



CALENDARS

We did manage to make a profit on the church calendars, but distribution proved to be difficult this year. Thanks to Catherine who did the bulk of the work on her travels. Hopefully, some normality will return for our 2022 calendar.

THE CHALLENGES IN THE CHURCH OF SCOTLAND

The CEO Dave Kendall has recently prepared and circulated a report on progress in reducing National Office costs and the future target for ministry numbers. Unfortunately, this does not make for encouraging reading!

During the pandemic all churches have struggled financially and the majority have seen their funds depleted in recent months. Ministries and Mission contributions have been cut for all churches but realistically, we should try to do better than just pay what we are being asked to pay in 2021, in order to support everyone working for the church and the mission of the Church of Scotland. So, how about a challenge to see if we can give enough for our spending to support what we need and also generate enough income to enable us to match what we paid for Ministries and Mission in 2020? For Laggan and Newtonmore, this would benefit the Church of Scotland by £3,835 so can we all be cheerful givers?

The Church of Scotland budget itself shows a deficit of eleven million pounds for 2021 and obviously cannot continue to operate at this negative level. This is why the number of ministry posts that can be afforded is under discussion and any aspiration to increase numbers is not achievable unless something fundamentally changes in terms of the Church's finances. The Church of Scotland has

never treated itself as a business but fortunately and unfortunately, the pandemic has highlighted problems that need to be addressed to stabilise the future. It is all work in progress!

CHRISTMAS THANKS

A big THANK YOU to everyone who was involved in the various ways we tried to celebrate Christmas out of our church buildings. Laggan put on a great light display, Kingussie also managed to light and decorate at the front of the church grounds and in Insh village church window, while in Newtonmore we had a beautiful nativity scene set on what became the Advent cupboard from which over eighty bags of gifts were distributed to people who were suggested to us in Laggan and Newtonmore, some of whom were in need, some who were being appreciated and some who might be lonely. In Kingussie sixty Christmas boxes with cake and shortbread and other small gifts, were given out in the community. So, thanks go to all who decorated, who gave and who distributed. We also thank everyone who was involved in the preparation and presentation and recording and distributing the video services for Christmas. It was a lot of work for some, but these were so well received that it was totally worth it!



The Advent cupboard and nativity scene at St. Bride's.

FROM THE MINISTER'S DESK

The minister's desk is where I am spending a lot of time these days as the Covid-19 restrictions mean that I may not undertake my normal pastoral visits in homes and hospitals. Spending a lot of time at home does not make my desk get any tidier! I know that many of you have been spending more time at your desks as well as you have taken up the challenge of learning to communicate digitally, Zooming your families and developing Whatsapp groups, as well as attending meetings of various bodies through the wonders of the internet and of course, accessing our Sunday service on line.

Since the lockdown at the beginning of January when church buildings had to be closed again, apart from funerals and very very small weddings, we have taken the short prayer services we were doing in our buildings on to Zoom. It is a second best to seeing each other in the flesh as it were, but it has its benefits. For one thing, more people are gathering at the same time and that is a great encouragement. Then again we do not have to be masked for our service and I am able to ask people if there are matters about which they would like us to pray, and where we can hear the answers! And we can also celebrate communion together, with each bringing their own elements, but all communing as one body. While we are out of our buildings, and I have no idea for how long that will be, we will continue to hold a Zoom communion on the third Wednesday of the month at 7.00p.m. On the other Wednesdays there will be a spoken word service of prayer, Bible reading and short reflections. If you have not already done so, please get in touch at Cbuchan@churchofscotland.org.uk for the log in details.

The next communion happens to fall on Ash Wednesday which this year is February 17th. It was during Lent last year that we went into lockdown. This year we will at least begin the season in a similar situation, but by now we know better how we can do worship without gathering in our buildings, and we can plan for ways to make it special, and how we will celebrate Easter. We may be allowed back in our buildings by Easter Sunday, but I expect this will still be in a masked and distanced way, so there will be a limit on how many may attend and what we may do. The Kirk Sessions and I will be

working on the best way to celebrate Easter this year, but it is too soon to make detailed plans.

Meanwhile keep praying, keep loving, keep hoping.

Your minister,
Catherine Buchan

CHURCH OFFERINGS

In Laggan and Newtonmore, there will be two changes in relation to offerings, one at the end of March and one when services are able to resume. The latter will affect all attending church as the Offering will now be collected as you enter church and it will be brought forward to the communion table at an appropriate point in the service. During the pandemic, a number have switched from envelope to standing order so this change will ensure that those with standing orders do not have to say NO when the offering is being collected.

Related to this will be a change to the WFO envelopes. Due to the reduced number wishing them, these will no longer be dated. We have purchased the minimum amount so by doing this and not dating the envelopes, the minimum supply should now do us two years instead of one!

CHURCH BANK ACCOUNTS

Some confusion was caused by typing errors in the last Newsletter so apologies for that!

The correct details are

LAGGAN AND NEWTONMORE

Sort code 80-22-60 Account 1895 8560

KINGUSSIE

Sort code 80-05-40 Account 0050 1949

Several members have changed to directing their offerings to the bank.

Standing order forms are on the websites.

FOLLOW THE NEWS

If you are unable to attend church and have computer access, you can see all the news and the sermons on www.stbrides-newtonmore.org.uk



CHURCH OFFICE BEARERS

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CHURCH FINANCE



Laggan and Newtonmore

Due to delays in receiving information from 121 as a result of the pandemic, our accounts will not be approved by the Kirk Session until their March meeting. Quite remarkably, the accounts will only show a deficit of £1 in respect of unrestricted funds (our normal activity) and a surplus of £175 in respect of restricted funds (Messy Church and Laggan public toilet) This achievement is the result of the continued active support of the congregation and it is encouraging to see a good result when many congregations are struggling to break even, so a big THANK YOU to all who have given financial support in 2020 and kept the treasurer happy!

At the end of the year, we were sitting with funds of £65,424. Obviously, the pandemic will have a knock-on effect into this current year, both in respect of our current operations but also historically in respect of a reduction in Gift Aid as a consequence of reduced open plate offerings in 2020. However, as a balance to this, 121 have reduced their requirement for our Ministries and Mission contribution for 2021 and presbytery will not be charging congregations any dues in 2021, thus potentially giving us a matching saving. With the continuing support from the congregation at its current level, we should be able to at least sustain our financial position until normality returns, hopefully later in 2021.

Kingussie

2020 was a turbulent year for the whole world and with our church working differently, like so many others, this was reflected in our income. The Kirk Session are indebted to those who have been able to continue to support the work of the church through weekly freewill offerings, cheques and standing orders and thus support the running costs including our contribution to Ministries and Mission. Abbreviated Accounts for 2020 are being sent out to Kingussie members and adherents with this newsletter in order to give a better understanding of the bigger picture for our congregation. If you have any queries about the accounts, please contact the Kingussie treasurer Jean Munro.

PARISH OF LAGGAN MINISTERS

Parson Robert Macpherson who was born in Laggan, went to Edinburgh University in the 1750's to train for the ministry, but he was 'fast tracked' because he 'had the Gaelic', to become Military Chaplain to Frasers 78th Highlanders, who were engaged in the Seven Years War. He was much respected in this most difficult role for there were many Badenoch casualties at the Battle of Quebec in 1759. On his return he farmed Dalchully and made many improvements including stone-faced ditches and liming. He



fattened many more cattle than when he took over. When a catastrophic flood swept away the houses and buildings of Lagg and Breakachy, it was Parson Robert who stepped in to fight the case of the Lagg family smallholdings, obtaining from the laird cancellation of the rent for two years. He was not so sympathetic to Breakachy whose main complaint seemed to be the loss of his wine cellar!

When the Parson was asked to go to preach in catholic Brae Lochaber, he was sceptical of any positive result. He took the precaution of taking two bodyguards and was right, when on arriving on a wild day, to find the populace was elsewhere at worship. Aberarder and Tullochroam was farmed by catholic Macdonell brothers and had been disputed territory. With the Pattock flowing west, argument was made that it should be in Lochaber. Robert became the farmer possibly as a reward for his service in Quebec. Uncharacteristically, he requested the factor, Alex Butter, demand the eviction of the Macdonnells but they were not going easily! They employed young James Boswell but although the case went all the way to the House of Lords, the Macdonnells lost and were evicted with seventy other men, women and children. Robert spent a small fortune in 1767 buying cattle and employed twelve men. However, he seems to have made a mess of things and spent many hours with the 'Bawdy Bard of Strathmashie. He weighed over seventeen stone and drank a pint of port a day as he maintained it was the best treatment for his flatulence!!

Aberarder became the first 'sheep walk' in Badenoch in 1779 when Robert sublet to Andrew Mitchell from Ayrshire, who is an ancestor of David Mitchell the comedian. He paid ten times the rent that Robert paid to the Commissioners of Annexed Estates. Parson Robert Macpherson died in 1791.

Contributed by Campbell Slimon.

KINGUSSIE CRAFT AND SOCIAL

Throughout these strange times, we have continued to sell bits and bobs from our craft stall, including church calendars of which there are still a few left. Due to present restrictions, the Rag Bag collections have been put on hold, but will be ready to start again once matters improve. New to the craft stall is a selection of small jewellery items, gifted by a friend of KPC, who at sometime in the future would like to turn her hobby into a small business venture. If looking for a small gift, do please give our Facebook page a look.

In accordance with Government instructions, we are currently social distancing! However, thoughts are developing as to how we could celebrate our eventual coming together, which of course looks like being some time away yet.



CHURCH ORGANS

During this period of little activity in our churches, all three Organs have had their little issues! The Kingussie organ gremlins previously reported by John Crombie have fortunately not had an impact on its playing ability and these will receive attention at the time of the next servicing when lockdown restrictions are eased. In Laggan the lack of regular heat has affected the playing ability of some of the notes so again a little TLC is going to be required to get it working satisfactorily again. The St Bride's organ also had some problems earlier in the pandemic, but Alan Buchan seems to have managed to work around these for the time being. All three organs have of course featured regularly in our Sunday services.

SPEYSOUND RADIO

We now have two presbytery influenced programmes on Speysound FM107.1. On a Sunday afternoon each week Rev Graham Atkinson, the minister of Abernethy, Boat of Garten and Carrbridge has initiated a Songs of Praise time at 3-00p.m. He is keen for wide participation and will be inviting favourite hymn suggestions from the general public. Ian Hall is continuing with his programme on the first Sunday of the month at 5-00p.m and he has lined up for his programmes...

Sunday 7th March

Politics and Faith...a discussion with and songs from Garth Hewitt, an Anglican priest.

Sunday 4th April

The first Easter and how it impacts us in 2021

The topic for May has still to be decided but Kate Forbes MSP will be taking part in June to look at Politics and Individual Faith.

If you are unable to tune in, these programmes are also available on www.speysound.com

PRESBYTERY

Presbytery met on Zoom on Tuesday 2nd February. There was disappointing news in that the full presbytery plan which we had agreed cannot be currently implemented as the Church has no current funding available for further Ministry Development Staff appointments. It was the intention in the plan to seek to appoint one MDS for the north of the presbytery and one for the south to work alongside the ministers, to help us develop new ways of worship and new worshipping communities alongside our existing churches. The idea was that by doing this, we would seek to reach people who are not attracted by the way we do church, though they understand the truth of the good news of Jesus. Unfortunately, all appointments, such as those we were hoping to make, have been put on long-term ice. That does not mean that what we had hoped to do is not important; it simply means that we should not expect to outsource these

ideas, but we should look around, listen to God and see what we can do ourselves. And we should remember that doing something 'new', may mean stopping doing something 'old'.

Discussions on the formation of one presbytery for the Highlands are ongoing and the next Zoom meeting on the issue will be focused on the financing of the proposed new presbytery. There is a will to succeed with this, and work is ongoing as to how such a scattered presbytery might function. All the presbyteries in Scotland are considering merger proposals as we try to reduce the number to twelve. It is anticipated that a new Highland presbytery would not come into being until at least the General Assembly of May 2022.

IS THERE A GOD?

Occasionally when the Church comes up in conversation, it is obvious that many would like to believe that there is something more than just our life on earth, but their faith in this thought is not sufficient to give them confidence to come to church to find out more and seek an experience of God. This is unlikely to be the case if a 'GOD experience' had occurred in your life.

A few weeks ago, just before Christmas, I was sitting quietly one Sunday evening catching up on the TV programmes I had recorded that day and was watching one of my favourites 'Reflections at the Quay' when I received a phone call from one of my nephews to tell me that his Dad had dropped dead that afternoon when out for a casual walk! As he had not been ill, I was totally stunned by the news and spent a period reflecting on what he had meant to me. On the day my wife died, he and his wife had journeyed to her care home, totally out of the blue and stayed by my side for support, and for that I have been eternally grateful.

When I recovered and returned to complete the programme, one of the presenters was about to say a prayer and when the words appeared along the screen, I was gobsmacked as they were totally for me that very second and included the following words of comfort...

"Be with those who have received unsettling news at this time, near or far,
Surround them with your comfort, your peace which passes all understanding,
And with others who will support them, through the next steps of their journey".

My nephew could have phoned me at any time that evening, but for me this was a 'GOD experience'. Have faith! There IS a God who can come to us with HIS light amidst all our times of darkness.

Contributed by Roy Alexander