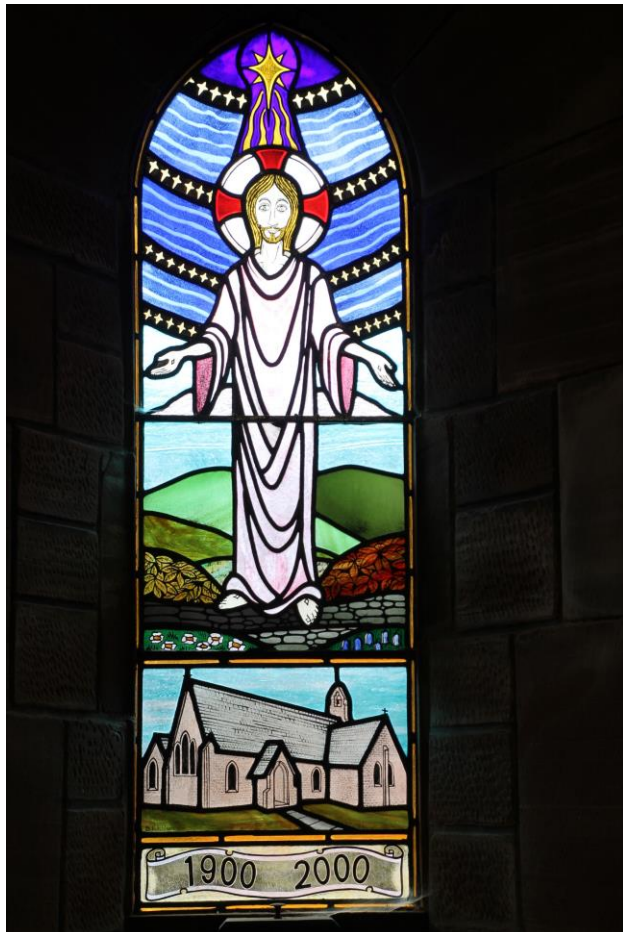




Lenten Cross: Image courtesy of istockphoto.com March 2021

To submit an item for Prospect please email Lorraine on
sessionclerk2020@gmail.com



Our Beautiful Centenary Window

March 2021

Issue 398

Scottish Charity No.
SC014212

PROSPECT ONLINE

Magazine of Stepps Parish Church

Contact Us:

Minister: Gordon Macrae 0141 779
5742

minister@steppsparishchurch.org

Session Clerk: Lorraine Robertson
sessionclerkspc2020@gmail.com

Church Organist / musician: Alastair
Sim 0141 779 1101

Watch us on YouTube each Sunday
at 11.00 am.

Follow us on Facebook.

www.steppsparishchurch.org

At the heart of our
community celebrating
faith and life to the full.

Pastoral Letter by Rev Gordon MacRae

Dear Friends,

There have been many times that I have needed to write to the congregation in my charge to alert them to important news concerning the future of the church. However, I struggle to think of an occasion when we face such a serious crisis as we do now.

In her letter Lorraine uses the word crisis many times as she informs us of the challenges that face the church, the National Church of Scotland and the local in Glasgow Presbytery and here, at Stepps Parish Church. Crisis is a word that comes from the Greek word for decision, but its meaning has developed to mean a turning point in the course of anything; a crucial time, stage, or event, and, yes, we are all, national and local, facing a crisis, a turning point which will affect us all.

The decisions and the direction we take in the next year or so will determine the future of the Kirk, locally and nationally. As I say, I have written letters alerting folk of crises on many occasions, but I am sure that we are all, no matter which congregation we belong to, at a tipping point like no other.

On Sunday, the set reading from the gospels was Mark 8:27-38. This is the 'tipping point' of narrative. Mark places the story almost exactly at the halfway point in his telling of Jesus' ministry. Up until this moment the pace of story has been ponderous. Following the crisis point in Chapter 8 the narrative picks up pace and moves towards the climax in Jerusalem. What happens now will determine the future of the whole drama. Peter declares Jesus to be the Messiah and Jesus responds by revealing that he will be arrested, be put to death on the cross and rise again on the third day. Just as they are attempting to catch their breaths the followers are told that if they are to be his disciples that they too must pick up their crosses and follow him.

A crisis, a tipping point. Would the disciples run off back to Galilee, would they leave Jesus standing alone? Or would they follow, follow on unsure of what laid ahead for their master and for them?

We know that they decided to follow, we know that the challenges they would face would be great. They will betray him, deny knowing him, cower scared to death in the upper room. Even after the resurrection following Jesus would get no easier. Each and all of them would face fear, torture and many would face their own death. If they had walked away at any point, if they taken the quite understandable decision to look after self and family, there would have been no church, Christianity would have remained a strange sect of Judaism.

What future for the Kirk? What future for Stepps Parish Church? We are at a tipping point that those who follow will look back upon. Will they have a church in which to worship? Will the Church of Scotland be merely a footnote in history?

Well, that depends on you. It depends on each of us and all of us. In the weeks, months and years that lie ahead I will be asking you to step up to the challenge facing us. You will be asked to join focus groups. You may be asked to help in practical ways. Most of all I ask that you hold your Kirk Session and all your fellow church family in your thoughts and prayers. Will there be a church in Stepps that your children, your grandchildren can attend?

This Lent we have heard much about The Covenant, the sacred promise that God has offered to each of us. I know with every fibre of my being that God has signed up for it. Have you?

With all God's Grace,

Gordon.

Session Clerk Letter

Dear Friends,

Well, here we are suddenly in March and now eight weeks into national lockdown as I write. It has been almost a year since life as we knew it changed almost overnight. The 15th of March 2020 was the last time we were all together as a church family. Never in our wildest dreams did we think that life would change so radically for us all and that we would be separated for so long. For many of us the past year has felt like our very own wilderness as we each sought to cope with the pressures of confinement or temptation in some way or another to not break the rules and attempt to go and meet a friend or travel that little bit further than we have been allowed to. Lent this year brings a more meaningful message for us as we face renewed hope as we mark the countdown to Easter and the good news of the Resurrection. We look forward in expectation that we will have defeated the battle against Covid-19 just as Jesus defeated death. The anticipation and joy that there will be life after Covid-19, just as Jesus taught us that there is life after death. For now, however the waiting goes on and our yearning for life to be renewed again. This is truly welcome news and I hope fills you with optimism that we may soon see our buildings re-open and a return to brighter days after the devastating impact the pandemic has had on so many of us this past year. However, we know that things will not be straightforward and so we must seek to pick up the pieces from where we left off. To



rebuild and adapt to the new normal and seek to thrive once again as a congregation. The church both locally and nationally we know faces many challenges and we must decide how we go forward. Later, I will advise on what this may mean for us as a congregation and as a wider church. We have faced challenges before and have overcome these and so once again I appeal to all of you who longs for a return to some form of normality to join us in adapting and thriving post pandemic. Only with everyone's support and contribution will we ensure the future of our church in Whitehill Avenue. Never more must we put our trust in God that we will emerge from the enforced closure of our churches as a vibrant congregation and put our church back at the heart of our community celebrating faith and life to the full.

Lorraine.

The Church Post Covid-19

Looking ahead to the bigger picture it is evident that things will not be quite as they were pre-Covid-19. One of the sentiments expressed by many has been a desire to return to normal, whatever normal means. This is one such dilemma that the Church faces nationally and will be debated at length in this year's General Assembly. How many of our churches will emerge from the prolonged enforced closures unscathed? How many churches felt confident that they had a secure long-term future? How many congregations were thriving? How well did things work before? These are just some of the questions that the Church of Scotland will be addressing as the reality of reduced finances has wider implications for ministry numbers and the Church struggles to stay afloat and balance the books.

Covid-19 restrictions forced us all to do things differently this past year some of which have reaped huge benefits as we learned to outreach in different ways but how will this new approach to worship affect our congregation? How many of the new ways should be retained or do we simply revert to the way things were aye done. It is by looking honestly at these questions that a new plan is set to emerge. Early preparations are already in place for Presbyteries to address these issues locally and so it was that we recently learned that once again the Strategic Planning Committee of Glasgow Presbytery are already in the early stages of planning how they will address this national *crisis* facing us.

You may think that description to be harsh but sadly there is no escaping the fact that we are facing a crisis as a Church. Not only in terms of human power but also a financial crisis. Recruitment is already reduced; a freeze is in place on employment for ancillary staff, but more worryingly ministry numbers will be greatly reduced. In some cases, by half. This all makes for grim reading and many of you will be forgiven for thinking we have perhaps been through similar before. The Strategic Planning Committee is asking us to consider buying into a new fresh concept of a more collaborative form of ministry through which a smaller number of ministers can serve larger areas of Glasgow to nurture and support mission orientated congregations. The committee believe that we will all need to work in

co-operation and in a mutually supportive way to share the good news of Christ in our communities.

Cluster ministry is one such proposal on the table, the sharing of administrative duties another but this will only work where congregations agree to work cohesively and avoid the threat of unwanted unions.

Of course, there will be some legislative changes that will need to happen before these proposals can be taken forward, but it is likely that the governance structure that only allows one ministerial charge per congregation be looked at and perhaps set-in motion at this years Assembly. So, we must sit up and take note of this early warning and not allow ourselves simply to sleepwalk into a situation that for some of us already feels like ***de ja vous!***

Furthermore, we have been given notice that very soon we will soon see a date being set for our final review in the coming weeks and so we need to forearm ourselves with a vision of how we intend to go forward in faith. It is hoped that we can dovetail our vision post COVID-19 into the bigger Presbytery plan but for us to survive we need a radical vision, and we need you all to embrace this great challenge that faces us.

We hope to host some forum discussions open to all in the congregation to explore how we can go forward putting our trust in God that together we can continue to serve our congregation and community and protect the future of our church in Whitehill Avenue.

***“Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding,
in all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight.***

Proverbs 3: 5-6

Lenten Group Discussions



Join us every Thursday at 7.30pm via Zoom as we come together in a time of reflection during the season of Lent.

We will follow the practice of Ignatian Spirituality as we try to delve deeper into the Bible as we walk with Jesus and his disciples and grow closer to God.

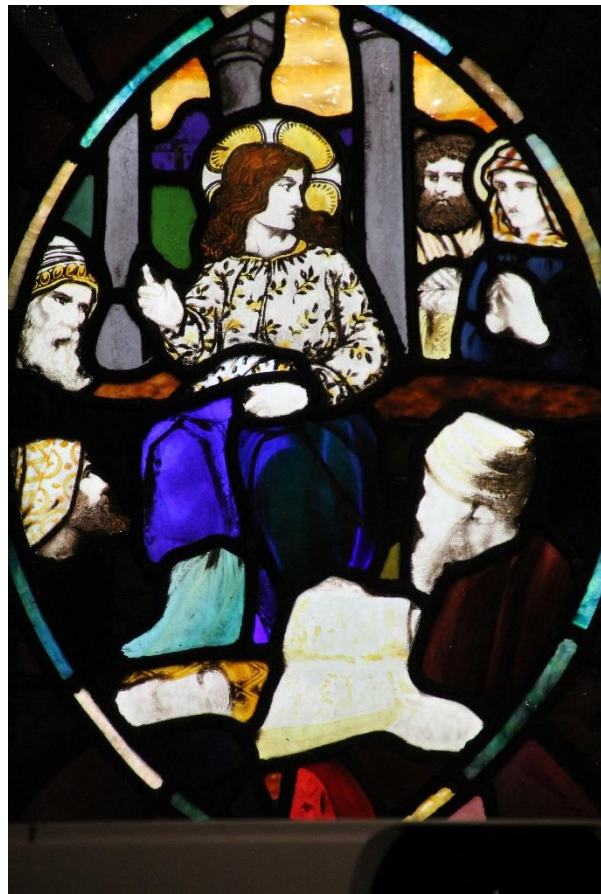
If you would like to join us simply get in touch by sending a private message via our FaceBook page or send an email to Lorraine to receive

Join us each Thursday @
7.30 p.m. via Zoom.

the Zoom meeting invitation. Meeting will last approx 45 minutes.

All are welcome.

Jesus Preaches to his Disciples





190th GLASGOW COMPANY, THE BOYS' BRIGADE

The Company has continued to operate throughout lockdown, as we consider it essential to keep things going for the Boys until we can resume our normal programme. There have been periods when, lockdown having eased, we have been able to meet the Boys face-to-face, and at other times we have kept up weekly Zoom meetings.

Since lockdown first started in March last year, we have run 21 Zoom sessions and 21 face-to-face activity sessions (often two on the same evening for different Sections), mostly outdoors.

Representatives from the Company attended Church services for Harvest and Dedication, during which we presented the Queen's Badge to Sgt. Callum Hoy, and took part in a tree-planting; and for Remembrance Sunday, for which Company Section Boys also laid a wreath and crosses from the whole Company during a short service at the local war memorial.

As well as games and other recreation activities, our Zoom sessions have covered seasonal occasions such as Easter, Christmas, VE Day, Remembrance and Burns Night, and enjoyed a very interesting evening meeting some rare and exotic animals with 'Cool Creatures'.

Boys have continued to earn credits for the Award Scheme, up to and including online work for President's and Queen's Badges. The Boys also earned the commemorative 'VE 75' badge.

We also completed a fundraiser 'Walking to Bethlehem', adding up individual step counts to cumulatively cover the distance from Steps to the birthplace of Jesus.

This past year has been a challenge, but with the ongoing dedication and support of Boys, parents and the Officers, we have been able to continue providing activity and fellowship to our Boys. We have even had some new recruits, so hopefully we are doing something right!

Both BB Boys and other young people (and not so young people!) can access activities to do at home using the **BB@Home** resources, which are open to everyone, BB member or not. If you would like to have a look, they can easily be found via Google search.

Our ongoing activities are shown on the Company's Facebook page, **190th Glasgow Boys Brigade Company**, please log in and have a look.

Colin Goodall

Acting Captain

07828 032807

captain190thglasgow@hotmail.com

Congregation News

We wish Mr. and Mrs. Morrison formerly of Cardowan many congratulations on their forthcoming Platinum Wedding Anniversary. John and Annie Morrison were married in the church on the 23rd of March 1951. This is a truly remarkable milestone, and we wish them both every happiness and hope that they both find time to look back on all their wonderful memories until they can celebrate more fully with their family.



Wishing you both every happiness and blessings for more happy memories together
from all your friends in Stepps Parish Church.

We remember in our thoughts and prayers all our friends at the Lodging House Mission who continue to feel the loss of their manager Mr. Stephen Mitchell who sadly died on the 7th of February 2021 aged 60 as a result of Covid-19. Stephen dedicated over 30 years of his life to serving the needs of the homeless and the marginalised. May he rest in eternal peace.



Let Us Pray

Living God,

In this season of Lent, we are reminded of our own difficulties and struggles. Sometimes the way has seemed too dark. Sometimes we feel like our lives have been marked by such grief and pain, we do not see how our circumstance can ever change. But in the midst of our weakness, we ask that you would be strong on our behalf. Lord, rise up within us, let your Spirit shine out of every broken place we have walked through. Allow your power to be manifest through our own weakness, so that others will recognise it is you who is at work on our behalf. We ask that you would trade the ashes of our lives for the beauty of your Presence. Trade our mourning and grief for the oil of joy and gladness from your Spirit. Trade our despair for hope and praise. We choose to give you thanks today and believe that this season of darkness will fade away. Thank you that you are with us in whatever we face and that you are greater than this trial. We know and recognise that you are Sovereign, we thank you for the victory that is ours because of Christ Jesus, and we are confident that you have good still in store for our future. We thank you that you are at work right now, trading our ashes for greater beauty. We praise you, for you make all things new. In Jesus' Name,

Amen