commenced during 2020, supplemented with e mail communications where appropriate.

Regrettably, the customary annual Summer Communion and December Carol Service for senior members were unable to take place in 2020 in compliance with Government Guidance in relation to community gatherings. Understandably, monthly services at the care home have also had to be suspended for similar reasons.

However, creatively, and taking the opportunity of the now well recognised zoom meetings, a Burns Supper was arranged and zoom Nosh and Natters have also taken place. Here's hoping the 'light at the end of the tunnel' is

shining brighter as we now move forward through Spring into the Summer of 2021.

Audrey Paterson & Michael Gall

FOOD BANK COLLECTIONS



The Food Bank Collection for Instant Neighbour continues every Tuesday morning at the Church. It is a pleasure to be involved in this project – not least it affords the opportunity – whether on duty collecting donations or calling at church with a donation – to actually have a chat with other members and friends – socially distanced of course!! It is also very encouraging to witness the generosity of folks – both from our church family and from the community. Delivering all the donations to Instant Neighbour reinforces the real need for the provision of food banks and we know all donations are very much appreciated by the food bank users. The only slight downside to delivering – to which Anna and I can attest – is the rather narrow entrance which often requires upwards of five-point manoeuvres to exit. Then if one is not paying attention there is a risk of travelling the wrong way up a one-way street – I shall leave readers to speculate whether or not this actually happened!

A small amount of food is retained in the church for providing support within Kingswells itself. We know that it is easy to assume that there is no need in our perhaps more affluent area but sadly this is not the case particularly as the fallout from the pandemic affects more and more aspects of our lives like employment and finances. If anyone finds themselves in need, they should contact the minister.

Collections continue on Tuesdays from 10 – 10.30am. Please help to get the word out in the community by bringing the collection to the attention of friends and neighbours. As more people hopefully become aware, we may see an increase in the much-needed donations. **Many thanks to all for your support.**



PRAYER CHAIN

Paul recommends that we should pray always and continually, “pray without ceasing” 1Thessalonians 5:17

The church Prayer Chain is made up of a group of people linked by the common aim of praying for church members, their families and friends in time of anxiety or stress. We are also pleased to join in prayers of thanksgiving for answered prayer and joyous occasions in the lives of our members.

As part of our commitment to all in our church family the prayer chain group have agreed to pray for any request you may have. Over the years many of our members have been supported by this group in times of need and have reported a sense of comfort, knowing that others are surrounding them and their loved ones in prayer.

Prayer can bring restoration, healing, encouragement and strength.

To let us know what you would like us to pray for or if you would like to join the prayer chain group please contact **Barbara on 07891376942/ 01224741558.**



This is the sixth year of **Thy Kingdom Come** which has become a significant part of the global ecumenical calendar with Christians across the world joining in prayer. Thy

Kingdom Come runs from Ascension to Pentecost Sunday, Thursday 13th to Sunday 23rd May. It's about praying for our churches, our communities and our countries and it calls for us to pray for those who as yet know little or nothing about Christ.

Here in Kingswells Church people have been joining with this prayer initiative for the past two years and are encouraged to join again this year. In fact, the Moderator, Martin Fair warmly commends us to pray and says he would be personally thrilled to see congregations getting involved this time round.

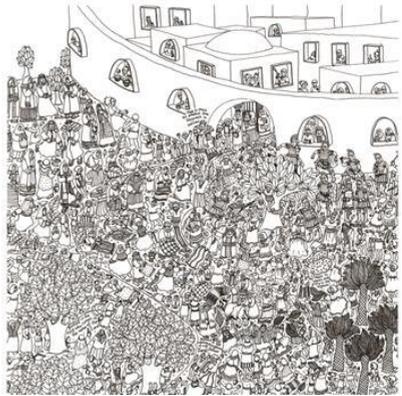
There are a whole range of resources including a prayer journal, novena, podcasts, daily videos and an updated Family Prayer Adventure Map. Every year the resources are first class. Please visit www.thykingdomcome.global to find out more about it.

Anne Rodger

YOUNG CHURCH

Although it's so long since we have got together in person, I'm happy to say that the members of Young Church are still contributing in their own way to the church family. At the moment they are all working on designing an Easter card.

We have set them the challenge of colouring in a very detailed drawing of Jesus' entry to Jerusalem on the donkey and are including a few other Easter treats.



We are mindful that they are sitting in front of screens for schoolwork, and hope this will give them some time to relax and enjoy creating a piece of artwork. We urge you to pray for them and their teachers as schools get back to normal.

We really miss our young people and can't wait to see them again SOON.

Anne Rodger

MONEY MATTERS

Annual accounts to 31 December 2020 - Due to the advent of the Covid 19 pandemic the church was closed from late March through to 31 December 2020 and the halls were also closed for the majority of that same period. Following the deficit of 2019 this has had another significantly adverse effect on the financial position. The total income for the combined Restricted and Unrestricted funds decreased during the year by £23,642.

This reduction was split almost equally between congregational giving and other sources of income, particularly the hire of halls. The congregational total could have been much worse had not numerous members switched from giving via envelopes to using standing orders.

Thankfully there has also been a significant decrease of £21,236 in expenditure. This is due almost entirely to a reduction in costs in respect of improvements to the manse building and grounds as well as the relocation and disturbance costs all of which were related to the filling of the vacancy in 2019.

Restricted funds returned a small surplus for the year of £266. The overall combined fund balance at the end of 2020 was £31,560 (2019 - £48,490) a decrease of £16,930.

Reserves Policy

It is the Trustees' policy to attempt to hold sufficient reserves to meet foreseeable needs. At present this is beginning to give rise for concern.

Current financial year – the first two months of 2021 show a modest surplus which is largely due to the fact that our annual contribution to 121 George Street has been cut by over 20%. In addition, many regular costs are not currently being incurred - e.g. cleaning, organist, or reduced expenditure due to the current closure – e.g. heating. This means that we should expect a significant increase in expenditure as and when we are able to open again. **It is therefore vital that members continue to make contributions even during the closure.**

Many more members are now giving by standing order and several have opted to make lump sum payments at regular intervals for which we are most grateful. If you are not already using either of those methods, you are encouraged to contact the treasurer to see if a suitable method can be arranged.

Jim Henderson, Treasurer

LENTEN BOOK STUDY

'FORGIVENESS'

Over the last few weeks, the group has been challenged by focussing on the central importance of forgiveness in human relationships. The author of the book, Marjorie J Thompson, is adamant that 'there is no Christianity without forgiveness.....forgiveness is the healing stream flowing out from the crucified Christ over a world that does not know how desperately it needs the healing'.

This has been a timely study as we have approached Easter. It has been an opportunity to gain a greater understanding of the sacrifice that Christ made on our behalf as a means of gaining our divine forgiveness in our relationship with God: only Christ could have said, 'they don't know what they are doing!'. Of course, this has profound implications for our ability to forgive ourselves and importantly to forgive others. As we have learnt from our study forgiveness involves self-examination, honesty about how we view ourselves and others, repentance (having sincere regret or remorse), and how to begin again. Paraphrasing words of the author: God's forgiveness offers us a way to move forward, to challenge the arrogance of self, to discover our common humanity with others of all backgrounds and persuasions, to wake up to the deeper reality of living as Christ has taught us to live. To have an ability to sustain loving relationships with others with whom we live, work and socialise.

Christ's parable of the prodigal son is presented as an immediate insight as to the essence of Christian forgiveness: in our raw unforgiving state we find it remarkable that the son's father reacts in the way that he does – welcoming him unconditionally and celebrating his son's return despite his reckless and profligate behaviour. But beyond the younger son who else requires forgiveness in this story? The older son who resents the extravagant welcome and his perceived inequality of treatment from the father? His apparent lack of love for his brother and his self-righteous judgement of his brother? The father's treatment of his two sons in which he apparently takes the older brother for granted and shows clear favouritism towards the younger son?

This challenges us to consider the complexity of this simple parable. 'Jesus seems to want us to grapple with the various forms of alienation from each other and from God in this story. Perhaps he hopes we will learn to see ourselves in the story in more than one way.' One of our members was very clear that this story revealed, at least for her, the true nature of God's (the father's) forgiveness; merciful, unconditional, and with enduring love. That response is surely worth holding on to.

The author points out that awareness, acknowledgement, and confession are the foundation for seeking and receiving forgiveness. This is why self-examination is one of the crucial spiritual exercises of the Christian life. It is the spiritual art of paying close attention to the dynamics of our hearts and

minds. It requires of us non-defensive honesty and humility before God. If we cannot see what goes on in our hearts and minds that make for health and peace, we will not be able to admit what alienates us from God, others, or ourselves. And it is worth emphasising at this point the author's conviction that 'God's absolute unconditional love gives us solid ground on which to stand with the security we need for unflinching honesty.'

We still have further to go with this book, but I hope that this has given you a flavour of some of the issues and topics that have exercised our hearts and minds in recent weeks. I would recommend this book: 'Forgiveness: A Lenten Study' by Marjorie J Thompson, published by Westminster John Knox Press, Louisville, Kentucky: it can be obtained through Kindle books. It will provide you with much thought, guidance and encouragement.

Jeff Maxwell

CHRISTIAN AID

Christian Aid is celebrating its 75th Anniversary this year and we give thanks for this organisation that represents the outreach of churches to the poorest people of the world: it fights for justice, the relief of poverty, and campaigning for tackling climate change. It continues to require our support financially so please consider donating through their web site to sustain this life-giving organisation that acts on our behalf: christianaid.org.uk

It is important also that we remember the organisation through our prayers. Please use the prayer below which is one of a number published as part of the 75th Anniversary Celebrations:

God our father, we thank you for your presence in our lives, and we thank you that you daily load us with your benefits.

We thank you for equipping us with knowledge of good from evil and helping us understand your plan and purpose for humanity.

We bless you for your love that has been shed abroad in our hearts, and even as we daily lament over the injustices we see in our communities, because of the imperfection that is resident in our mortal flesh.

We are encouraged to remain resistant in our supplication, because we know that you will do all things well.

We know Lord, that in all that we see around us, your vision will come to pass in our communities.

God of Mercy, our help from ages past,

*our very present help in the times of need,
be gracious to us your people as we ask that you bless us with the heart
of love,
that continually sees you in every boy, girl, man and woman in our
communities and in our world,
that we be your footprints here on earth and
become vessels through which injustice will be eradicated in our world
through Christ our Lord. Amen.*

Dr Anne Ene Adah-Ogoh, Christian Aid's Programme Manager for Health, Africa.

GUILD

The Guild 'phone round' is still in place and, at the point of writing, everyone seems to be well, apart from Laurene, but like all, hoping for more normality in our lives as the spring weather cuts in. We send our best wishes to Laurene, knowing that shingles is not easy to deal with. Keep her in your prayers and keep in touch with her!

The Church of Scotland Guild has announced that members have raised more than £500,000 over the last three-year fundraising cycle, which will be shared between their designated projects.

Inspired by Scotland's Year of Young People in 2018, four of the six initiatives which were chosen by the Guild focus on providing opportunities for younger generations. These include The Boys Brigade; Journeying Together, a partnership between the former World Mission Council and the Guild



lifting teenage mothers in Zambia out of poverty (Photo -Guild members visited the Journeying Together project in Zambia in early 2020); Malawi Fruits, helping young people to farm cash crops and to irrigate using solar-powered pumps; and Seema's Project, a charity working with street children in Pune, India. The remaining two groups to benefit are Join Up the Dots, a partnership between CrossReach and the Guild tackling loneliness and isolation: and The Sailors'

Society, providing practical and spiritual support to those in the maritime industry.

Guild secretary Iain Whyte said: "As we come to the end of the three years of our current projects, it's really heartening to know that the Guild has raised the amazing amount of over £520,000 for our project partners, despite the challenges of the past year when Guilds couldn't meet. "With the Malawi Fruits project having our funds matched by the United Nations, the total raised rises to almost £600,000 - money that will deeply affect lives across the world." An extra boost came from the Moderator of the Church of Scotland, Rev Dr Martin Fair, who hosted an online quiz in honour of the Guild and raised an impressive £1,500, including gift aid, towards the total.

Guild convener Mabel Wallace said: "We give thanks to God for the privilege of being able to work with these six wonderful projects and their range of work. The members of the Guild, as ever, have risen to the challenge and raised awareness, raised funds and offered prayerful support to our partners. Even when faced with the closure of Guilds over the last year, fundraising continued including through a series of on-line events including a quiz run by the Moderator, a soup lunch and a Mothers' Day afternoon tea!"

To learn more tune into this video prepared by the `church of Scotland
<https://youtu.be/jBQ42k0-FBg>

The new 2021 - 2024 partner projects will be announced in the next few weeks.

Chris Maxwell

REFLECTIONS ON LOCKDOWN

First Contributor: On looking back this year there is part of me that thinks it's gone quickly and another part that can't believe how little we have done and that this will be our second Easter out of our church in Kingswells.

The first and last lockdown have been really different: the first one seemed a little like a stay-at-home holiday to start with, good weather, lovely walks, gardening and everyone pulling together to help others by doing things like shopping for friends and neighbours, painting stones and leaving them for others to enjoy. By the second one with Winter conditions and especially after

months of the Tier system, missing seeing our families in person has become a major issue.

One of the things I am extremely grateful for is the new way of communicating by Zoom Meetings. New to me anyway. This has enabled both me and Alison to continue to meet up with friends and to get involved in activities such as Bible Study, Thursday Prayer Meeting and yoga, and Alison has many activities from quizzes to Clubbercise and discos. I have to say 'Zoom' has made all the difference to our year.

Hopefully by this time next year we will have a different perspective on our Covid year; let's hope things will be done differently and better in lots of ways.

Second contributor: How best to describe this year without entering into rant of despair is something of a challenge. Two immediate feelings come to mind: downheartedness and the 'blues', both indicating a feeling of discouragement, sadness and being in low spirits. And why? Well for me and I suspect for so many others it is the fact that I have been deprived of natural human contact, especially my family and friends, and the ability to freely roam in the country and countryside that I love.

It has become so apparent that as human beings we are so dependent on one another for our well-being and while for short times we are able to live happily within our own world there comes a time when contact with others and especially those we love and cherish is essential. I know this because after a phone call from my son, daughter-in-law or grandsons my spirits soar. And I am fortunate in having the constant companionship and loving presence of Chris, without whom life would be so much the poorer. And I do feel so much for those who live alone! But neither can I ignore my dependence on God which I know has also been important in dealing with the exigencies of my life under lockdown.

I am reminded that someone once said, 'The greatest thing that comes from faith in Christ is that putting your hope in him will not be in vain. When we follow Jesus, we can trust that *all things will work together for those who love him*. When all seems lost, knowing that He loves us, and that one day it all will make sense, makes me feel more hopeful than anything else. We just have to

remember that there is no trouble this world can throw at us, that wasn't defeated by His sacrifice. We find our peace there-in Christ alone.'

I think this is a useful reminder of what my faith (weak, though at times it may be), my hope and my love of life with which I have been gifted, can do for me and the joy and celebration that Easter can bring. Out of despair, joy really can come! I must and I do believe that!



The Church of Scotland's Listening Project, which ran from 6 November until 5 February, has been hailed as a "powerful" source of insight by volunteers tasked with collating the broad array of responses from 225 people associated with the Kirk.

The project sought to garner the views of people aged 16 and older throughout the church about their experiences of faith and church during the coronavirus pandemic, in order to listen and share what we have learnt from this difficult and challenging time. The research team is now analysing the results and expects to publicise some initial learning at the end of March, with a fuller report going to the General Assembly in May. It was particularly important to the team that the project gathered experiences from those from different generations, locations and circumstances across the Church.

Lynne McEwan, one of the volunteers who is helping with the project, said "I think the Listening Project was a good way for people's voices to be heard. "It was a fascinating insight into people's thoughts about the Church at this time. Some answers were brief, others much longer, but what impressed me was the thought that had gone into the answers. Online services and worship play a big part but not everyone has access to the technology. Some have physical difficulties (e.g. hearing). Others revelled in accessing different forms of worship.

"Relationships and fellowship are vitally important. Expressions of loneliness were touching, but examples of working together very encouraging.

“Overall, in the responses I dealt with there was a hope that the central Church had learned lessons from this time and would take account of them for the future.”

Another volunteer on the project, Richard Lloyd, said: “I especially enjoyed those responses which told a story about someone’s church life; sometimes in great detail, and it was good to hear positive accounts of how churches had been truly creative in serving their congregations and communities. Almost every response mentioned technology, and it’s clear to me that people learned a great deal about how to make good use of it, and that it will surely be part of our future.”

The Church of Scotland Listening Project was carefully designed to ensure that people could share their experiences and insights with confidence, fully assured that their confidentiality will be carefully guarded. It is hoped that everyone who participated will benefit personally as well as contribute to an important shared venture.

The project’s initial findings, updates and then the full report will be shared in the coming weeks through the Church of Scotland website and social media channels.

Church of Scotland Web Site

THE CHURCH IS EASTER

Out of death: Life

Out of blackness:

A lush green world,

Flowers in the ice,

Sunrays in the storm,

Mustard seeds galore.

Our souls enter a spiritual springtime,

Our bodies given over to leaping and dancing,

Our very beings saturated in hosannas.

Our shouting crashes in upon this world:

The Lord lives,

We live!

Resurrection sounds throughout our community.

Ann Weems