

Soundings

Portobello & Joppa Parish
Church Magazine

June 2021



Portobello and Joppa Parish Church

From the editor



When I was a little girl, I was given a volume of extracts from books thought suitable for 1950s children - such as “The Coral Island”, “Kidnapped” and “The Pilgrim’s Progress”. I don’t suppose I understood the meaning of the latter but I was fascinated by the names of the people that Christian meets along his journey – Faithful, Obstinate, Pliable and so on.

We have our three-year-old granddaughter staying with us at the moment and she’s been playing with three of the dollies in our cupboard. She’s given them names: Celery, Salary and Jealousy. I can just imagine a modern version of “The Pilgrim’s Progress” – Celery would be a diet guru (or a gardener – or both); Salary would be much the same as Bunyan’s Mr Worldly Wiseman; and Jealousy – well, the name speaks for itself. They would keep in touch by mobile phone, and post about their journey on social media.

In his letter, Stewart tells us about very difficult journeys undertaken by two fathers in Israel/Palestine and asks us to imagine what it must be like to be in such a situation. Shirley has something very relevant to say about this.

In Christian Aid Week, when we try to help those in dire circumstances around the world, some members of the congregation have done a fund-raising walk for Christian Aid; while Ava has raised money by reading – lots. Stewart also tells us about the different challenges faced by the Church here in Scotland.

In this edition you can read about various lockdown experiences of our members and also find out what lockdown Sunday Stars has been like, how Junior Drama has kept going and which one of our members *didn’t* do any decorating during that time.

Thanks as ever to all contributors, regular or occasional.

Pam



From the minister

Dear Friends and Neighbours,

I write this reflection on 23 May 2021.

Exactly one year ago George Floyd died and the words ‘I can’t breathe’ have become a clarion call to remind so many of us of the sufferings experienced by those whose skin colour, religion or orientation have drawn unwanted, unfair and often violent focus and attention.

Responses have been real, heartfelt and constructive, and some have been marked with anger overflowing and boiling rage.

I have recently been reading Colum McCann’s book ‘Apeirogon’. In an impressionistic book of 1,001 chapters, echoing *1,001 Arabian Nights*, McCann tells the story of two remarkable men whose lives were shattered by the violence of Israel/Palestine.

Rami Elhanan’s daughter Smadar was killed by a Palestinian suicide bomber and Bassam Aramim’s daughter Abir was killed by an Israeli rubber bullet. They now travel together speaking to any group who will host them. On Rami’s motorcycle, in Hebrew, is printed their purpose: *It will not be over until we talk*. Recent events have sadly underscored how right they are.

Talking, real talking, is hard. Listening, real listening, is perhaps even more difficult.

How often do we know, feel and intuit the way someone else thinks, feels responds? How often do we enter the worldview and mindset of another, especially one who is different from us, perhaps very different from us?

Even if we do understand even a small portion of what it would be like to experience such fear, suffering and then exclusion, what do we then do?

Do remember that Christ entered into the world and the lives of precisely those who were at the edges, excluded and suffering. Bleeding women. Paralysed men. The dead. Those cast beyond the pale because of skin conditions.

Christ put aside cultural and religious and historical frameworks to connect with the person, the child of God, created in God's image. That miraculous love travelled in shafts of light to the core of another's soul and healed in grace.

We are called to follow Christ, to be disciples of Christ, to imitate Christ, to be Christ to and for others. That is the essence of our faith. That is the manner to exemplify and manifest that overwhelming love that lasts forever and grants to us eternal life here and now.

Our world needs healing. Desperately. Are we ready to take the plunge to heal with our bodies, minds, spirits and souls?

Here we are, Lord.

Stewart

From 80 to 50 Ministers in Edinburgh

The General Assembly of 2021

Huge changes are underway in the Church of Scotland and these are being discussed at this year's General Assembly of the Church of Scotland.

Uppermost in the minds of many people is a significant reduction in the number of ministerial posts in Edinburgh.

In 2011, the Presbytery Plan assumed 78.5 ministerial posts in Edinburgh.

Within 5 years, or by 2025, there will be 48.5 ministerial posts in Edinburgh. That's almost a 50% reduction. This reduction may perhaps be accomplished even sooner.

Why the reduction in numbers?

There are a number of reasons.

Firstly, many ministers will soon be retiring.

Secondly, far fewer ministry students are coming through to replace them.

Thirdly, numbers are declining and finances are stretched: there is simply not the money to pay for ministers for all the vacant charges.

What is being done in response?

Clusters: churches are being encouraged to work with others nearby in order to share resources and ideas. We are currently clustered with St. Martin's, Duddingston, Richmond Craigmillar and Bristo Memorial. There will thus be an opportunity to share with each other and learn together.

Lay involvement: because there will be fewer ministers, there will be more need of lay assistance. Perhaps to do sermons, or prayers, or pastoral care, or perhaps funerals.

Mission: congregations are being urged to focus on mission and, if necessary, prioritise. Choices will be required.

How will this affect PJPC?

As mentioned above, we will be working more closely with other local congregations in the Church of Scotland.

Already we have done so and there is significant scope for cooperation and drawing on the skills, talents and energies of the other congregations. I think immediately of Bill Wishart and his music at St. Martin's, Jim Jack and the initiatives at Duddingston, Liz Henderson and her amazing work at Richmond Craigmillar and specifically at Richmond's Hope and the many challenges in the area of Bristo Craigmillar.

A scoping exercise is being carried out in the Craigmillar and Niddrie areas in order to ascertain the needs in the communities. They are amongst the most challenging areas in Scotland and we have every opportunity to be involved.

Discussions will soon be underway in our own Kirk Session to think about ways to involve more of our members in tasks which the ordained ministers have typically undertaken: worship, prayer, pastoral care or others.

Other changes will no doubt follow as things unfold.

Do get in touch if you have any thoughts or questions.

Meantime, do watch this space for more updates and for more ideas.

Stewart



It was a very cold day in the very depths of winter in the countryside. Snow lay thickly on the ground and only one farmer, plus the minister, turned up for the service.

"I suppose there's no point having a service, then," said the minister.

"Well," said the farmer, "if only one cow turned up at feeding time, I'd still feed it."

Christian Aid Walk – 15 May 2021



It all started with a conversation in a breakout room after the church Zoom service on the 25th of April. It was suggested we might do a sponsored walk round the Portobello churches. Ella liked this idea and contacted Christian Aid and planned a route for the walk. Ella contacted Elaine and me (Sheena) asking if we would like to join her to recce the route on Friday, 30th April. We had a very nice day walking the route led by Ella. Elaine and I carefully took notes of the directions, Elaine on her phone and I with paper and pen. We stopped for lunch in the gardens at Duddingston Kirk Hall and were pleased to see there were several different areas and benches where our groups could spread out to have lunch. We all decided, after a few wee detours, that the route was perfect.

Two weeks later, after much to-ing and fro-ing of emails, Zoom meetings and a lot of admin done by Stewart, Ella and Elaine, we were all set to walk on the 15th of May.

We had good support from Stewart, who set up a JustGiving page, advertised the event in his e-newsletters and appealed for donors and walkers. Stewart also supported by checking everybody in at the church at the start of the walk and cycling round the route to check on us.

There were 5 groups with 25 walkers all socially distanced and following the rules, all keen and ready to set out from PJPC for a fun walk. We were the first team to leave the church at 9.30am. Team A... The A Team!!

Our first stopping point and photo opportunity was St Martin's Church and we set off along to Eastfield to go up the Brunstane Burn path and over the railway bridge.

Our next port of call was Richmond Craigmillar and Bristo Memorial Churches and we walked along the Innocent Railway path and under the tunnel at Bingham. I have lived in Portobello all my life but I was taken aback by the lovely new building developments at Niddrie and Craigmillar. We stopped for a look at the sundial sculpture to Helen Crummy, who was the founder of the Craigmillar Festival. This was a highlight for me as it is such a beautiful piece of art.

We wandered on to Duddingston Kirk through the woods at the side of Cavalry Park (to take us off the main road). This prompted a couple of us Portobello High School alumni to reminisce about being taken to Cavalry Park in the winter to play hockey whether we liked it or not (and I didn't) ... happy days!! By the time we got to Duddingston Kirk we had clocked up 5 miles and were ready for lunch and the Kirk has lovely grounds for the groups to space out and have a rest and comfort stop.

Another highlight for me (Helen) is Sheena's tablet, which is always present at a church walk. In fact, you could say that it's not a church walk without the tablet!! Sheena gave everybody a wee bag of tablet to give us a burst of energy when we needed it.

From Duddingston Kirk we climbed Jacob's Ladder, all 200-ish steps, and round Dunsapie Loch – something else I hadn't done in many years. This prompted another bit of reminiscing about the Old Parish Bible Class trips to the top of Arthur's Seat on 1st May to wash our faces in the dew. Also the little service at the top where we always sang "I To the Hills Will Lift Mine Eyes" and "Morning Has Broken". I always think of these trips when I sing the hymns. Now, these were happy days (unlike the hockey).

We were on the home straight now, and after about 7.5 miles, we walked through the Figgate Park trying to spot the cygnets and down to the churches in Portobello for photo calls. By this time it was raining so our photos at St

John's, Baptist, St Mark's and finishing at P&J were a bit soggy. Thankfully it rained on our last leg and we were all equipped for it and were going straight home to dry off.

I want to thank all the walkers and the organisers who made this a great event with lots of fun. Thanks also to Brian (St Martin's), Jim (Duddingston) and Liz (Richmond) for opening their churches for us.

And... a massive THANK YOU to everybody who has donated to Christian Aid. We raised almost £4000.

Helen & Sheena



Remembering

20th April

Eileen Cunningham of Musselburgh

25th April

Martin Currie of Portobello

9th May

James Campbell Murray of Joppa

10th May

Anthony Mancini of Joppa

Wedding

7th May

Jamie Wishart and Laura McKenzie

If you or another member of the congregation have a special birthday or anniversary coming up and would like to share news of this, or if you would like to share a tribute to a member who has died, please feel free to contact the editor with your contribution.



Sunday Stars 2021



Considering that we're meeting with the children on Zoom at 9.30 am on Sundays, they have been very attentive and creative with the crafts etc. There are approximately ten or twelve children in the group.

17 January: the story was about John the Baptist and the children listened to the story from Michelle and the Craftwork was drawing a dove.

24 January: We discussed the 'creation' and the children had plasticine and other modelling material and they made a variety of different animals. They were very good at it. They were encouraged to eat an apple and plant the seeds to see what would happen.

31 January: We talked about Daniel in the Lion's Den and the craft was to make a 'Lion Mask' using a paper plate. They did well.



In February: there were 2 weeks of 'Godly Plays' with Catherine and Michelle

21 February: We told the story of Esther, who married the King and persuaded him not to kill Jewish people.



The children made Queen Esther's blue crown and decorated it and they also made Stars of David.



28 February: We discussed the wedding in Cana where Jesus turned the water into wine. The craft was to draw the jug twice – once empty and then full – and make up a rhyme.

7 March: The story was about Jesus speaking to the children.

14 March: Discussion about the Lord's Prayer and the children made Mother's Day cards.

21 March: The story was about Jesus washing the disciples' feet - The craft was to draw round a foot and decorate it.

There were Godly Plays during Easter

25 April: We discussed communion, and the craft was to make a 'family' by folding paper and cutting out a family of 4 joined together.



2 May: The story was about Joseph who received a colourful coat. His jealous brothers sold him to a group of travellers. The children drew the coat and made the drawings very colourful.



9 May: The story was about David and Goliath and we discussed the fact that bigger isn't always better. The children drew large animals and small animals and discussed things such as how much humans need small animals, like bees who not only make honey but propagate plants etc



16 May: We discussed the second part of the story of Joseph when he was in Egypt and the children, who were very knowledgeable about the subject, drew Egyptian necklaces and made a mask like



Tutankhamun's.

Ann Smuga

Junior Drama

Hi everyone! We hope you are all keeping well. Things are looking to be getting back to some normality again but let's not rush it too much. Junior Drama are still having a great time playing games on Zoom. Since last time, we have played Escape Room, Detective Murder, Wink, Wink Murder, Scavenger Hunts, Never Have I amongst others, and it's great having the young people choosing and leading the games. Charlotte and I have hardly won any of the games. The kids are too good for us.

We do have some exciting news!! JD is making a short movie!!! Filming will begin on the 12th June for "12 Angry Pigs"! Think of the classic movie "12 Angry Men" and you'll get the idea but our version will be funnier.

Charlotte, our Steven Spielberg of JD, will be doing the filming with the help of Jack from JD. Scripts and casting will have been sorted out by the time you read this and we hope to show the movie when we return back to JD in September.



Well, that's all for now and we all look forward to seeing you all again soon.

Jamie

What lockdown's been like for us

Various people have kindly contributed further thoughts about their lockdown experiences. Here are a few. It's lovely to hear about what our church family has been doing – the young and the older.



What lockdown's been like for me – Morag

I almost feel guilty regarding my lockdown feelings and activities when I think of "then and now".

I was, like everyone, shocked at the immediacy of lockdown. I had not stocked up on anything but had 2 days to obtain some essentials, as the previous week had been engrossed with the Drama Club show, which fortunately we were able to complete.

Encouraged by Government to shop about 08.30 (for an OAP ?!!) I ventured out locally. Needless to say, the licensing laws were not altered to enable alcohol to be purchased. I was very wary indeed but needs must. My courage has fortunately improved. No alternative other than on-line which, as a person who is not really comfortable using current technology, I have now dealt with – and Mr Tesco has helped with heavy stuff.

I challenged myself to add at least one page of work per day to a small sketch book. 65 days passed and I had got involved in another piece of work. A beautiful spring with regular early walks and taking lots of photos of flowers and shrubs started me on "Isolation Spring", a piece of textile mixed media work – very bright and abstract.

I knitted 8 little jumpers for youngsters in anticipation of a frugal winter for some because of the businesses closing and furlough for others.

I worked on a piece of sewing for my friend and her husband to celebrate their very low-key Ruby Wedding.

I also, during this time and till winter, met 3 other ladies in our block (perhaps illegally but for our wellbeing) for 30 minutes of exercise and tai-chi. We did this on our roof terrace in the open air most mornings. Without their contact, things would have been quite different for me.

I have however been in a bubble with my friend Nancy Kent. She honoured me with this privilege which has enabled me to spend time with her and to enjoy Christmas and Easter in her home with her and her husband.

Many people have sorely missed family members and I feel so pleased that now things are improving they will be able to pick up these relationships again.

I am so lucky that I have a home which offers me such wonderful views on all sides, which so many people do not have. I am extremely content - getting lazier by the week - and will certainly take my own time to come back out into the world again.

What lockdown's been like for us – Paul

In these interesting times I often catch myself in "insufferable-dad-mode", lecturing Eilidh my daughter about how lucky we are. We have food. We have shelter. We have people who care for us, and so far we have been healthy. Lockdown hasn't been fun for the Brown family but I'd do well to remind myself that others have been less fortunate - especially when I find myself dwelling on how difficult things have been.

I have noticed a paradoxical abundance of both connection and distance, silence and noise. Working from home alongside Michelle with both kids home-schooling has involved a barrage of communications technology. Zoom meetings, Google Classroom, Meets, MS Teams, FaceTime and good old fashioned phone calls all compete for our attention whilst keeping us connected at work and school. Trying to keep up with everything would often leave me exhausted. The last thing I'd want to do would be to talk to friends

and family using the same devices that I've been juggling all day. It's never been easier to talk to people yet it's still very easy to feel lonely. I can always be thankful though for never being too far from the sea and a banjo. Both of these are great stress relievers (although arguably some may find relief from throwing a banjo into the sea). Like Michelle I too have had some Knut-like moments, berating the Forth, and while I really miss playing music together with others. one of my highlights in the last year has been (ironically) having online jam sessions with friends from Baltimore, Stockholm, Kiel, Newcastle, Achnamara and even as far afield as Tranent.



What lockdown's been like for me – Robert

I have just recently got back to school full time after a total of 7 months home learning plus holidays. At the beginning, everyone had the same feeling of novel excitement at missing school, but that quickly faded into boredom. After the easing of restrictions after July 2020, things began to look up as we were back in school. This wouldn't last long, however, as we were plunged back into home learning in January, when it felt lethargic and boring again.

For me personally, the hardest thing has been missing out on the daily contact with my friends, but a whole host of issues have affected my peers, such as lack of motivation and even physical effects of Covid. I have been trying many things to keep a routine going, such as daily walks or runs - having the dogs has helped immensely. As we come out of lockdown again, I keep reminding myself how lucky I am.

What lockdown's been like for us - Aileen, Mark, Nina and Jack – who made us an acrostic -

What we've enjoyed:

Lazier mornings

Outside space in the garden

City hikes

Kindness of strangers

Discovering nature

Ornithology

Walks by the beach

Nina's artwork

What we've missed:

Loved ones

Orchestral concerts

Choral singing

Kids' activities

Dining out

Open church, galleries, shops, sports centres, cafes, restaurants, pubs

With friends (all the things above)

National travel

What lockdown's been like for us – Corinne

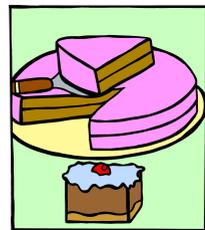
The occasional news coverage of a 'virus' in China, I'm ashamed to say, didn't capture much of my attention. At the end of 2019/ beginning of 2020 the media in the UK certainly weren't giving it much attention either. How naive was I? – and that was all to change, and with it our lives as we knew it, and suddenly.

The first time I was really aware that there was something to worry about

(and I am a worrier, so it doesn't take much!) was when my brother Chris (who lives with his family in Farnham, Surrey) urged my Mum to take care and queried why I was still going into the office when all his colleagues in London had been instructed to work from home – that was at the beginning of March 2019. A few weeks later, and life as we knew it – was gone, just like that and we didn't know how long for.

Fear, trepidation, excitement, anxiety and confusion filled our lives. We were all sent home from the office, children were sent home from school and parents and carers were thrown into a juggle of home-schooling and work. Panic buying of loo rolls became headline news, while the seriousness of Covid-19 started to hit home as hospitals filed up with sick patients, all non-essential medical procedures came to an abrupt stop and we were confined to our homes and parted from friends and family. 'Zoom' became a staple of our lives.

For Ava and me, our lockdown experience has, surprisingly, been a positive one – I appreciate we are probably in the minority. Crucially we and those we know and love – friends and family – avoided getting sick with Covid, which was the biggest fear. Having self-isolated at home for 2 weeks when the schools shut, Ava and I (a single parent) moved in with Mum and Boyd, and retired primary teacher Gran became a full-time primary teacher again to Ava. This allowed me to support CrossReach in its most challenging time ever, working from one of Mum's spare rooms. We cosied up as a family, and despite the challenges of Ava only seeing Daddy on Zoom, then – when allowed – at a distance in Mum's garden – we enjoyed quality family time, baking, crafting and playing board games.



Ava learned to read – thanks to my Mum - and she mastered the art of bike-riding too. I took to doing 'Couch to 5K' in Mum's garden, running twice a day (but going no further than the fence at the front of the garden). My daily routine included obsessively watching Nicola Sturgeon's daily updates. The occasional, but very welcome, garden drops-off from Katie Weaver of hand-

sewn bags for CrossReach staff from to safely store and wash their uniforms became a highlight for us all: caring, human contact outwith our four walls. For me, the daily fight to keep Covid out of our CrossReach services was exhausting. The sense of responsibility I felt was at times overwhelming and when Covid did sadly get into a service, the feeling of fear and failure was very real – and I wasn't even on the front line. My heart broke for our staff and service users but a breaking heart wouldn't help the reality of what was going on, so I put on my big girl pants so to speak and got on with helping support our services.

From the initial trepidation and at times genuine fear for our lives and those we loved, to the ever-changing rules and guidance, to the very gradual easing of restrictions, life is now starting to open up again. Soon we will be able to hug, and chats with friends and family won't have to be huddled outside in the cold and rain. We will even be able to worship again together as we did before – eventually.



For me, whilst I am delighted for some restrictions to ease, particularly to see and hug friends and family, I don't want life to go back to as it was. I have enjoyed a slower pace of life; not feeling the pressure to rush from one activity to another, not always having to be somewhere or doing something, spending quality time at home or out locally in the fresh air with my wee girl.

I hope and pray that our appreciation of the 'little' things (which are actually the big things) will continue long past the ending of lockdown.

What lockdown was like for me – Ava, aged 7 – and (great minds think alike)
Ava has also made an acrostic.

LOCKDOWN

L – loved spending time with Mummy, Gran and Granda, doing crafts, baking and playing board games.

O – Odd. It was an odd time, strange that things changed, like no school, not meeting and playing with friends

C – Covid 19. I learnt what this was, and how to try and keep safe from the virus,

K – Kindness - doing kind things for other people and thinking of kind things to make other people happy, when many people were alone

D – Dream. Sometimes it felt like a big dream, not going out, not seeing friends or doing normal things. Things changed but Mummy and Gran made me feel safe and I didn't really worry very much.

O – Online. Learning what Zoom was and talking to my friends and seeing my friends and uncle, aunty and cousins on zoom calls. Doing Sunday stars and dance class on the computer.

W – wishing the virus would just go away so I could see my friends again.

N – New skills. Gran taught me to read and Mummy taught me to ride my bike. I made good use of the time. And **Nicola** - Mummy and Granda always watched Nicola talk about Covid on the telly – I got fed up of them wanting to watch her all the time, though Mummy said it was important for them to know what was going on.





A Call to Prayer

Every child would love a father's blessing and every father should speak words of blessing to his children. When Isaac blessed his sons, he was speaking with divinely-given authority – not out of sentiment or favouritism. By Hebrew custom, a father's blessing had various ingredients. Firstly – touch “Jacob went close to his father, who touched him. Then his father Isaac said to him, ‘Come here, my son, and kiss me.’” Genesis 27, 22 / 26. A father's blessing included the laying on of hands, a kiss and an embrace of love and acceptance.

Jesus also knew the importance of touch: “He took the children in his arms, put his hands on them and blessed them” (Mark 10, 16). And such expressions of love still bless your children's hearts when they get them from you.

Secondly – words of affection. Before blessing Jacob, his father Isaac said to him, “Ah, the smell of my son is like the smell of a field that the Lord has blessed” (Genesis 27,27). Isaac, who loved nature, was saying, “That's my boy, a country boy like his dad.”

We need to tell our children that we're proud of them, we love them, we believe in them and we'll always be there for them.

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Israel/Palestine

Reading Stewart's "Have a nice weekend" at the end of Sunday Nudge reminds me of a large yellow notice near a village on the West Bank in Palestine. The last line on the notice said, "Have a nice day" The difference is that Stewart's wishes are genuine!

In 2007 Ian – a retired Church of Scotland Minister and Religious Education Adviser – and I, with 20 or so others, went on a trip to Palestine and Israel which was led by a former minister of The Scots Kirk in Jerusalem. We were met in the village of Jayyous by Abdul Latif, a Netherlands-trained Hydrologist, who was one of the village leaders. With a tear in his eye he thanked us for coming and said, "You are our bridge and you must tell the world of our plight."

The 400 farmers of the village had been cut off from their land by the Israeli authorities – land which had produced citrus fruits, olives and vegetables in abundance and which had been the livelihood of the village. Separating the farmers from their land were huge coils of razor wire, a wide ditch, an electric fence and a military road. Only 30 of the farmers had been given permits to go through the checkpoint to work their land. The gates of the checkpoint were due to be opened 3 times a day but the opening was at the whim of young Israeli soldiers who sometimes kept the farmers waiting for hours in the hot sun. Sometimes the opening didn't happen at all.

Near the gate stood the huge yellow sign. It welcomed the farmers to the checkpoint, said that only certain tools (ones that couldn't be used as weapons) were allowed and asked the farmers to be ready to strip to their underwear to be searched. How humiliating! Yet the last line of the sign said "Have a nice day!".

We made many other visits and we learned of the appalling way Palestinians were being treated. Many of our after-dinner talks were given by representatives of voluntary groups who help Palestinians, for example from

ICAHD who support those whose houses in East Jerusalem have been demolished and help them to rebuild. This is an Israeli organisation – there are many Israelis who are critical of their government.

Israel and Palestine are lands full of fearful people. Israelis are afraid of their Arab neighbours and of the rockets and suicide bombers of the Hamas extremists. Some people say that the Israeli government is so afraid that it aims to drive the Palestinians out and to take over all of the West Bank and East Jerusalem. Palestinians are afraid of the illegal Israeli settlements which continue to be built (200 in 2007), of the demolition of their houses and afraid of the walls and checkpoints which divide them from their land, work, schools and fellow Palestinians and from Jerusalem's hospitals, colleges and sacred places. Something more than a ceasefire is desperately needed! The Palestinians have a right to an independent state.

Shirley

Gardening with George - More plant lore
from George, horticulturist and star of the small screen.



While the danger of long lingering frosts have passed by this time of year, it is still very worthwhile keeping an eye on the weather forecast to make sure that any tender and delicate plants are not suddenly damaged by low temperatures. It is also likely that the season of gales and cold winds that dry out and wither young newly emerged foliage has passed. All in all, it looks like the plants in our gardens, balconies and patios should have peace to grow and thrive over the next three or four months.

As the growing season progresses there will be a need to keep them well supplied with water and nutrients.

Many of you will have plants in pots and containers planted in your favourite brand of compost. It is worth remembering that while there is some feeding included in the new compost, it is soon used up by the growing plants and needs to be replaced or supplemented with some new balanced fertiliser. The easiest way is to start feeding your pots and containers about six weeks after they were first planted. Feeding with a dilute solution of tomato fertiliser, which is rich in potash, will encourage good flower and flower bud production, ensuring a long season of blooms. Another method is to add a small amount of a pelleted, slow-release fertiliser to the surface of the containers and gently work it into the surface of the compost or use a fish, blood and bone fertiliser mix, which supplies all the plant food needed to ensure strong balanced growth. Both release their nutrients over a lengthy period. It is necessary to add extra feed to plants in containers because they quickly exhaust their nutrient supply as they put on their new growth and floral displays.

In the open garden and allotment, extra feeding is also needed to keep plants in tip-top condition. In their natural habitat, the nutrients that plants absorb through their roots come from the decaying remains of previous year's growth, the leaves and stems of other seasons' plant material. In our carefully tended herbaceous borders and shrubberies, we carefully remove all the spent growth at the end of each growing season, thus diminishing the available nutrient supply for the following year. To redress the shortfall, it is best to use a balanced fertiliser. Always follow the instructions on the packet and after carefully scattering the prescribed amount around your plants gently work it into the soil surface with a fork or hoe. Pelleted chicken manure or fish, blood and bone are well balanced fertilisers and give good results on most soils. Never apply more fertiliser than is recommended.

In the small space garden we have established at home outside our kitchen window we have created small raised beds from old paving slabs and the wood from some pallets. Seeds were sown in L=late March and already we

are harvesting lettuce, spinach and lots of salad leaves. The crops of bright green, succulent and tasty leaves are full of flavour and once they have been picked and enjoyed, more seed will be sown so that we can continue to enjoy fresh salads well into September and October. Each time we harvest a crop, we feed the soil with fresh fertiliser and make sure that the newly-sown seeds are well watered into their new home.

In the cold glasshouse the tomatoes, peppers, cucumber and aubergines are all planted into their final containers and grow-bags and currently are settling in well. The pumpkin seedlings from seed sown in April have all germinated now and been moved from the glasshouse into a cold frame outside, in order to get them used to outdoor conditions. They will be planted in the allotment in early June.

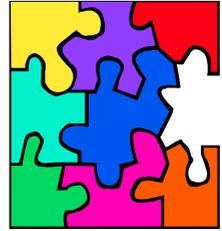
Many shops, garden centres and supermarkets are now stocking compost and a whole range of different bedding plants, all to tempt you to get planting up your pots and beds with the vibrant colours of summer. Go on - open your wallets, buy some plants and brighten up your patios, balconies and garden borders. Time to replant the raised beds at the Church, I think.

Happy Gardening
George



Brain teaser

It's **Father's Day** this month so I chose anagrams spelling out this phrase. Can you work them out?



OVERFIG – what we're asked to do to our enemies

HATSMEN – the choir sings these

HIT MY TO – a book of the New Testament

AS NONAH – the angels sang this

RAZE – a book of the Old Testament

BARBI – another word for "teacher"

ILOAMS – there was a cool pool here (it's in a hymn)

CLIP IS SED – there were 12 of them

GAIL MYTH – very strong

A HE WHY – variation on "Jehovah"

Happy Father's Day to all the dads.

Alison



Getting to know you



Ian, who says: I was born in 1951 and brought up in Ballymena, Co. Antrim. My parents were brought up on farms in North Antrim and were both the first in their family to attend university. I attended Queen's University Belfast, their alma mater and, in 1973 with two years of university to go, married Isabel, whom I had met in my last year at school. We decided it was better to share "poverty" together, though in world terms we were well off. I trained as an anaesthetist, including a year in Canada, following the career chosen by my father and elder sister. We have two children: one is yet another doctor (working in

Child Health not Anaesthetics) and one is a social worker working in Youth Justice. I have commuted at every possible opportunity by bicycle.

I've attended various churches over the years - West Church, Ballymena; Presbyterian Community Centre, Belfast University; Fisherwick Presbyterian Church, Belfast; Bloor St United Presbyterian Church, Toronto, in 1982; Armagh Road Presbyterian Church, Portadown; St Michael's Church of Scotland, Inveresk; and now Portobello and Joppa Parish Church. I've been a member of choirs in every church except Toronto.

Q. What is a favourite hymn, and why?

A. Thine be the glory, risen, conquering Son. It has a magnificent bass line and I can barely sing it without recalling my father-in-law's funeral, when it brought tears to my eyes.

Q. What is an early church memory?

A. Being on holiday in Downings, Co Donegal and being brought out of church by my father because I was fidgeting too much.

Q. What's your earliest *childhood* memory?

A. *Putting my head round a caravan door in Portnoo, Co. Donegal and saying "Is tea ready yet?"*

Q. In an alternative life, what job would you have chosen?

A. *Head of the Royal Society Gardens in Wisley—but it's highly unlikely they would have chosen me.*

Q. What are you reading at the moment?

A. *Mother Tongue: The Story of the English Language by Bill Bryson*

Q. How did you find lockdown?

A. *Challenging.*

Q. What extra tasks have you done/ are you planning to do before lockdown is completely over?

A. *I am one of 27 cousins on my mother's side and managed to organise a Zoom meeting of 25 from all round the world on the first Sunday in May last year - some cousins "met" for the first time in a Zoom Room. I renamed our cycling group FECIT (Friends Enjoying Cycling In Turmoil – parton Father Jack), trained online with Scottish Cycling as a Covid Officer and maintained regular group cycles until a county border restriction was brought in. Planned not to paint the bedroom and achieved this goal.*



Q. What are you longing to do once lockdown is completely over?

A. *Take the leg of Herdwick hogget from the freezer and eat it (cooked slowly) inside the house with our children and grandchildren.*

Q. What is your most prized possession?

A. *My Brompton bicycle.*

Q. Tell us something that not many people know about you.

A. *On the night of the full moon in July 1992 in a campsite beside Lake Garda I skinny dipped in the beautiful warm lake water with a friend. Unfortunately when we were about 30 metres from the shore we heard shrieks of laughter as our children removed our carefully hidden stash of clothes and returned to the tents. The return run from the shoreline to the tents was tense.*

Q. What luxury would you take to a desert island?

A. *My Brompton bicycle.*

Q. What do you do to relax?

A. *Organise sunshine in the conservatory, put my feet up, start reading and go to sleep.*

Q. Where would you go in a time machine and why?

A. *Palestine – about 30 AD. To come back with an independent report.*

Q. What is a favourite quotation?

A. *The only thing that history teaches us is that history teaches us nothing (Hegel).*

Q. What kind of music do you listen to?

A. *Classical – apart from BBC Radio Ulster Sunday morning at 07.00 – Kim Lenaghan – and evening at 23.00 – John Bennett – when they churn out hits from the latter half of the 20th Century.*

Q. What do you miss (or not miss) about being a child?

A. *Most of my family tell me I'm just a big child – so not much really.*

Q. How would you like to be remembered?

A. *As a person who loved his wider family.*

Q. What gets you up in the morning (apart from your alarm clock)?

A. The first cup of tea, the opportunity to sit in the quiet of the conservatory, to look out into the garden and then fail again to master the art of meditation.

Q. What makes your heart sing?

A. Isabel. Singing.

Ava's reading marathon



Drought drives people to the brink. Storms tear families apart. Raging waters show no mercy. In Kenya, the climate crisis has made weather more extreme, whether long drought or relentless rainstorms. Christian Aid supports some of the poorest communities in the world.

Ava is in P2F at Towerbank. Her Gran, Annette, (who used to be a teacher there) had the idea that to raise money for Christian Aid (which we support every year) and encourage Ava with her reading, Ava could complete a reading challenge. Ava took up this challenge and completed it, reading 20 short books or stories in 2 weeks! Ava was very proud of herself and chose more difficult stories to read each time.



She set a target of raising £50 and smashed it, raising £385 for Christian Aid! Ava would like to thank everyone who supported her reading challenge.

Corinne

LIFE AND WORK – June 2021



Women and Livingstone The reopening of the David Livingstone Centre in Lanarkshire offers the chance of a fresh appraisal of the explorer's life, and particularly the role of his wife, Mary.

Building a Different World Interview with Carolyn Merry, new director of the mediation charity Place for Hope

Tributes to the Duke of Edinburgh Church of Scotland figures pay tribute to Prince Phillip

Assembly 2021 More reports to this year's General Assembly

An Unforgettable Experience John R Hume remembers a personal experience in a village churchyard

Looking For Deep Spiritual Truth The Very Rev Dr John Chalmers reflects on the spiritual themes in an Oscar-winning movie

A Pleasure to Serve In this month's youth column, Catriona Munro introduces her new role within the Church of Scotland Faith Impact Forum

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MAGAZINE/DIARY DEADLINES

July/August 2021

September 2021

October 2021

Sunday 20th June 2021

Sunday 22nd August 2021

Sunday 19th September 2021

Scottish Charity Number : SCO11728

Portobello & Joppa



Parish Church

Photography by Kim Kjaerside

