



WARMLY WELCOMED

Tempus fugit, the great Roman poet Virgil said: time flies. And in this, as in so much else, he was right. It certainly is hard to believe that four full months have passed since I first visited St Andrew's to begin my third and final placement in preparation for full-time ordained ministry in the Church of Scotland.

If my memory serves (though as I get older I increasingly find that it doesn't), this is the fourteenth church in which I have worshipped for a period of four months or more. Casting my mind across five decades and three continents, I recall with real admiration and gratitude each of these outposts of God's kingdom: the tiny, beleaguered fellowship of believers that met in Nara, Japan during the late 1970s; the curious mix of scholars, choristers, and tourists who filled the stalls in Christ Church, Oxford, during my days as a student there; the crowds who gathered each Sunday to hear the gospel at another St Andrew's - in Newport Beach, California; and many more.

So I am profoundly thankful to be able to say that I have never been part of a church at which I have been made more quickly and warmly welcome. I count it a special privilege to have had the opportunity to spend time during the past few months visiting with a number of those in the church who have long experience in and deep memories of St Andrew's and of life in Arbroath, and to learn from them about the history of the town and the role of the church within it. It is, I'm discovering, a remarkable place

All of which is to say that I have good reason to say, with another Roman writer - an itinerant preacher and part-time tradesman who went by the name of Paul: 'I thank my God every time I remember you', and 'in my prayers for all of you, I always pray with joy'. And I am looking forward to continuing my time among you in the months to come.

Donald Wood
Probationer Minister

What I Missed Most

What I missed most of all during the pandemic restrictions was people; unable to visit or meet up, having to stay at home except for essential shopping....queuing up while staying a safe distance from others with whom we would normally engage in everyday conversation.

Church life too all but disappeared; thank goodness for Zoom which allowed face to face meetings, all be it on electronic screens.

Thankfully restrictions are all but gone and at last we can enjoy a cup of coffee after church once more. Of course, thank goodness, we were able to pastorally visit by telephone and this I know was greatly appreciated by many....But we all need that close encounter of the human kind; there is nothing quite like that loving, caring touch to assure others they are not alone.

To be part of the Wednesday midweek worship is such a blessing, and enjoyed by a number of hardy souls who faithfully attend in all kinds of weather. And, thanks to Joan and her team, coffee is back on the agenda where further fellowship is enjoyed in the hall afterwards.

I was inspired, and still am, by a book I was given by a member of Brechin Cathedral on its closure. The title is, "A Psalm a Day" by John Nugee an Anglican priest in London. During the first lockdown period John decided to read

a Psalm a day and then commit his thoughts on each Psalm to paper. Alongside that he wrote a short homily of life during lockdown....a diary of family events and thoughts about spending so much time together away from everyone else. It is truly an inspiring book and has encouraged me to read and enjoy the Psalms once more.

Robin Linnekar wrote the foreword to the book and these are a few of his words.... "The Psalms present us with a miscellany of images, thoughts, rhythms, songs, prophecies, sayings, emotions and perspectives on life. There is something for everybody, everyone and anyone, the collective and individual. They are glimpses of the world that God created and works in. We are learning about God and his ways as we read his Word. We are learners as we dwell in his Word; if you like, we place an L for learning within the word WORD, too show we learn about his WORLD.

God's inspired Word, the Psalms in particular, is filled to the brim with truth and endless hope. A source of promise and encouragement during the most stressful of times. In addition, Scripture reminds us that whoever does seek the Lord in all things "shall lack no good thing" (Ps. 34:10).

Take care and be safe

With every blessing

Ian Gray

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ST. ANDREW'S ARBROATH

**Member Records
 May 2022**

Baptisms - None

Weddings - None

Funerals - None

Martin and Ian, our pastoral assistant, conducted other funerals though none were of members of our congregation. Nonetheless, we remember the bereaved families in our prayers.

IMPORTANT DATE

PLEASE NOTE - There is normally no AUGUST Quest and it has now been decided to also omit JULY.

SEPTEMBER EDITION

**Word Processed files,
 as attachments,
 should be sent directly
 to the Editor by**

Tuesday 23rd AUGUST

**(Editor's Note)
 David and Lorna Searle**

We are extremely grateful to David, our former Assistant Minister, who continues to submit his learned articles for Quest - which he faithfully does despite the difficulties facing himself and Lorna.

In his most recent email communication, David writes -

Trust you are yours are flourishing. At our end, Lorna is doing great. Recent scan (April) shows the tumour is presently stable.

Their faith in the Lord's grace is an example to us all, and we continue to hold them in our prayers.

The Ninth Commandment

You shall not bear false witness

Exodus 20:16

God is light and in him is no darkness at all
 1 John 1:5

Grace and truth came through Jesus Christ
 John 1:17

Each of the Ten Commandments reveals something of the nature of God. The Ninth Commandment is concerned with his love for truth.

Lord God, your nature is light and you love the truth. You see everything there is to see; and you know those secrets of our lives that are ugly and shameful, things we often find it hard to admit to ourselves. We are amazed, Lord, that, in spite of all you see and know, you still love us.

Lord Jesus, you came to bring to us the truth of the Father. Your teaching words, your healing actions, and your redeeming work

combine to make clear your radiant truth—the truth about your holiness, the truth about your mercy, the truth about your love. In you, grace and truth join hands, and you welcome and embrace us, sinners that we are.

Spirit of Truth, your gentle work is to take the truth as it is in Jesus and apply it to our lives. Bring us to love the truth. Give us hearts that abhor all that is dark, deceitful, dishonest. Lead us in those pathways of transparent living, where there is no shadow of false speaking, no game of pretending, no cloak of hypocrisy. Direct us in the paths of righteousness, where truth is spoke and lived in love.

My child, my will for all my people is that by living out the truth as it is in Jesus, they may daily commend themselves to everyone's conscience in my sight. (2 Cor. 4:2.) In this way, will I be glorified through lives lived in the pure light of my truth.

D Searle.

Guild News

Twenty Guild ladies visited Chalmers Cinema to watch the latest Downton Abbey film. All enjoyed the evening and they had, unplanned and unexpected, exclusive use of the cinema. We will try to ensure any future activities or outings are advertised so that anyone wishing to can join in.

As mentioned in the last Quest, Gaynor will be speaking at the big sing in Edinburgh on 24th May about our lockdown Guild in a Bag which kept us all in touch. The Annual Gathering is also in Edinburgh on the 10th September. Information regarding this should be on the Guild notice board in the church hall. I have included a short summary, kindly provided by Gaynor, of the recently held regional meeting. (Back page). I am sure everyone will find it as interesting as I did.

All that remains is to wish everyone a happy summer break. Looking forward to seeing you refreshed and raring to go in September.

“Whose we are and whom we serve”

Martin Fair

June 2022

Dear friends,

Across the whole of Scotland, Presbyteries are in the thick of it by way of preparing Presbytery Mission Plans. These have to be completed by the end of this year and will signal the greatest 'shake-up' in the life of the Church of Scotland in almost a hundred years, since the union of the Church of Scotland and Free Church in 1929.

In some senses, what's happening now is something that should have happened a long time ago. The union of 1929 resulted in almost a doubling of the number of buildings held. It was then, and has remained so, a case of too many buildings - more than were needed - and if you were starting from scratch to devise mission to the people of Scotland today, you certainly wouldn't, in the case of Arbroath for example, build two suites of buildings within 150 yards of each other as it is with St. Andrew's and Old & Abbey.

Of course we've been closing buildings for many years. The West Kirk for example is the result of various unions and closures. Our own congregation came about as the result of a union between Hopemount and St. Ninian's, the building of the former St. Ninian's Church now home to the CAFE Project.

But even so, we still have considerably too many buildings - many of them creaking and crumbling - and these place huge strain on often diminishing congregations. The closure of Brechin Cathedral is a case in point; a congregation that had dwindled away to a few handfuls of people on a Sunday and nowhere near able to find the funds to maintain the building.

So right now, we're looking for something like a 40% reduction in the number of buildings the Church has. All well and good - except for the fact that people become very attached to their buildings! There's often family history to factor in and much emotion as times past are remembered. So the question of which buildings to retain and which to dispose of remains a thorny one, not easily resolved. Does Arbroath need all of its church buildings? No, but which ones should be kept? Do we need all of the small country kirks? No, but each village wants its church.

Alongside the question of buildings, there is the question of ministers. Right now, there are 320 vacant congregations, many of them having been without a minister for years. Whilst we are recruiting new ministers, it's at a rate not even nearly high enough to keep up with the rate of retirements. And that's only going to get worse with an incredible 45% of ministers due to retire in the next five years.

The result of this is that the days of one minister, one church are gone. We're going to see far fewer ministers serving larger and larger areas. That won't be easy. But on the upside, we're going to see ministers working together in teams as never before. And with ministers working more closely together, we'll see congregations much more closely aligned - sharing in mission, sharing resources and coming together to form groups of churches operating under a single banner.

It's impossible to predict how things will look by this time next year. Big changes will have happened or will be happening. The key is that we continue to trust God in all of this and that we pray for wisdom to make the right decisions.

These verses from the great hymn, *All my hope on God is founded*, are particularly apt. Much of what is known and dear is captured in the line, '*all that human toil can fashion, tower and temple fall to dust*'. Much is going to 'fall to dust' in the years ahead but that which is true and eternal shall neither crumble nor spoil. In all of this, we shall find once more that God is good.

All my hope on God is founded,
all my trust He shall renew;
He, my guide through changing order,
Only good and only true:
God unknown, He alone
Calls my heart to be His own.

Pride of man and earthly glory,
Sword and crown betray His trust;
all that human toil can fashion,
Tower and temple, fall to dust.
But God's power, hour by hour,
Is my temple and my tower.

With love,

Martin & Elaine

mfair@churchofscotland.org.uk

Wednesday Dementia Support Café

It was good to meet up with everyone again for our Café afternoon – even better as we were able to do some home baking for the first time in a long time! After a relaxing time of cuppie, cake and chat it was time to be a bit more active with some folk busy crafting and others practising their putting skills, some for the first time. (See back page for photos.)

We ended a pleasant afternoon with a few games of Bingo and another cuppie. The Café girls are now busy preparing for our June get together when we are all looking forward to enjoying our Jubilee afternoon tea.

Regional Event St Andrew's Parish Church Dundee, Thursday 12th May Looking Forward

Where were we? Where are we? And where are we going?

The Guild arranged 'regional events' around the country and our one was last Thursday. Karen Gillon, our new General Secretary came to enthuse and inspire us – a room of Guild members from Perthshire, Dundee area and Angus with Jenni and Gaynor going from our Guild.

The Guild was established 135 years ago and over time many things have changed. The Guild history is made up of 'stories' which help us remember. We can remember – share – celebrate – learn – understand and move on. We live in changing times – in challenging times. "Life can only be understood backwards, but it must be lived forwards". She shared her 'story' about the Guild and cutting a long story short she got to know the Guild ladies of her church when she would stop off at the Guild meeting after her Guide meeting finished to walk home with her mother. One 'story' Karen remembered was when the minister had asked her to do a reading at the church service but not hav-

ing done it before she was quite anxious so the Guild ladies suggested she practise in front of them and the encouragement she got gave her the confidence to read in front of the church.

Karen suggested that through our meetings in fellowship, our action for the amazing projects we support and throughout lockdown finding ways to keep in touch and support each other, the Guild is one of the most 'radical' parts of the Church of Scotland. The projects we supported changed the way they used the funding during Covid – the Boys Brigade getting gatherings on Zoom; CrossReach used the money to buy tablets so that folk in their care were able to keep in touch with family members. The number of people with eating disorders has soared over lockdown and again one of the Guild's new projects is BEAT (beating eating disorders)

Martin Fair was the speaker and he is a great supporter of the Guild, aware that Guild members put their faith into action through the work they do and the projects they support. Martin's talk was "I Fall Down but I Get Up Again" – Christians are not immune to trials and hardships but it is how we respond to them is what counts. It is a very challenging time for the Church – are we ready to get back up again?

More In Photos

From our Wednesday Dementia Support Café

