

KIRK OF THE HOLY ROOD
MAY 2021
NEWSLETTER



Welcome again to our monthly newsletter. I cannot believe that it has been a year since we started the monthly newsletter to keep you informed during the COVID 19 restrictions and we are not quite back to normal yet! This newsletter has a lengthy update from our treasurer which he said I could edit to make shorter but I am sure many will be interested to hear how we are doing financially so I have left it as he wrote it. Enjoy the newsletter.
 Kathryn Bennie, Editor Tel: 01324 485292



Here we are again. It has been lovely to see some of you back in Church with us on a Sunday morning. We hope that as the restrictions relax more that we can get more members back and who knows we may even be allowed to sing. Wouldn't that be great. It is really hard to see your favourite Hymn on the screen and not be able to sing. It was lovely to have Brian back to play the Organ on Easter Sunday, somehow it doesn't feel the same without the Organ. I like the taped hymns but the organ just makes it for me. I told you in a past newsletter that I would be stepping down as Session Clerk. I can now tell you that Kathryn Bennie has been chosen as your next Session Clerk. I will still be there for a short while longer and we will work together to get Kathryn comfortable in taking over. Even then I will still be on hand should I be needed. I am sure the Kathryn will be a caring and competent Clerk and I wish her well in her new role.
 Helen Scott, Session Clerk



Heavenly Father we come before you handing over this time to you with our gratefulness and thankfulness that you are a Father who loves and cares for us.

We continue to pray for our family and friends asking for your protection over them and keeping them safe in this uncertain time.

We give thanks for all the NHS workers, carers and people working in the front line, for the vaccine and the efficient procedure the government are using in distributing it.

Lord we lift our minister Ronald up to you thanking you for him and the work in the Alpha and new elders courses and also being the interim moderator for St. Helen's church, Bonnybridge.

Father let us remember the folks that have not managed back to church whether for illness or just not ready yet, let them not be far away from our thoughts.

We praise you Lord God for each new day and at the end of it to say Amen

Church Family News

It has been great to see Joyce Thomson in church over the past couple of weeks and to hear that after 2 years of treatment on her leg the doctors have given her the all clear and she is looking well. Fantastic!!

Over the years our church gardens have been well looked after by Maureen & Norman Martin with a few helpers from time to time. Maureen & Norman have decided that it is time to take off their gardening gloves and step down from their role. We thank them for their efforts over the years which kept our gardens looking so good and wish them a summer of relaxation, hopefully in the sunshine, in their own garden. Thank you both.



Easter Cross
 It was lovely to see the Easter Cross return to the garden this year. Our thanks to Morrisons, Falkirk for donating the flowers and to those who worked on the cross. It was a joy to see.

A Note From The Treasurer

Given that we are unlikely to be able to have our Stated Annual Meeting for a little while yet, I have included a short summary of what I plan to present. If you have any questions on this, or any other part of finance, please just ask.

I have summarised below how the church performed in 2020, from a financial perspective, compared to 2019.

Financial Review

Income

Weekly Freewill Offerings remained virtually unchanged. This is an unbelievable achievement and speaks volumes about the generosity of our members and friends.

Fabric donations decreased by 27%

Gift Aid donations decreased by around 12%

Unsurprisingly, our Open Plate donations decreased significantly (67%)

Fundraising was also hugely restricted, but may I offer huge thanks to those who were involved. Managing to generate 10% of last year's sum was a great achievement.

Giving Day was virtually impossible, forcing a huge decrease in donations of 90%

Our hall let income was also hugely affected by restrictions, and was down 43%

Expenditure

We were unable to meet the Congregational Payments due this year, and underpaid by £16,000.

Council Tax costs have increased for the manse. This is entirely expected, as we were only liable for the last three months of 2019, where we are now covering every month.

There were no other significant changes to expenditure.

Summary

2020 has been a difficult year for many reasons. With many workplaces closed, business struggling, severe restrictions placed on travel, the banning of non-essential meeting indoors, it has been virtually impossible to retain any sense of normality. Our church has strived to cope with any and all restrictions placed upon us, while still delivering our services when possible. It has been wonderful to be able to share worship and fellowship through these difficult times, via the delights of modern technology. As we begin to see light at the end of the tunnel, I am grateful for the effort put in by so many to ensure that our church continued as best it could.

I suspect it will come as no surprise to you that our finances suffered greatly on the back of the restrictions placed upon us. With church services firstly suspended, and then strictly limited, it has been difficult to maintain the levels of offering and open plate that we would see in "normal" years. The closure of buildings and restrictions on those from different households meeting indoors severely limited our options in terms of our fundraising activities, and our hall lets.

I have no doubt that we will not be alone in this, and that many, if not all, other churches, locally and nationally, will have suffered to the same extent. What I can say, is that I am very grateful to everybody who contributed to the financial wellbeing of the church last year. You have all found a way to keep your offerings coming in, whether by embracing online banking, creating direct debits, sending cheques by post, passing on your donations to your elder, or even handing in donations when donating to the food bank. I appreciate very much the lengths you have gone to, and I am humbled by your kindness, generosity and dedication to our church. For the coming year, the challenge to balance the books will continue to be a difficult one. We have been restricted for some 4 months now, with a return to normal still some way off. The number of members we have continues to fall slightly, year on year, in keeping with the trend across most churches, and all denominations. It becomes all the more difficult to maintain our levels of income, despite the generosity of our members and visitors.

As you can imagine, our fundraising efforts this year, will be more crucial than ever before. We are in the awkward position of having to concentrate our year of fundraising activity into whatever time is available when restrictions are eased. We will hope to have a variety of fundraising events in the coming year, and I offer grateful thanks to the hard work, inspiration and infectious enthusiasm that the fund-raising committee will contribute.

If you can help to support our fundraising events (bring as many friends as you can) it will go a long way to allowing me to balance the books. The more we are seen to be paying our way, the better our chances of securing the long-term future of our church. I am optimistic that your support of these events will make a big difference.

Looking to 2021

Having reviewed the Income and Expenditure from 2020 and compared to 2019, I have attempted to forecast how we will manage to balance the books in the coming year. The impression I get is that we are not likely to return to a point of breaking even, but I am hopeful that we will get much closer than last year. While this means that we may have to carry a deficit into future years, it has been an inevitable consequence of the restrictions placed on us. We have not been alone in having to suffer these circumstances, and I am grateful that we have our church at all.

It is my duty to present the accounts to you today. All non-confidential details of the finances of the church will be made available to anybody who wishes to see them. Please just ask.

In closing, let me thank everybody who has contributed to the well-being of the Kirk of the Holy Rood in 2020 in any way, financially, spiritually, anything. My particular thanks go to those who do so much work unseen.

I am indeed privileged and honoured to be treasurer in a church of so many good people.. Take care of yourselves, and hopefully it won't be long before we can all share worship and fellowship together, in person and under normal conditions.

Thank you and best wishes

Stuart

Giving Day

We plan to hold a combined celebration of Communion and Day of Christian Giving on Sunday 6th June 2021

Given the difficulties of 2020, when restrictions prevented most of our activities, it is even more important that we support our church this year.

We plan to distribute the Giving Day envelopes along with the next newsletter, which should be with you in late May or early June, so please look out for them.

If you are not already registered for Gift-Aid, and you pay tax in any way, please consider the benefits of Gift-Aid to our church. There will be a leaflet sent with the Gift-Aid envelopes which will explain in more detail, but Gift-Aid effectively forces the taxman to add 25% to any donations made. There are no negatives whatsoever.

Thank you and best wishes, Stuart.



The Big Sixty

This year marks six decades of the congregation of Kirk of the Holy Rood. A Diamond Anniversary is worthy of celebration and we plan to do just that. A group of us have been tasked with putting forward suggestions. Of course, nothing can be decided until we know more about Covid restrictions. In the meantime, if you have an idea as to how to mark the anniversary, please pass it on by phoning 484392



The next Foodbank collection will be:

Monday 3rd May 11am to 1pm

At present we are low on adult toothbrushes, toothpaste, shampoo, gents shaving foam and pan scourers.

Thank you for your continued help.

FROM THE MANSE

“Living in the present”

Ephesians 5:15-17

“So be careful how you live. Don’t live like fools, but like those who are wise. Make the most of every opportunity in these evil days. Don’t act thoughtlessly but understand what the Lord wants you to do.”

I was inducted as the minister of the Kirk of the Holy Rood on the 26th of November 2019. Full of excitement, I could not wait to run with the ministry in Grangemouth. My desire was to visit every member of the congregation so that I could get to know them. Then move on to engaging them in creating a vision for the future of the church. Excitement was in the air.

Well, what I can say now is that things didn’t go as planned. On one hand, the pandemic came and disrupted all my plans. I never imagined that in 2020 there would be no in-person worship and I would be preaching weekly to an empty sanctuary. Technology became a lifeline. Worship, bible studies, church meetings, pastoral visits and counselling all moved to online platforms. The challenge was to master these platforms; something that I must say has not been easy.

On the other hand, the conversation about one church in Grangemouth brought a thick cloud of uncertainty over the life and work of the church. It then became challenging to make plans for the future. Before I could get my head around all this, the Presbytery Plan was approved and I now find myself in a conversation about buildings; which of the three church buildings in Grangemouth will be closed and which one will be the future church.

For a while, these two issues weighed heavily on my heart. The temptation was to mourn for what could have been. To complain to whoever was listening, crying in frustration, “This is not what I expected,” “I don’t like it here,” “I should seek a different job and leave this place.”

However, when I came across Ephesians 5:15-17, I realise that I must make the most of this opportunity. In other words, I must live, not in the past or not in the future, but in the present. This to me was so liberating.

I think this is what God wants us to do; to be present in the present moment. The problem is sometimes we lose sight of what is happening in the present because we are merely thinking about the past and the future. Being present means we let go of “what could have been” and focus on what is happening now. We think about what today requires of us and deal with that. It means we take each day as it comes. Jesus instructed us to take one day at a time. In Matthew 6:34, Jesus said, “Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.”

Absolutely, the present may be terrible, sad, lonely, or tragic. But if we are to make the most of every opportunity we must live in the present and take each day as it comes, trusting God in everything that we do. We should not live too much in the past or be filled with anxiety over the future, but we must live in the present.

Despite the challenge of the pandemic and the uncertainty of the future, we must realise that we are here now. Therefore, we must think about what today requires of us and deal with that. In doing so, we must recall the words of the Psalmist, “Be still and know that I am God” (Psalm 46:10).

I pray that we all make the most of every opportunity that God has given us. Knowing that this is what the Lord requires us to do. Let’s live in the present. Today is a gift from God that is why it’s called present.

Enjoy your present!

Ronald