Easter - Some Personal Reflections

Pages 12/13

ALSO IN THIS ISSUE:
> Scottish Faiths Action for Refugees - p3
> The Times They are a Changin’ - p8/9
> The True Wealth of the Church Pt.3 - p16/17

Price £2.00
Editorial

‘The times they are a-changin’. Rob Barlow (P8) uses this quote from Bob Dylan to describe the challenges facing Youth Mission in Carnoustie and also across Scotland. However, this also very aptly reflects the challenges now facing all churches and indeed the whole world in light of the rapidly unfolding Covid-19 crisis. In January, as the virus shock waves initially struck in China, we watched the rising tsunami wave from afar with a naïve curiosity, continuing to go about our normal day to day lives. Then, over the following weeks, as the wave rapidly spread across the globe, governments were one by one stunned into action, scrambling to protect the social order. As governments stumble around seeking to better understand what’s going on and to find a way out of this disaster, we are reminded of Jesus teaching about those who ‘see by this world’s light’. ‘It is when a person walks at night that they stumble, for they have no light.” John 11:9-10 NIV

While the lights of this world may have gone out in our church buildings, the heavenly Light shines ever brighter as God’s Kingdom comes. For those who walk by faith in Him, Jesus says “I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life” John 8:12, and ‘if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin.’ 1 John 1v7. So, while we may not be physically able to congregate, we continue to have fellowship with one another.

We pray for God’s grace to shine on all governments, that they may have wisdom for the decisions that must be taken, decisions that will affect us all and, hopefully, help to minimise the awful suffering. We further pray that as the winds of change blow across this world, the eyes and ears of many will be opened up to understand that Jesus is the true Light of the world and so will come to know Him as their Lord and Saviour.

In this Easter edition of the magazine, it is encouraging to read the Personal Reflections on pages 12/13 of what Christ’s death and resurrection means to others in our churches. In these troubled times, it is comforting to further learn from John 11, that while events may happen so ‘that you may believe’ (vs.14), God shares in our suffering (vs.35) and longs to raise us to a new and better life with Him.

Have a blessed and happy Easter.

Alastair Wright | Stedfast Secretary
One of the big changes we have seen in Scotland has been the arrival in the past few years of Syrian refugees as part of the UK’s resettlement programme. Every local authority in Scotland has welcomed refugees, and more than 3,500 people have come since 2015. Churches have often been at the forefront of community responses to support integration, through offering welcome sessions, language support or family-friendly activities where the new Scots can make friends and learn more about Scotland’s society, culture and history.

The scale of the refugee emergency worldwide continues to grow. The United Nations High Commission for Refugees now estimates more than 70 million people have been forcibly displaced from their homes. Humanitarian catastrophes and loss of life continue at borders around the world, including in the Mediterranean and on the Greek islands. The practical and material support that we can offer to help people in these situations remains as important as ever.

For the last 18 months, ScottishFaithsActionforRefugees has been working with the Scottish Refugee Council on a new project, called the New Scots Integration Programme. This work (which is funded by the European Union’s Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund) includes two elements aimed at faith groups.

The first is we are able to offer workshops or presentations to local churches and other faith groups who want to learn more about refugee issues and refugee integration. There is funding to pay for staff time, travel and accommodation if needed. If your church would be interested in having an awareness session, please get in touch with us (details of how to do this are on our website sfar.org.uk). The funding is in place until the end of September 2020, so this spring and summer is the last chance to take advantage of this opportunity.

The second is that we are piloting a holiday hosting scheme, whereby refugees living in one part of Scotland can be offered a holiday break in the home of a church community in another part of Scotland. We have had some successful trips of Syrian folk from Aberdeenshire going to Skye, Angus and East Lothian, and are planning to hold some more holidays later in the year. The hope is that as well as providing some respite and enjoyment to refugees, it is also a chance for receiving communities to offer hospitality as well as make friends. Jesus said “when I was a stranger, you welcomed me!” and this project is showing how this very intimate act of inviting strangers who have a different language and religion into your home can be transformational for everyone involved.

The 20th June each year is international Refugee Day and this year we are hoping to hold a national ecumenical service in Glasgow, and we very much hope the United Free Church will be represented and contribute. We are also completing production of a new publication of resources for worship and prayer on the theme of refugees and asylum, which we have put together with the help of Churches Together in Britain and Ireland.

More information on the work of ScottishFaithsActionforRefugees can be found at: www.sfar.org.uk
I’ll never forget being at a European Conference of Christian leaders during which Diane Langberg, who has spent her life counselling victims of abuse of all sorts, pleaded tearfully with the audience of 500 mostly male Christian leaders, “Please, please, use your power and leadership to feed God’s sheep and not feed yourself upon God’s sheep.” It was a pin-drop moment of conviction for many. I ran into Diane in the coffee queue the next day and asked her how much of a problem she thought poor and damaging Christian leadership was. “Ubiquitous,” was her reply.

I’d love to argue that she was overstating, but my own experience over many years would back up her claim - not least my experience of the steady stream of casualties of Christian leadership who sit in my study seeking counsel. Why is this? I think one of the reasons (perhaps the principal one) concerns what is at stake in the functioning of the body of Christ (or not) as God intended it. The mission of God to bless the nations through His people depends on the body of Christ doing what God made it to do - and the body functions healthily as every member is equipped by the God-given leaders to find their place and make their unique contribution. Paul is clear in Ephesians that we have a spiritual enemy who schemes against us (Eph 6:10-13). It should be no surprise if the enemy’s schemes should particularly target the leaders - that, after all, is sound military strategy.

In Christian leadership, it is vital to understand what it is for and how it is to be exercised. The letter of Ephesians weaves together numbers of biblical and theological themes in speaking of the church and its purpose in the world. In Eph 2:11-22, Paul tells us that the peace-making work of Christ on the cross has reconciled people both vertically to God and horizontally to each other, constituting “one new humanity” (Eph 2:15). He goes on to describe this new humanity as a new temple, a “dwelling place for God by the Spirit” (Eph 2:22). In describing the foundation and building of this new temple, Paul draws on several Old Testament passages (e.g. Isa 2:1-5, Isa 52:7, Isa 57:19 and Zech 6:12-15) that all concern the Gentile nations coming to God’s dwelling place to worship him. In employing these texts to describe the building of the church, Paul is making sure we understand the inherently missional or expansionist nature of this “one new humanity”. To put it another way, the church exists as the unique dwelling place for God on earth so that people can see who God is, what he is like and can then become part of his people. The church exists to bless others.

This “missional temple” theme in Ephesians is of huge importance. Not least, it means that mission is a corporate function that depends on each part finding its place and making its contribution. In Ephesians 4:11-16, Paul switches to body imagery to describe exactly this - the body of Christ grows and “builds itself up in love” as each part does what God has made it to do (Eph 4:16). Each part finds its place and makes its contribution as leaders (those described in Eph 4:11) do what they are made to do, that is, to “equip the saints for the work of service” (Eph 4:12).

One of the key purposes of Christian leadership is, therefore, to help each member find their place and make their unique contribution so that the whole body should function and grow - should carry out the mission with which God has entrusted it. Perhaps you can begin to see that if you were the devil and you wanted to inhibit Christian mission, then one of the key things you would do would be to target leaders and neutralise them in some way.
On Sunday 26th September 2004 I stood before my new congregation in Craigmailen, my first charge. What message would I bring, where would my new ministry lay its foundations? My text that morning was:-
Romans Ch.1 Vs 1 - 17
I am not ashamed of the Gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes:
I did not believe I would ever be in that position as Pastor BUT, we don’t always know what God has planned for us.
So here I am, almost seventeen years later, and I can think of no better way to conclude my ministry than to say that: ‘I am not ashamed of the Gospel.’
For many years after my conversion I “felt called” into ministry but I thought it was just my ambition. Then, one weekend in 2003, two separate ministers both told me that they believed I should be in ministry.
I applied to the United Free Church of Scotland, and after interviews, study and preaching trials I was accepted in Spring 2004.
I was invited to preach for Craigmailen but just one week before preaching I took ill and spent the whole week in hospital. There was a man admitted who was very drunk. He kept speaking to me and the ward sister told him to leave me in peace as I was ill.
He persisted and asked me what I worked at. I replied that I was a Pastor. He was pleased about this as he had often worked with Plasterers!
I was discharged from hospital on the Saturday, preached at Craigmailen the next day, and was unanimously accepted.
I was excited about starting the Pastorate. I thought I was good with people but weekly sermon preparation was daunting. However, the study and preaching was a great privilege.
So began my journey with the Craigmailen Family.
Helping to celebrate Marriages and Baptisms has been a thrill. Counselling people with the most dire problems has been challenging. Conducting funerals has been a constant honour.
On my first Sunday, a neighbouring church was having a “Songs of Praise” evening service. A group of us from Craigmailen attended. The lady sitting next to me said: “Pastor I have something to tell you, I have a new heart”.
I put on my most pious face and said I also have a new heart. She thumped my leg and pointing to her chest and said: “no - I have had a heart transplant”.
Visiting the Craigmailen family has often been eventful.
One very lovely old lady had a dog which barked at me for the whole visit. As I was leaving, unknown to the lady, the dog bit my leg and drew blood. Complete with my injury I then visited another lady who was very deaf and shouted at me for the entire visit. I went home that day with a sore leg and a sore head.
On one occasion I visited an older lady who loved dogs so I took my wee Westie with me. The lady was delighted to pet the dog who then went to explore the sitting room. Suddenly a female voice sounded from behind the sofa asking my hostess if she was ok. My hostess hated her personal home alarm and had hidden it behind the couch. My wee Westie had stood on the red button.
Another visit was to the home of a lady who worked as a zookeeper. She knew that I was very fond of animals. Firstly, she brought through a large noisy bird which sat on my wrist, then she brought a one-metre-long snake which I held, and lastly a very large lizard which climbed up my legs and sat on my lap.
During my time in Bo’ness I have been the School Chaplain, the Hospital Chaplain and after a fashion the unofficial Chaplain at the local Tip, but that is another story.
I have enjoyed super fellowship with all the other churches in the community.
Christine and I have made many friends in the Craigmailen Family and, whilst I will certainly keep up with the folks, I will surely miss the close fellowship which I treasure so much.
I believe that the best place anyone can be is where God wants them to be. God has surely intended that I be in Craigmailen and it has been an unspeakable privilege to serve Him there.
Ten years ago I visited a residential care facility for disabled people in Perth. I went in really to play songs to people and ended up playing songs with people! What they called a music session seemed to just be giving people tambourines and shakers if they could hold them...something in me wanted to try real teaching.

My first pupil was Fiona. She was around 40, had cerebral palsy, no speech, just a little movement in her right hand, and none in her left. She was permanently in a wheelchair. I think I just asked her if she would like to have a try, and she was keen. I got hold of a small electronic keyboard, but one with good quality sounds on it, set it to a nice strings sound, mounted it on a table exactly at the right height and just started visiting Fiona regularly in her flat getting her to hold down just one note, as a kind of ‘drone’ and picked simple songs where one note would sound reasonable throughout the song. A bit Scottish...all bagpipe music works on that principle! I would pick simple pop or gospel songs, and part of the form of the lesson was that I was sitting there singing the whole songs through and playing my guitar. I think this was important because even though Fiona was only holding down one note, she was experiencing a good quality music sound right there in her room.

So that was the beginning. One or two others asked to join, and we had our first group practice. Then we were asked if we would like to play at an event within the residential home, and there we were, performing! I think I was then forming a teaching strategy for the work, with a programme consisting of individual lessons, group practices, and public performances. Each level has its importance and value. I was very keen on trying to do with music what the Paralympics have done with sport... to create a parallel programme with the able-bodied world, where all the same psychology, team spirit, work ethic, and huge sense of achievement would apply.

At that stage we didn’t even have a proper name, then one day I was chatting to orchestra member Sarah in her room, and remember saying Sarah, we have to call this something...how about the ‘challenge orchestra, or... and she turned to me very definitely and said, “No, we should call it The Inspiration Orchestra!”

Organisationally also, everything was just very ad hoc... My income had been reducing and reducing as the days of selling lots of CDs and being asked to do concerts was winding down, and I had been very grateful to have been taken on by the local Church of Scotland, as a kind of music resource person for the parish. That had been keeping me going, but with a retirement of a minister and church board decision to dispense with my services, I found myself in a real ‘on my knees’ situation. Here I had what thought was a wonderful, valuable work among disabled people that I wanted to be
involved with for the rest of my life, but I had to find some way of funding it.

A key helper in these early days of the Orchestra had been a dear lady called Margaret Benson. She was in her late 60s and had a severely disabled son called David, who was loving being involved. I knew Margaret believed very much in what I was doing, and I asked if we could meet. I wanted to broach the idea of some form of charitable trust… although I knew that setting up such a thing was quite an administrative challenge. Margaret walked into the coffee shop we had agreed to meet in, and before I had the chance to open my mouth she said “Ian… we have to form a Trust for this work!”

It also transpired that years before, when I was touring singing my songs and Psalms, Margaret had been sitting in the audience at one of my evenings in Aberdeen Music Hall. She had come out of the concert, climbed into her car with a friend, and turned to her and said… ‘I believe in my heart that one day I will be in a ministry for disabled people with Ian White’. She had held onto that for all those years… and here we were agreeing in the coffee shop, that now was the time… That has been a very powerful encouragement to me… none of us are on our own…!!!

The Inspiration Orchestra has now been an official registered Scottish Charity for 4 years. We have been very generously donated to by organisations and individuals, the number of orchestra members has risen to over 20, and we are continually encouraged that what we are doing is a good thing, and worth all the effort!

From time to time I am invited to talk about the Orchestra project, at evening events where the audience also enjoys hearing him sing some of his own songs, Psalms settings and other pieces.

This past year the Charity has expanded with a Shop project in Perth City Centre. The vision was to have much more than just a fund-raising venture selling used clothing… The initiative was to offer cards and prints all designed by artists with disabilities, and also to create an activity space where a disabled person could help play CDs of background music for customers. The first six months of opening have gone well, and more and more people visit the shop and hear about the Orchestra’s work.

Douglas Campbell writes ‘Last October I emailed Ian to ask if he might come to play at Milngavie and he replied, “Happy to sing a few songs, but my work now revolves around a disabled group called The Inspiration Orchestra.” We discussed the details and hosted a well-attended ‘Evening with Ian White’ in December with a collection for the Orchestra. Ian is a professional musician who uses his gift to communicate the Gospel in a very personable manner and the audience instantly warmed to him as he led us in praise and sang some of his new songs. He also spoke about and showed videos of ‘The Inspiration Orchestra’ and conveyed his passion for this ministry to which God has clearly called him.

Contact: ianwhite.musician@gmail.com
In October 2017, shortly before I arrived in Carnoustie, the churches had formed a group called ‘Carnoustie Churches Youth Mission’ (CCYM). This was in response to concerns that there was no organised outreach in the town and children/youth were virtually absent from the churches. The group met and laid out a plan for 2018 which involved organising Dodgeball events in a local hall with speakers from ‘Christians in Sport’. Free pizzas and drinks were offered as an extra inducement, which was much appreciated. Each church had agreed to donate £30 per month to pay for the CCYM activities.

The Dodgeball events were initially very successful with as many as 50 teens attending. Support from Christians in Sport was great and resulted in the formation of a Friday afternoon youth group, called Sports and Crosses. This group met in the same local hall on a Friday afternoon and they played games of various kinds before sitting for a short presentation on some aspect of the Christian faith. Typically, 6-12 kids came along regularly and in 2018 it was agreed to run an Alpha course on Friday afternoons. This course ran into the summer of 2019 with 4-5 kids having attended regularly. However, the June 2019 Dodgeball event was poorly attended, and it was obvious that Sports and Crosses were finished. Whilst efforts were made to recruit for the next academic year, we had no one sign up, not even from those kids who had been attending.

During the next several CCYM meetings it was agreed that a new strategy was needed, but what would that look like? The group were forced to take account of the adverse publicity that the Carnoustie Churches had been involved in since early 2018. Local support for an active LGBTQ group at the school had grown dramatically during this short period and the High School was certainly now off limits with regards anything remotely evangelical. The CCYM group took the view that there was no quick fix in terms of what would be likely to attract kids and so perhaps a longer-term approach was needed. To that end, it was decided that since so many kids milled around in the High Street on a Friday afternoon, and since winter was approaching, perhaps we should open up the Baptist Church for them. The Baptist is ideally situated and not being a standard format of ‘church’ since it was a bank in a formal life, and had various rooms and facilities that could provide a variety of spaces for interested teenagers. This next venture was called ‘YourSpaceCarnoustie’. It even had its own web site!

We started in October. The main room had snooker and table tennis options, another room had soft furnishings, still another tables/tea/coffee/toast and wifi. We put a signboard in the street. The school put notices on their Facebook page. Net result by January 2020, virtually nothing! We even chatted to known kids in the street but they clearly were not going to come in. So, at the late January CCYM meeting, we paused the initiative and agreed to pray and reflect carefully before meeting again in June.

For the time being, we are more aware that the times have certainly changed and are wondering what our next steps should be with regards mission. I cannot help but wonder whether we are seeing the end of an era in this respect:

By Rob Barlow

Bob Dylan wrote this popular song in 1964 and the iconic artist is still on tour and is scheduled for a tour of Japan this year. Indeed it is significant that the times were changing back then and continue to change, perhaps with ever-increasing speed. Recent events in Carnoustie have left this song on my mind as myself and the leaders of the other Carnoustie churches face what appears to be a virtual cessation of youth outreach in the town.

The times they are a-changin’
• If we cannot connect via births, weddings and funerals.
• If we cannot connect via church children, because there are none.
• If we cannot connect in the schools because the gospel is not acceptable.
• If we cannot connect via evangelistic events in the public domain via street evangelism or organised events like those proposed with Franklin Graham.
• If we cannot connect... What is the future of mission in our country? What of the church...?

Romans 10:14 comes to mind “How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them?” But surely ‘We’ are connecting with people all the time? We, of course, are all of God’s people, not just a few ‘experts’, and that is our challenge, to equip Gods people for mission. We know that our God is faithful and he has not given up, so neither will we. I will, of course, let you know what happens to CCYM next, but please do pray for us.

Andrew Scott retired as Session Clerk of Milngavie Church and handed over to Justin Hargreaves at the congregation’s Annual General Meeting on Saturday 22 February.

Andrew Scott retired as Session Clerk of Milngavie Church and handed over to Justin Hargreaves at the congregation’s Annual General Meeting on Saturday 22 February. Andrew was installed as Session Clerk 35 years ago in 1985 and has faithfully carried out his duties with great dignity and humility supporting the ministries of David Cartledge, Patrick Coltman and myself. He also bore the burden of serving as Session Clerk throughout two lengthy periods of vacancy.

Andrew is a graduate of Cambridge University and was employed by Strathclyde Council as a Chartered Surveyor before going on to lecture on Planning and Valuation at what is now the City of Glasgow College. Latterly he lectured on Property Management and Valuation at Glasgow Caledonian University.

Andrew has served as Moderator of the Presbytery of the West; he was Convener of the Church and Society Committee and more recently he has convened the Ministry Committee. In 2015 I had the privilege of seconding Andrew’s nomination as Moderator of the General Assembly: a role he fulfilled with the same conscientious diligence with which he has served as Session Clerk.

Since his retirement from full-time employment Andrew has had more time to apply his mind to spiritual matters. He studied at ICC and is well-read in theology. Having an interest in church history Andrew will at times quote the church fathers, especially Augustine; the reformers, particularly Calvin; and the covenanters, reminding us of our rich heritage in this ‘Land of the Book’.

Relieved of his duties as Session Clerk, Andrew is not by no means retired but continues to serve the Lord, the congregation of Milngavie and our denomination. And for that, we are grateful and give thanks to our God who gives good gifts to all his children.
Both hospices are purpose-built home from home environments, providing accommodation for eight families in each hospice from across Scotland at any one time. The hospice supports the whole family, it’s a place where families can relax, recharge their batteries and have fun with their children. We offer respite for the referred child through short planned breaks, emergency support, as well as providing that much needed one to one end of life support and care.

We are currently supporting over 300 families across Scotland, as well as a significant number of families who receive bereavement support. Some of our families have been using our hospices for several years and others come as emergency admissions from home or hospital for end of life care.

We have a purpose built room in both our hospices called the Rainbow Room. These special rooms are for families who wish to spend time with their child after death. The Rainbow Room provides a private, calm and restful place for families to spend time together, and say their final goodbyes. The child can stay in the Rainbow Room right up until the day of the funeral allowing the family extra time to say their goodbyes. Some of our referred children who die in hospital or at home may be brought to the Rainbow Room if the family wish and we also have special equipment for those who want to keep their child at home.

Bereavement support is available to the whole family: parents, siblings, grandparents and the extended family, and it doesn’t end when the families leave. This support can range from practical or emotional support from one of our social workers or help from myself in assisting with funeral arrangements or helping to make connections with local faith communities, ensuring that the spiritual, religious and cultural needs of our families are respected and met. I believe it’s more beneficial to our families if they are introduced to their local church so when the time comes, they’ll be supported within their own church community.

In my role as Chaplain, I journey with parents and families through some very happy times and also through the darkest of times. I offer religious and spiritual care to all, regardless of faith or beliefs. The loss of a child can raise big questions about life and death and I’m available to explore these questions with our families.

I also conduct the majority of the funerals at Robin House. Families often say: “We would like you to conduct the funeral service because you knew my child and you know our story.” It’s so important for families to have someone who has walked at least part of their journey with them.

Chaplaincy within the world of children’s palliative care is very different from any other kind of ministry I’ve encountered or experienced. It is a world I feel humbled and privileged to serve within. And as a mum of three, I cannot begin to imagine the heartache and pain of losing a child.
Robin House Children’s Hospice is a special place for families to spend precious time together; making memories in a home from home environment, knowing that the medical team is nearby.

There’s no better way to tell you about the work we do at Robin House than to hear a parent’s account. The following is a father’s account of his experience of Robin House.

Leanne McDowall was 20 weeks pregnant when she and Mark found out their unborn daughter was diagnosed with Edwards’ Syndrome, but they were determined to give her the best care they could.

Dad, Mark explains: “We decided to go ahead with the pregnancy. We were facing anything from a miscarriage to stillbirth, or up to a year with our baby. She deserved a chance to try.

Julianne was born on Thursday morning, weighing just over 3lb. It was much worse than we thought. There were other complications - her oesophagus was missing so she couldn’t eat and she had a hole between her stomach and lungs, so the stomach acid was eating away her lungs.

Julianne was in an incubator and needed full oxygen. She had a scary amount of lines in her body to give her medicine and hook her up to machines that made terrifying beeping and whistling noises.

We were clinging to the hope of an operation to repair her stomach and lungs, but it wasn’t possible. Suddenly, we didn’t have much time and Robin House seemed the best place. At the hospital, Julianne didn’t feel like our daughter. We couldn’t hold her for long or dress her. Only one family member could see her at any one time. We felt like we were just visiting.

Within the first hour of being at Robin House, we knew we’d made the right choice. We bathed her, changed her nappy and dressed her in her own clothes and blankets. We gave her a proper good cuddle - just the three of us sitting on the couch, with no noises or wires stuck all over her little body, just one tube in her nose. Julianne felt like ours for the first time. It was amazing. It was like being home.

On the Monday we had a rough night. I’d been up all night singing songs to her, but the next morning she was better. I ran to the shops to pay some bills and half an hour after getting back, she took her last breath. She was five days old. I was wandering around in a daze. I didn’t know what to do.

The support from staff was amazing. They sorted out the birth and death certificate and helped organise the funeral. Our extended family were able to visit and say their goodbyes. Staff were there for us the whole time. Without them, we couldn’t have got through it. There’s nothing I can ever do to thank them enough.

We have hundreds of photos and keepsakes the staff made for us to remember Julianne, like hand and foot prints, and we’ve got the music from the funeral service on CD. It’s amazing to have those memories.

The team at Robin House phone regularly and we’ve been to the Remembering Days. It’s a blessing to know that if we ever need CHAS, someone will help us.”

Julianne never made it home - her home was Robin House. I had the privilege of journeying with Julianne’s family from the moment they arrived and was with them as she took her last breath. I then conducted her funeral service.

It’s difficult to put into words the work we do at Robin House so I’ll leave you with words from a parent.

“At Robin House, we got to hold our daughter for the first time without tubes and equipment. We got to cuddle her... just the three of us until she took her last breath.”
Some Personal Reflections

Traditionally in the Easter edition of Stedfast, we present an article that reminds us of the theological significance of Easter and why we celebrate it. This year we decided to invite some folks to share something of what Easter means to them personally.

Moira Frew  
Calder Church, Lochwinnoch

For around 20 years now, we have invited church members and those in the various churches in the village and around us, to join us at the Lochside early on Easter Sunday. It is a climax to Holy week, and as we have gathered nightly to remember the death of our Lord, so we gather on the Sunday to remember his resurrection, our Lord and Saviour, and to shout our united “Hallelujah, Christ is risen.”

I find myself thinking of the women in the Bible who stayed at the cross when the disciples fled, who knew where the body of their beloved Saviour was laid and who had prepared spices to anoint that battered and bloodied body. It was to be their final act for the one they had followed, the one who had healed, restored and forgiven them.

Those days are far behind me now and I’ve celebrated Easter in many places. Intellectually I have a better understanding of the magnitude of the sacrifice behind Easter. And the knowledge that Easter means the defeat of death has become more significant and comforting. But the memory of that shared proclamation that Jesus is alive and victorious lives with me still.

Jane Sandell  
Corstorphine

Easter for me is all about victory and celebration. My clearest memory of Easter is as a teenager in the Church in Lossiemouth. I remember the warmth of the sun streaming in through the east-facing windows. In my memory, we are closing the service, singing Thine Be the Glory (not in the revised edition of the hymn book but daringly chosen by my minister Dad and typed out by my Mum). We were a singing congregation - not necessarily brilliant but always enthusiastic - and there was power in the music.

What I love about Easter is that Easter is hope! The truths of Easter can and do provide hope to anyone and everyone. The fact that Jesus bore my sin and my shame on the cross and three days later rose from the grave, triumphant over death, provides hope for humanity: hope that even though we are broken and troubled, God still loves us and still cares about us. It provides reassurance that our God reigns over all and nothing can keep his love for us at bay, not even death.

It gives us a purpose, a purpose to share this amazing news, that we no longer have to be weighed down by our sin but can have that weight lifted off us and placed on Jesus. We do not need to fear anything because God’s got it all in His hands. This news that others can have the same freedom by being a servant of God deserves to be known and known by everyone! Easter is the promise of love eternal. That we can eternally be with God, encompassed in his everlasting, never-changing love.

Rachel Tait  
Darnley

Easter is victory and celebration!
Good Friday

by Rev Archie Ford

A crown of thorns forced on his head. As blow by blow his hands were nailed I ne’er had felt such cruelty. From distance where I stood to see My Lord by lash and soldiers’ dice. Was stripped of all but dignity I heard the jeers and mocking taunts. Safe distance where I stood to see The air turned chill, the sky to black. Red trickling life-blood ebbed away His dying words upon that cross. “Father forgive” he said of me Golgotha, hill of pain and death. My failings clear for all to see Why is it such a special place? Here by his love I am set free

Mike Marsden
Wilson Memorial, Portobello

Now, I realise that when I think about Easter I’m supposed to focus on things like the atonement, salvation, redemption, resurrection, and all the other theological stuff associated with the death and resurrection of Jesus. But, if I’m being honest, the thing I feel most about Easter is relief…relief that it is all over, or at least for another year. Does that shock you? I hope not. Let me explain what I mean.

Prior to moving to Canada in 2001, my commemoration of Easter typically only involved one day…Easter Sunday (or possibly two if we happened to hold a Good Friday service). But now our Easter journey began on Shrove Tuesday with a Pancake Supper, followed by six weeks of mid-week Lent Lunch services. Then comes Holy Week, beginning with a big service on Palm/Passion Sunday with a Pancake Supper, followed by six weeks of mid-week Lent Lunch services. Then comes Holy Week, beginning with a big service on Palm/Passion Sunday, mid-week Communion on Maundy Thursday, and Tenebrae worship on Good Friday. There is some respite on Low Saturday, but it all kicks-off again with a Sun-rise service on Easter Sunday, followed by a church breakfast, and then a Celebration service.

So, that’s why I feel relief… relief that all the hard work in travelling with Jesus to Easter Sunday has all been worthwhile.

Graham Skinner
Drumchapel

Easter is wonderful because it reminds me that whilst I am so undeserving, I have a wonderful Saviour! A Saviour who was willing to die for my sins, because he loves me. We can be thankful for many good things in this life that make life sweet, but the reality is that life is often hard. Life is full of trials and sufferings, indeed God’s Word tells us to expect such things. However, Easter reminds me that despite present sufferings, I have a hope in Jesus so wonderful that it surpasses all earthly hope. Easter reminds me that this life is temporary and reminds us that we are journeying towards our eternal home when we will be with our Saviour and Lord for all of eternity. This then helps me to have an eternal perspective in daily life, seeing the temporary troubles in the backdrop of the wonderful promises of our Lord that one day we will be in Glory, with Him.

Archie Ford
Calder Church, Lochwinnoch

Easter Sunday at the Lochside, recalling the resurrection followed by breakfast then, the family of the Church gathered at 11 am in wonder, hope and praise is a time of such joy. I have always found Holy Week to be a blessed time for prayer and reflection and can remember Palm Sundays as a child being aware, even at a young age, that the events in Jerusalem were important. Primary School Good Friday services at Wilton Parish Church were also very special and to this day, ‘There is a green hill’ remains one of my favourite hymns.

The Good Friday services in which we read the Gospel accounts of the crucifixion are for me, moving and powerful. Over the years, through the writing of poems, I have tried to share my understanding of Jesus’ sacrifice for the world and for me. Hopefully, the one above expresses something of what Good Friday means for me.
At the age of 16 he made his profession of faith at Milngavie UF Church during the ministry of Cameron Grant, and that same year he began his studies at Glasgow University. Three years later Alex Ross was inducted as minister at Milngavie. This was significant because Mr Ross had a rather attractive daughter Barbara who took Douglas’ eye. He grew up in Milngavie UF and in his teens sensed a call to Ministry. After studies at Glasgow University where he gained an MA and BD, he then went to Princeton Theological Seminary in the United States.

1955 was a memorable year for Douglas as he completed his Masters of Theology at Princeton; he was ordained at Milngavie by Glasgow Presbytery on 15 March and on 22 July Douglas and Barbara were married in Milngavie before they set off for Malaya where Douglas was to serve as an army chaplain. Four years later Douglas was inducted as minister of Cathcart UF Church when he was preached in by no less than Professor Willie Barclay.

Douglas and Barbara settled down to life in Cathcart with their children Catherine and Alec. Of course, life in ministry is seldom settled and Douglas seems to have carried out an incredible amount of work. But whether he was preaching at Cathcart, lecturing at Jordanhill or Glasgow University or moderating a church meeting, Douglas never forgot that he was called to minister to the people as a servant of Jesus Christ. He ministered at Cathcart until 1967 and there are still a few folks there who have fond and appreciative memories of his ministry, his thoughtful leading of worship, his stimulating and challenging preaching, his conscientious pastoral care and his wise and gracious leadership of the congregation at a time of encouraging development.

Recognising that he was reconciled to God through Jesus, Douglas exercised a ministry of reconciliation and he laboured to reconcile people to God and to one another so that the church family was built upon solid relationships.

Over the years he did much to encourage good relations with other denominations believing that we could be much more effective when we work together. He also sought to encourage links with other local churches which helped pave the way for the local cooperation at Cathcart today.

---

Rev A Douglas Scrimgeour was born in Maryhill on 10th September 1930, the only child of James and Catherine Scrimgeour. He was in a sense born into the United Free Church, in which his parents were much involved. This was a home where Jesus was known and loved. Douglas had no siblings but he gained many brothers and sisters in the church. The family moved to Bearsden at the outbreak of the war and that was when Douglas began attending this church.

by Rev John Fulton and Rev Douglas Campbell
It is true to say that the qualities which folk appreciated at Cathcart have over the years been appreciated by many congregations across the presbytery and beyond. Although Cathcart was his only charge, when he took up his position at Jordanhill in 1967, despite a considerable workload he still managed to find time to serve the UF Church in a wide variety of roles over the years. Having become a member of the Youth Committee in 1959, he was soon appointed vice convener and then convener. With his interest in education, he became a member of what was the College Committee, then convener of the Training for the Ministry Committee and he had a very long involvement with the Ministry Committee where for many years he served as Adviser of Studies. In that role, he kept in touch with students for the ministry, not only offering guidance in their choice of subjects but also giving pastoral support and encouragement.

Within the presbytery he played a very active part, serving for many years on the Survey and Readjustments Committee including a period as convener. From 1986 till 2012 he was Clerk to what became the Presbytery of the West and in his gracious way he ensured that things were done decently and in order. He knew practice and procedure and followed it carefully and yet with a pastoral touch aware that it was there to facilitate the work of the church.

He was an interim moderator of many congregations and in each place went to considerable lengths, well beyond what could reasonably be expected to get alongside the folk and work with them to encourage and assist them in making wise decisions as to the way forward.

Douglas demonstrated immense faith and fully embraced the profound mystery of God and the reality of the Lord Jesus Christ, whom he sought to make known to others. He communicated a sense of reverence and awe of God along with an intimate loving relationship with Christ. And perhaps this goes some way to explaining his desire that all things ought to be done in an orderly and seemly manner. However, that did not mean that he stood aloof. Far from it, Douglas always took a keen interest in people and had time for each of them no matter how busy he was. He could put people at their ease and if there were difficulties in relationships he would seek to bring about reconciliation. He worked long days and nights and found deadlines a helpful impetus. His keen mind and clear thinking benefitted many congregations and committees.

It was a reflection of the esteem in which he was held that he was called to be Moderator of the General Assembly in 1975 and again in 1999 - and as you would expect, Douglas and Barbara fulfilled this task with enthusiasm. They were married for over 64 years and her sense of humour and outgoing personality perfectly complemented his more serious and reserved side.

As a denomination, we have a great deal for which to give thanks to God as we reflect on Douglas’s life spent in the service of his master not just within the church but in all that he did. We benefitted so much from his faith in God, his sharp thinking, his wisdom, his integrity, his compassion, his friendliness and his enthusiasm.

One of the questions asked at an ordination is ‘Are not zeal for the glory of God, love to the Lord Jesus Christ and a desire for the salvation of men your chief motives for entering into the holy ministry?’ It is a challenging question for all of us - and yet as we think of Douglas, we think of someone who clearly demonstrated these various attributes. In his leading of worship, he encouraged people to experience something of God’s glory, in his encounters with people he sought to share the love of Christ with all and his great desire was that others know the salvation Jesus offers to each of us. We thank God for Douglas’s very significant contribution to the United Free Church over so many years.
The True Wealth of the United Free Church of Scotland

By Rev Jim Neil

What was intended as a two-part article on the True Wealth of the United Free Church has evolved into a third! Far from being an afterthought, it is, in fact, an ‘outworking’ of the earlier two parts. It is an attempt to suggest a practical response to visions currently held and expressed by Assembly Committees at our last General Assembly. The response is at two levels - where the required resources may be found, but of equal importance how these can be released as testament to the nature of God and His Body, the Church.

The first article cited the extraordinary activity of the Holy Spirit in releasing energy and finance following 1929 when the continuing United Free Church came into being. Could it happen again? We were reminded that Psalm 104 speaks of a treasure house of God which is full and beyond all human need, of a treasure house containing varied gifts reflecting God’s versatility and wisdom and of a wealth wholly owned by the Lord to be used responsibly. Some principles on Biblical stewardship were identified concerning wealth. These were: Ownership, Responsibility, Accountability, Reward and True Wealth.

The second article provided examples from my ministry where exceptional income was required (and found) producing great joy, proving the goodness and benevolence of the Lord when He is approached in a right spirit. Faith allied to boldness, believing in the Lord’s sufficiency, are key components in discovering the true wealth of the Church.

This final article offers some telling Scriptural pointers which mark out ‘a True Church’.... and Christian Stewardship lies right at the heart of that Church witnessing to and proving ‘how good is the God we adore’.
There has to be a right heart and spirit in the believer when seeking His support for our visions. Before offering a biblically-based and practical suggestion to help release ‘the hidden assets’ of the United Free Church for God’s Mission, I invite all members to look in the mirror at their own response to our Church’s needs. Measured against that of the Church in Corinth, (2 Corinthians 9) how does our stewardship stand up?. Paul reflects on one distinguishing mark of the Corinthians - a righteous life shown by their GENEROSITY. A life generously lived has a harvest drawn from the wealth of heaven. Conversely, a mean spirit bears a judgment by its poverty of action. However, the hallmark of the Corinthian Church as Paul discovered was not just its generous heart for a single cause but its generous nature in ALL things (2 Cor. 9 v11). The consequence of this is a heart of thanksgiving (v11) and even more than that - a winning witness to the world (2 Cor. 9 v13).

Elisha many centuries earlier prophesied concerning the overflowing nature of God’s storehouse and his willingness to open this floodgate (2 Kings 7).

Nearly five centuries later the prophet Malachi spoke so eloquently in like terms,

“Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. Test me in this, and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that there will not be room enough to store it”. (Malachi 3:10)

IN CONCLUSION, I OFFER ONE SUGGESTION AS A POSSIBLE DISCUSSION STARTER FOR TESTING THE REALITY OF ‘FUND LOWERING’ REMEMBERING THAT ALL RESOURCES ULTIMATELY COME FROM GOD.

To generate significant funds, I envisage the creation of a hedged ‘Outreach Fund’ for General Assembly approved projects considered to be outwith the normal scope of support from Target funding. This special fund would require to be actively promoted within the life of the Church to release extraordinary levels of finance. This appeal could be composed of Living Legacies, Pledged Gifts, Covenanted Sums, Focussed Approaches To Members And Friends of the United Free Church.

It might even inspire the whole Church if significant seed money from the General Funds could be released as a bold statement of intent to bolster this fund and set it on a solid footing. This might also be a good time to refresh minds of the blessings to the Church of personal wills to include the Church and its work. This new fund could or maybe even should be prayerfully promoted annually at the General Assembly and in other ways as a means of unlocking ‘the true wealth of the Church’. My prayer is that in the fullness of time spontaneous giving would replace finance strategies. It is amazing how the Spirit can touch hearts when a specific project is officially sanctioned and presented in a clear, focussed and prayerful manner for the whole Church to embrace. Our denomination has seen something of the worth of such focussed appeals in recent times, ‘Stand By Me’ being a good example. However, such responses need to be greatly magnified’ to embrace the aspirations expressed in recent Assembly Reports.

Members may be in diverse financial circumstances, but those well blessed materially have an added responsibility to recognise where their riches come from and respond in accordance to the measure given them from on high. If we don’t find the means of supporting inspired visions as they are hatching, we may miss the few opportunities given to our Church to be revitalised. Could this be our ‘Kairos’ (God-appointed) moment to act, just as it was for Esther? (Esther 4:14).
The United Free Church of Scotland has been generously involved in Stand by Me’s work in Dembi Dollo, Ethiopia, a desperately poor town where many families live in one-roomed mud huts on barely any income. Suffering from malnutrition and too poor to afford school resources, many children are unable to attend school and as a result, they have little hope for the future.

In September, the Stand by Me Abdi Academy had the addition of 40 bright smiling faces as we welcomed new students into Kindergarten. These boys and girls have come from disadvantaged backgrounds but are excitable, playful and love attending school. Today, the 480 children in our care are receiving a great education which is helping them achieve their dreams of becoming doctors, engineers, pilots, teachers and pastors.

For the children’s families who are the poorest, struggling to provide for their children and put food on the table, they are helped through our family support programmes.

The United Free Church of Scotland’s Easter Scheme raised an incredible £9893.75 for Stand by Me’s work in Dembi Dollo. Such a significant amount will go far in improving the daily lives of children rescued from desperate circumstances.

This donation will provide a class of 40 students with breakfast and lunch for a year. For children whose families live hand to mouth, these regular meals help keep them strong, healthy and full of energy to learn and play. It will also provide 2 uniforms each for 40 students. As our children own very few clothes, a uniform is not only for school but is valued as a new outfit and brings dignity. As well as uniforms, the addition of 2 pairs of shoes for each of the 40 kids will protect children from damage and disease everywhere they travel. The United Free Church

Stand by Me rescues children from terrible circumstances, then provides the care, love and attention they need to thrive. We are caring for over 3,500 kids across the world, from Myanmar to Colombia to Ethiopia, meeting each of their individual needs from food and healthcare, to loving parents and a quality education. As we make lasting improvements to children’s lives, we show them the love of God and help them realise their potential.

By Rebekah Adams

EASTER SCHEME 2019
A BIG THANK YOU FROM
STAND BY ME
of Scotland’s support will also fund the salaries of a school cook and 2 junior teachers for a year, helping our kids receive a fantastic education so that they can rise above their circumstances and change their futures.

Despite our kids’ amazing progress, many of them still return home to small, dark mud houses and spend every night sleeping on the cold mud ground alongside their parents and siblings. The Easter Scheme donation will fund 7 beds for children in Dembi Dollo. Each bed comes with a comfortable mattress, soft pillow and warm blanket and will benefit a whole family, bringing them joy and comfort and helping our kids wake up every day rested and ready to learn.

This amazing support will help the Abdi Academy continue to be a place of education for children living in poverty and to provide hope for their parents and families.

One of these parents is Birhane, a single mum of three who faces a daily struggle for survival. Birhane always wished to provide for her children but could never afford the uniforms, books, shoes, healthcare and education needed to change their lives. But today Birhane is full of hope because her eldest daughter Sifan now attends the Abdi Academy. She commented on how much this meant to her:

“If it was not for the school, I would have no hope. But now my hope is in Sifan. When Sifan grows up, she wants to become a doctor. Sifan tells me that our lives will be changed when she gets a good job in the future.”

At the school, Sifan receives uniforms, shoes, regular food, the support of her teachers and a life-changing education. These things are not only transforming her life, but they are also a practical demonstration of God’s love to her family.

Just as these things have provided hope to Sifan’s family. The United Free Church of Scotland’s support will do the same, enhancing children’s health, dignity and happiness as well as helping their families hope for a brighter future.

More details of the work of Stand By Me and how you can support them can be found at:

www.standby.me

Zimbabwean ladies drafted the service for this year’s World Day of Prayer around the text, ‘Rise, take your mat and walk’ (John 5:2-9). Five local churches came together for the ecumenical event hosted by Ardeer U.F. in their wee tin kirk.

On arriving at the church each person was offered a drink of water, as is the custom in Zimbabwe, and a fabric cloth representing the sick man’s mat in the Bible story. As they walked in, people were met with the vibrant display of the Zimbabwean flag, African artefacts and red, yellow and white candles. These were lit by Joanne Kennedy wearing a white T-shirt with a red and yellow flower matching the candles.

The colours symbolised love, peace and reconciliation.

Members from every congregation participated in readings, prayers and meditation. This became a thought-provoking challenge as individuals reflected on Jesus’ question, “Do You Want to Get Well?” This was followed by everyone being invited to share something about their ‘mat’ within their own life. Joanne thought it was, “great everyone getting together and the singing was so strong.”

Prayers from Zimbabwean ladies hit home as concern for the country shone through in their words rather than requests for themselves. They prayed to be peacebuilders and for reconciliation in their land. Zimbabwe has recently elected a new president and although the economy is improving it is still regarded as a developing country.

Rice and sweet potatoes, which are common in Zimbabwe, added to the array of items on display and in true U.F. style, these were not wasted but taken by ladies to make soup!

Phamie Smith, who welcomed everyone at the door with Joan McGinn, found the event a “memorable experience” and enjoyed meeting up with friends from other congregations.

Nancy Cowan said, “It was wonderful to see such a full church for a community event.”
Tribute: Rev Donald Mackenzie

Donald Mackenzie was born in Gargan in 1949, the eldest boy among nine children. Donald attended Braescale School until the age of 14; then continued his studies at Lewis Castle College where he studied marine navigation, before discovering he was colour blind and that had to be the end of that!

He came to faith in Christ at the age of 19 and was ordained as an elder at 21 in the Church of Scotland in Carloway on the same day as his father. In his early twenties, he started as a night orderly in the Lewis Hospital working there for 3 years, often leading worship in the wards. It was whilst working there that he felt the call to the ministry. He was accepted as a student at the Bible Training Institute (BTI), Glasgow in 1974.

During this very important time in his life, Donald charmed one particular nurse, Catherine Morrison, and they were married in 1977 in Glasgow. Donald graduated in 1977 and began his ministry in the United Free Church in Dounby, serving there for four years. Their first son Gordon, now the minister in Lossiemouth, was born in 1978.

In 1981, he was called to Ballachulish where the family grew with the addition of Margaret-Anne in 1981 and Gavin in 1984. He served the linked charge of Ballachulish and Kinlochleven, latterly with Fort William, until 1987 when he took up the linked charge of Perth, Auchterarder and Balbeggie.

In 1981, he was called to Ballachulish where the family grew with the addition of Margaret-Anne in 1981 and Gavin in 1984. Donald graduated in 1977 and began his ministry in the United Free Church in Dounby, serving there for four years. Their first son Gordon, now the minister in Lossiemouth, was born in 1978.

In 1981, he was called to Ballachulish where the family grew with the addition of Margaret-Anne in 1981 and Gavin in 1984. Donald graduated in 1977 and began his ministry in the United Free Church in Dounby, serving there for four years. Their first son Gordon, now the minister in Lossiemouth, was born in 1978.

Tribute: Jock Hinchliffe - Elder, Sauchie & Fishcross

Jock Hinchliffe was born in Tillicoultry on October 26, 1931. On leaving school, Jock served his time as a painter and decorator. National Service with the RAF took him to York, after which he was employed by a brewery in Alloa. Jock retired at age 60.

Jock married Chrissie Ferguson in 1952. They were blessed with six children, and Jock had fifteen grandchildren and nine great-grandchildren. Chrissie came to faith many years ago, but it was only after he retired that Jock became involved in the congregation. He used his skills as a painter to the great benefit of the congregation. He became a member of the church choir, of the Moody and Sankey Group which was part of the congregation, and through these contacts, Jock was challenged to trust in Jesus Christ for himself.

On coming to faith, in 2000, he went on a trip to the Holy Land with other members of the congregation, and one of the highlights for Jock was when he was baptized in the River Jordan. For many years, Jock and Chrissie marked the entries for the denominational “Orbit” competition. He was ordained as an elder in 2004 and he served faithfully while his health allowed.

Chrissie passed away in 2013, and Jock struggled from then onwards and passed away himself on January 18th this year. We remember in prayer his children and all his family and friends.

Tribute: Joe Dawson - Elder, Sauchie & Fishcross

Joe was born in Alloa, on October 4, 1919. He was the eldest of 4 children. He went to work as a grocer after he left school. On being called up, he joined the RAF, and on being demobbed, he went to work as a Turbine Driver. He retired in October 1984.

In September 1942, Joe married Jean Jeffray. They had been married for nearly 68 years when Jean died in August 2010. Joe and Jean were blessed with two children, Jeffray and Ann.

Joe was brought up in Sauchie and Fishcross U F Church and was committed to supporting it all his life. He was a long-serving elder and also, for a good number of years, the church treasurer. For many years, he was also the church’s representative elder on the former Presbytery of Alloa and Dunfermline. A memorable year for Joe was when he was privileged to serve as the Moderator of the Presbytery.

In 2014, Joe moved into a small flat in a sheltered housing unit where he was well supported by staff. Joe celebrated his 100th birthday there last October. Sadly, his health began to decline and he slept away in his bed on Saturday February 8. We miss him in the congregation and pray that his daughter, Ann, and all his family may know the peace and comfort of the Lord Jesus Christ.