

# *The* **Lych Gate**

The Newsletter of St Machar's Ranfurly Church



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## MINISTER'S LETTER

### Patience and hope:

Welcome to a slimline, digital only version of the Lych Gate. As there are no organisations running and few other 'events' this copy is a bit slimmer than usual, however we still felt it was good to share some congregational news at this time.

Who could have thought a year ago that we'd have had the year we've had and that it is still not over yet! As I write we are in lockdown number 3 and the second period of not having in person worship services. A few weeks in and I'm already missing meeting with (some of) you at church on Sundays! Hopefully this phase won't last too long. All our patience has been very much tested in the past year. At least we are once more coming towards spring and longer days. If you pay attention you see green shoots amidst the frost and the snow. First spring bulbs and buds are already sprouting. It is in the core nature of the Christian faith to

practice patience and hope – to look eagerly for signs of God's work in the world and Christ's return. This patience and hope is not passive but active, whilst we *wait for* we also *work towards* God's kingdom come, for his will to be done on earth as it already is in heaven.

Paul writes this in Romans 5 (2-5) about enduring suffering:

*And we boast in the hope of the glory of God. <sup>3</sup> Not only so, but we also glory in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; <sup>4</sup> perseverance, character; and character, hope. <sup>5</sup> And hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us.*

In some way this past year has been a test of character and perseverance for all of us (though in different ways).

But in faith we know that we do not endure this test alone, or in our own strength. With

God's love poured out through the Holy Spirit, we can endure all things through his strength. If nothing else we will have realised how fragile and dependent we are – which has rid us from the illusion that we are as humans in control of everything.

As we come into the season of Lent I want to invite you to join in with a 'Take Time' Bible reading group about which there is more elsewhere in this magazine. This will be held via Zoom. Zoom is very easy to access by just clicking on a link. If you want to receive an invite, please contact me.

Another reminder that if you need practical assistance or a listening ear, please get in touch via email or phone; I don't know if you don't ask! May the blessing of God – Father Son and Holy Spirit – surround you and strengthen you.

*Hanneke*



## THE MAGIC OF NATURE

For any of you who have been watching Chris Packam and "Winterwatch" you would know each programme has a theme. On Friday 22nd January the theme was the "Magic of Nature". Saturday 23rd January dawned bright, clear and very frosty and as usual Francis & I donned our winter woolies and walking boots and set off for a ramble/clamber/wade over the hill and through the woods behind the village. Heading off the beaten track we were wandering through the woods when I spotted an amazing sight - hair ice. It was growing out of dead wood lying on the ground. I have never seen a natural phenomenon as beautiful as this. Our world and nature is a wonderful thing and in these difficult times it does you good to see something so amazing in our "back garden" . If you want to know how it happens you will have to watch "Winterwatch



Norma Hancock

### FUTURE HISTORY

This world is in a sorry state  
Of gloom and doom and strife  
It's hard, but we must try to see  
The sunny side of life.

Pick up the phone to ring a friend  
And share a joke or two  
There's nothing much to chat about  
With nothing much to do

Enjoy a walk out in the sun  
Or even in the rain  
Just get fresh air before it's time  
To isolate again

Try cooking up a unique meal  
With what is left in store  
But don't be disappointed  
If nobody asks for more

Let's hope that life will soon return  
To what it used to be  
Then this existence of today  
Will just be history

### ACCESS TO OUR ONLINE SERVICES



As we are unable to attend Church, all services are held online. Any of the following ways will let you gain access to the services, which will be livestreamed to our YouTube channel from the church:

- Go to our YouTube channel (Google: St Machar's Ranfurly Church YouTube) – if you click subscribe then it will be easier to find each week.
- Via the Sunday Morning e-mail. Within the e-mail there is a link to click which will take you directly to our YouTube channel. If it is at the same time as the service (10:30 am), you will see the live service
- At other times you will be able to see a recording of the latest service.

If you would prefer a printed copy of the Service please let your Elder know.

## TAKE TIME BIBLE MEDITATIONS DURING LENT



Do you ever feel you 'read over' the words of Bible passages? Do you find it hard to engage with the stories on a heart level? Would you like to take time to practice a Christian form of meditation? Why not participate in our Take Time sessions during Lent. This will take place via Zoom. Each session has 20 minutes of meditating on a Bible passage (relaxation exercise, guided meditation based on Bible story, silence) then there is the opportunity to either leave the Zoom or stay to share with others prompted by some 'wondering' questions. There are no right

or wrong answers and it is not a teaching Bible study group as you might have experienced previously. You don't need to have any previous experience or knowledge of the Bible or indeed meditation. You can read more about TakeTime on this website: <https://taketime.org.uk/>

It is possible to join the Zoom with your camera off if you are all zoomed out due to work or school! Depending on demand I intend to offer this on **Wednesday afternoons at 4 pm** and **Wednesday evenings at 7:30pm**, starting Wednesday 17<sup>th</sup> of February until Wednesday 24<sup>th</sup> March.

**Zoom info for Wednesday afternoon sessions 4 pm:**  
[https://us02web.zoom.us/j/89364381629?](https://us02web.zoom.us/j/89364381629?pwd=dmNlZVJ3Y3FOWWJHZEltbDBOL2c3dz09)  
[pwd=dmNlZVJ3Y3FOWWJHZEltbDBOL2c3dz09](https://us02web.zoom.us/j/89364381629?pwd=dmNlZVJ3Y3FOWWJHZEltbDBOL2c3dz09)  
Meeting ID: 893 6438 1629  
Passcode: 978721

**Zoom link for Wednesday evening sessions at 7:30pm:**  
[https://us02web.zoom.us/j/88601285756?](https://us02web.zoom.us/j/88601285756?pwd=Zk1Kb3NwYk9ycHF4d1J1WFRZM1dFdz09)  
[pwd=Zk1Kb3NwYk9ycHF4d1J1WFRZM1dFdz09](https://us02web.zoom.us/j/88601285756?pwd=Zk1Kb3NwYk9ycHF4d1J1WFRZM1dFdz09)  
Meeting ID: 886 0128 5756  
Passcode: 283253

**You do not need to sign up in advance or attend all the sessions, however, to give me a sense of number interested if you could email me to say that you're planning on doing so that would be great!**

Hanneke

### FROM THE TREASURER

I write this as I am finalising the accounts for 2020. For the Church, as for all organisations and businesses, last year was difficult in many ways, not least financially. Income was significantly reduced due to the curtailment of hall use and fundraising activities. Total income for the year was £97,102 - down from £111,687 the previous year. However, we were very fortunate that most members have been able to maintain their regular giving throughout. The lack of activities did help to limit

expenditure and this along with some cost reduction measures and restricting spending to essential items only reduced expenditure to £106,391 from £126,868 in 2019. A significant expenditure this year was for the live streaming equipment which has proved very successful in allowing everyone to follow the services even when attendance at church is not possible. With an award from Presbytery of £5,000 and donations of nearly £3,000 contributing to this, the net expenditure from our general

funds was just £4,000. Disregarding this extraordinary expenditure, the overall excess of expenditure over income was just £5,290 - a very good result in view of the circumstances in which we found ourselves. So a very big "Thank You" to all who continued to give their financial support, through standing orders, bank transfers, periodic cheques sent to the Treasurer or even plate collections when the church was open for communal worship.

Francis Hancock

## 1ST BRIDGE OF WEIR GUIDES (WEDNESDAY GUIDES)

After enjoying seeing the girls in person again during outdoor meetings last September and October, all too soon it was back to virtual Guiding. With daylight hours being so much shorter it meant it was too dark, wet and cold to safely continue our evening meetings outdoors.

Despite this we have been enjoying a varied programme meeting virtually.

We have continued to complete our Skill Builders and Unit Meeting Activities from our Girlguiding activity packs, as well as baking and crafts. Our first baking session on Zoom was to make 'Fork Biscuits' which all turned out great. I'm sure Mary Berry would have given them all ten out of ten. We had our first virtual Halloween party last October. The girls came dressed up for the evening and we made paper pumpkins, enjoyed apple bobbing and had a Halloween inspired scavenger hunt. Of course, on the Wednesday nearest to the 11<sup>th</sup> November we had a Remembrance inspired evening which included making paper poppies. We also had a really interesting session with the manager of Sangam, the Guide World Centre in India who joined us for the evening. We all learnt about Indian culture, learnt some of the language, and enjoyed a virtual tour of the centre. We finished December with Christmas craft and enjoyed making snowmen Christmas decorations using battery powered tea lights and decorated ceramic mugs with a Christmas theme.



We are now into January and being back into total lockdown we will continue on Zoom. Last summer, we had hoped that we would be back to normal by now, but it was not to be. On our first night back, we had a 2020 quiz and met some new four-legged pets that arrived at some households over the holidays. We also had a Scottish themed evening to celebrate Burns Night and will finish off our Communicate Skill Builder with an evening learning Sign Language and looking at Braille.



At the end of the month, we will have another 'Virtual Camp' and plan to make scones for supper. We will be joined by a yoga teacher to lead a session called 'laughing yoga' which I'm sure will be enjoyed by all, especially in the current circumstances.

Christine Haddock  
1<sup>st</sup> Bridge of Weir Guide

## FEBRUARY QUIZ (FIND THE FRUIT)

		Answer
1	A couple called	
2	NZ produce	
3	Classical Chinese	
4	Popeye's partner	
5	Undo rip coat	
6	O my darling	
7	Rude when blown	
8	Sounds up-to-date	
9	It's leaf provided basic cover	
10	Unwanted third party	
11	Plane pipe twisted	
12	Rage in tin note	

**October Quiz Answers:** 1. Turkey 2. Mistletoe 3. Holly 4. Bethlehem 5. Reindeer 6. Santa Claus  
7. Mince Pies 8. Advent 9. Noel 10. Christmas crackers 11. Star 12. King Herod

## CHURCHES OF THE WORLD



This church is on our doorstep and we were totally unaware of it until we came across it during one of our many walks in Lockdown.

It can be accessed from the cycle track or old railway line which runs from Kilbarchan to Lochwinnoch or alternatively from the walk which runs from the car park at the north end of Lochwinnoch to Parkhill woods.

The church is rich in history:-. Robert and Thomas Sempill supported Robert Bruce in his 14th Century campaigns and, as their reward, were granted significant stretches of land confiscated from the family of John Balliol. This included the area around Loch Winnoch.

A later Thomas, Sir Thomas Sempill of Eliotstoun, inherited the estates at Loch Winnoch. He died in 1488 at the battle of Sauchieburn

### Lochwinnoch Collegiate Church

leaving his son John to become Lord Semple.

A little later, in 1505, this John Semple built Castle Semple at the east end of Loch Winnoch - now known as Castle Semple Loch - and also founded the collegiate church near the loch shore. It is in a late gothic style and has a rectangular body with a square tower at the west end and a three-sided apse at the east end.

The school associated with the church came to be regarded as one of the finest in Scotland. Like other collegiate churches founded at around the same time in Scotland, it was built to house a college of clergy, whose main role in life was to pray for the souls of the Lord and his family.

At Castle Semple Collegiate Church there would have been a senior

priest, or Provost, six other priests, two altar boys, and an administrator. The college of priests would have lived nearby and the church became the focus of an important centre of learning. John himself died in 1513 at the battle of Flodden. He is entombed at the eastern end of the church. The tombstone of a descendant of his, Gabriel Semple, who died in 1587 is also inside the body of the church along with some more modern (19th century) graves. Collegiate Churches across Scotland ceased to be used for their original purpose after the Reformation, and Castle Semple Church fell out of use altogether, though it remained a burial enclosure until the 1800s.

Dennis Taylor

## BOYS BRIGADE



In the present circumstances the Boys Brigade cannot hold meetings but the company Section is currently having zoom meetings on Friday nights,

# NOTICES

## ASH WEDNESDAY

If you are wondering when is Ash Wednesday this year, we are only a few weeks away. February 17, 2021, is the day when many believers will recognize the beginning of Lent.

## SACRAMENT OF HOLY COMMUNION



Sunday 7th February  
10.30 am

(online at St Machar's Ranfurly Church  
YouTube)



## FUNERALS

Jesus said "I am the  
Resurrection and the Life"

William Coulson

17th December 2020

## THE CHOIR

Since September members of the Church Choir have been meeting virtually via Zoom every Thursday evening. We have covered a wide range of hymns, anthems and Christmas carols. Our rehearsals have provided an opportunity for socialising and for me it has been a chance to get to know the choir. Whilst the technology doesn't really support rehearsals (all the singers have to sing with their microphones off) we have enjoyed singing along to some commercial recordings and YouTube performances which has helped give the sense of singing together once again. Since January I have been trying to introduce some new anthems and introits to the choir as well as some less familiar/new hymns so when singing together is allowed once again the choir will be in good voice with some new repertoire to sing too!

Filling my Grandpa's (Hector Munro) shoes is a little daunting! It has been strange to have been in post for almost a year and not really been able to enjoy "normal services" or get to know the congregation either. I really am looking forward to getting to know the St. Machar's congregation and I hope that day comes soon. I'd like to thank the choir for their warm welcome and support, as well as Hanneke for all her guidance, I really do feel very much at home here. Sincere thanks must also go to our solo singers who have sung during the streamed services since September. It is daunting enough singing solo to a congregation never mind a video camera. Each of the singers has provided a wonderful contribution to our worship, and I am most grateful to Alex, Archie, Fred, Helen and Margaret for leading the singing over the past months.

If you are a budding singer and would like to join the choir for one of our Zoom meetings please get in touch! A warm welcome awaits.

Ian Munro



## CONTACTS

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## LENT AND EASTER OUTREACH

Freeland, St Mary's and St Machar's Ranfurly churches will be working together in outreach this year for Lent and Easter.

### Lent Calendar

We are planning to create an Online Lent Calendar with a daily post on a dedicated Facebook Page which will be shared to our own pages. These posts will feature an uplifting Bible text and a photo supplied by our members. Photos of the village and surrounding area can be emailed to the minister until 10<sup>th</sup> Feb ([Hanneke.Marshall@churchofscotland.org.uk](mailto:Hanneke.Marshall@churchofscotland.org.uk))



### Reading Mark's Gospel during Holy Week

We will record a number of readers from the 3 churches reading through the entire gospel of Mark, creating 6 videos which will be shared during Holy Week via Facebook and YouTube. You are invited to take 20 mins each day to watch the video and read along – this way you will get a more direct sense of the entire story of Jesus' life, passion, and death. You are also encouraged to share these videos with others.

There will be an opportunity to chat with others about what you've heard in a dedicated Zoom group.

### Holy Week and Easter Trail

Plans are also being worked out to set up a trail round the village suitable for individuals and families to visit a number of stations which tell something about the last week of Jesus' life and Resurrection. This trail can be done in stages, offering a good reason to go out of a daily walk. More information will be shared in March. Watch this space!