



From the Minister's Desk

Dane Sherrard

By the time you get to this part of the Newsletter you will probably already have read everything else but I hope you won't mind me highlighting something of what this issue is about. Naturally we have started with a bit about our Easter celebrations. The Church is about Easter: Jesus, who was dead, is alive. We know how much God loves each one of us and we can face the future, whatever it is, in the confidence of that love — even in a world where so much appears to be so wrong, so unfair, so callous and so pitiless. If we can learn to share, to stand up for what we believe, to love each other then we can start to make a difference where we live and in turn can start to change the world — there's no doubt at all that those eleven disciples locked in an upper room in Jerusalem never thought that they could change the world in the way they did but they reckoned without the power of God's Spirit and I suppose that we often make our plans thinking too that it will all be down to us.

This edition also sets out more about the way forward for us as a congregation, describing some of the discussion at our special meeting (but making no mention of the wonderful food which has become such a part of all that happens at Fogo!)

A number of people said things that night which have stuck with me. Pete said that in his experience new folk often chose to come along for the first time on one

Beatles or the Rolling Stones. If the television was on it was probably Formula One motor racing, or football or golf. You wouldn't find Steve's nose in a book — not unless it was a book about Newcastle United — he had so many treasured mementos of his team and its players and managers over the years — or perhaps about Winston Churchill. He loved to be involved in local politics and gave his time unstintingly to the work of the local community council, enjoying working with other local people to make this area better for everyone.

Sitting with Marilyn you might have found them talking about their love of walking — together they climbed lots of mountains in Scotland, England and Wales — and Steve loved taking photographs.

His firm friends were Peter and Alan and he always enjoyed their company. But if you asked him what was most important in life he would speak of Marilyn and Ailsa. He was so proud of Ailsa and it was quite simply Marilyn's love that made life the joy that it was to him. Steve will be missed. He will be missed by so many people but it is Ailsa and Marilyn who will miss him most and we offer them, and all the family, our love and our prayers today.

of the 'special' Sundays in the year in part because they knew there would be quite a lot of people there and they wouldn't stand out like a sore thumb. Maybe we need to have a special Sunday when everyone is there and let that be known so that others can feel that it is safe to join us. The other thing that is important to say is that we have now reached the stage when there are always a good number of folk in church so no-one needs to worry about arriving and sharing the service with just a handful of others.

Clare spoke about the importance of other events to enable visitors to see the church and to enable us to meet them and invite them to join us, possibly to suggest we meet and come along together because once folk come they always seem to want to stay! We have some concerts planned and a flower festival about which there will be more information to follow.

Molly undertook to prepare a small welcoming card to ensure that visitors and others we met knew how welcome they would be — and this has already been done! (Thanks, Molly — your photos throughout the Newsletter are great, as always.)

I realised from what was said by so many that mission is not about special events and organised activities, although these are important: it is about a new mindset. Everything we do has to be about mission. Welcoming new folk is what we are about. As we welcome others we often end up meeting Jesus in the guise of a stranger — that's the message of the Emmaus Road and it's quite a thought that we too may be the face of Jesus to others.

Finally you will notice that I have included the words which Marilyn and Ailsa helped me prepare about Steve for his recent funeral. I enjoyed meeting him as I delivered Newsletters round the parish. He was a real character and he will be greatly missed.



Fogo Kirk News

“where folk have worshipped for a thousand years”

April Edition, 2018

Easter Season in full swing !



On Good Friday we had the simple wooden cross with a single red rosebud on the upright. On Easter Sunday we had a beautiful display of lilies around the base — a symbol of new life and of the fact that Jesus who was dead is now alive.

It was a lovely visual picture of what Easter is all about and we are grateful for Erica for preparing it for us.



Erica at work on the Easter decoration



Sometimes small pictures tell big stories! This is the little table just inside the door of the church. There's a vase of daffodils which have almost come to symbolise Easter and Spring and the start of everything coming back to life. There's the glass decorations with the flowers because someone has taken enormous care to decorate the church for this special time of year. There's the basket of eggs, another Easter symbol, all carefully dyed and ready for church rolling — and so many of them. We expected a full church and we certainly weren't disappointed. There's a small pile of Orders of Service, a reminder of the care and attention which goes into the preparation of every service — most have already been distributed but there are still a few left over because we always plan for more people to come and join us.

Of course, numbers are not the most important thing, but we did take satisfaction in having more folk this Easter than last Easter; we rolled more eggs, we ate more cake and we really celebrated the most wonderful day in the whole year!

One of the particularly happy coincidences this year was that on Easter Sunday we had people with us in every decade of life: children, teenagers, twenties, thirties, forties, fifties, sixties, seventies, eighties and nineties. A real family Easter!



One of the highlights of Easter is Easter Communion. This is always particularly special for us because we use what we are told are the oldest silver communion cups still in use anywhere in Scotland. They were donated in 1662 by the Trotter family.

It is quite something to remember that not only are we sharing in a sacrament which goes back to Jesus himself, but we are drinking from the same chalices which have been used for over three hundred and fifty years — a real link with those who have gone before us — and which will continue to be used for at least that time in the future. Others will drink from these silver cups and remember those of us who worshipped in this special place in years gone by.

Mission Discussion Evening

It grew out of the last meeting of the Kirk Session and Congregational Board. We spent too much time talking about all that we planned to do with the building and too much time discussing out finances and, as a result, we left ourselves with too little time to talk about mission and the way forward for our congregation — the really important matters, although the other things matter too!

It wasn't that we had run into particular difficulties. On the property side, the last bits of damp in the building were to be removed by cutting out the plaster, removing the rubble underneath (which was holding the damp) and replacing the plaster work, all of which has now been done, and then planning to have the building redecorated, both inside and out.

On the financial side, we learned that we had ended last year with a surplus of around £10,000, money which will enable us to develop our future plans for this year with confidence that whatever problems we run into, they won't be financial ones!

As we ran out of time we agreed that we would hold a special meeting in Clare's home and we would invite everyone who wanted to come along and share in a discussion about where we are going to be in eighteen months' time. (The significance of that timescale is that we are now half-way through the three years of presbytery guardianship agreed when Alan Cartwright retired.)

Almost half of the congregation turned out for this evening meeting and to say we were delighted would be a huge understatement! Everyone contributed to the meeting and we had some grand discussions. Several people wanted to ask what would happen at the end of our three years and we teased the answer to this out together. The building of Fogo Church has been declared surplus to requirements and, as a result, we have been engaged in creating a Community Trust, to take ownership of the building sometime next year and to hold that ownership on behalf of the community of Fogo and for the ongoing use of the congregation. Local trustees have been recruited: more than half live within the parish of Fogo, there are the same number of men and women on the trust, and there is a wide range of experience and background represented. By the time the trust takes ownership of the building we will have ensured that it is in a really good state of repair for the future.

A church building, even an historic one like Fogo, requires a congregation. So how are we getting on in

that regard? We have around thirty-four folk who we can count on always to be in church if they are at home but our folk do get about: last Sunday we had members in Australia, China and the West Indies and several were on holiday in different parts of England. We also have around another dozen or so who come from time to time and then there are the occasional visitors. To ensure that we are fully sustainable we need to push that thirty-four up to fifty. That's not beyond us; in fact it will be achieved if every two of us succeed in bringing along one friend, and it is less that the number of new folk we have welcomed in the last year!

What then about ministry? There is, of course, no way that the presbytery will be able to provide us with a minister. So the choices are that we would ask to be put in with another grouping of churches, or that we would attempt to go forward on our own. Several people present at our meeting encouraged us not to be afraid of going on forward on our own. John spoke of services conducted in a foreign embassy in a country where Christianity was not permitted. The community held their own services at a Friday Coffee Club, several folk took a turn of leading worship and the little congregation thrived. Taking worship responsibility ourselves would enable us to continue to worship together in Fogo every Sunday, something which it was felt was important.

Everyone agreed that it was important to us that we remained firmly as a Church of Scotland congregation. Even although we would own our own building and be responsible for our own ministry we would continue to pay dues both to Presbytery and to the Church of Scotland. We would also continue to have the parish responsibility of Fogo under the oversight of the presbytery.

As we talked more about ministry, it was hoped that our present 'minister' (technically our interim moderator) would continue for a while to come but that we explore ways of using our members fully in leading worship — most Sundays already, several members share with the minister in leading the service.

It was also suggested that we explore the possibility of having a church cottage to which we might invite retired ministers to come and spend a summer in exchange for leading our Sunday worship. We may be short of ministers but we have so many retired ones — and the borders is a beautiful place to spend some time.

It was an enthusiastic meeting — plans were made to hold some special events and some additional welcoming material is to be produced and we all went home feeling enthused about the future.



Steve Hunter

Steve Hunter's funeral was in Fogo Kirk on Thursday 19th. April. Friends and family from all over the country and from Cothill filled the church for the service and I print the words I spoke on that day about a very special gentleman.

Steve was born at Walkergate in Newcastle sixty-nine years ago. It was there that he grew up with his Mum and dad and with his younger brother, Laurence. It was here too that his education began. At school he concentrated on chemistry and biology, loving also to spend time playing and watching football, naturally supporting Newcastle, and playing drums in a band, although his real and growing passion was for animals.

He kept guinea pigs and showed them as well. He also kept snakes and mice, rabbits and slowworms. With Laurence, he would explore and look for wildlife, taking delight in discovering frogs under stones. Steve bought Laurence his first fishing rod and Laurence, I'm told, has been fishing ever since.

When it became time to go to University, Steve enrolled at Glasgow to study agriculture. He would have liked to become a vet but there were not enough places available at that time. Steve returned home every two weeks to support Newcastle. By this time he was also into motor-bikes and cars — uncle Robert was an engineer and taught Steve all he needed to know to keep them on the road. Unfortunately he had a motor bike accident but, always positive, he bought a bubble car because he could drive it on his motor bike licence. He never lost his love of cars and driving.

University successfully behind him, Steve moved out of the family home which he had shared not just with his parents but with his grandparents and Uncle Robert as well. He sold his drums and bought a home in Chapel House in Newcastle and got his first job working for West Cumberland Farmers selling animal health products, partly from the depot in Hexham and partly out on the road.

In 1974 he married Marilyn at Newcastle Civic Centre. Their families had long lived in the same street and both Mums travelled to work on the same bus. Marilyn recalls that Steve had been sent up on an errand to

hand in a pair of football boots for her brother Paul, but while at the house ran into Marilyn and invited her out for a drink. So began the courting which led in time to the wedding. They danced, listened to music, went to the clubs and visited the cinema before setting up home at Haxby near York where Steve worked for Pfizer before moving to Chester where he made the change from working on animal welfare to human health, gaining additional qualifications and working for Astra Pharmaceuticals in which company he rose to become the National Sales Manager.

The call of animals and also of being his own boss was strong and in 1992 Steve set up his own Aquatic Business based in the Duke of Westminster's Grosvenor Garden Centre. Now his life centred around fish and aquariums and ponds, and leisure time often saw Steve and Marilyn on their narrowboat 'Cat's Whiskers' which they sailed on the Shropshire Union canal and from which Marilyn and their daughter Ailsa have so many happy memories.

In 2007 Steve retired, the canal boat was exchanged for a motor home and together Steve and Marilyn explored so much of the country, enjoying everywhere from Devon and Cornwall to the Lake District and sometimes stopping off in Wales where their friends Lindsay and Ann had a hotel which they loved to visit and sometimes to help run to allow the owners to go on holiday, and where they met their great friend Judith.

They loved these times but Steve and Marilyn yearned for somewhere quiet to call home. Cothill was absolutely perfect for them — secluded and quiet, with a site on which they could build their ideal home to their own specifications and, of course, not too far from Newcastle, their spiritual home.

These then are the bones of Steve's life, but what was he really like? Let me share some of the words Ailsa and Marilyn used when they talked of Steve. They described Steve as 'a bit of a joker' and as one who could be forthright and assertive but as one who was very kind — nowhere is that natural kindness seen more clearly than in his love of animals, something which stayed with him throughout his life. Here at Cothill it was the hedgehogs which caught his attention. He built them little houses and rigged up cameras so that he could watch how they were getting on. He rejoiced to see the deer in his garden of a morning — he really enjoyed his garden and being a handyman he was able to do a great deal to make it the way he and Marilyn wanted it to be.

If he wasn't in the garden you might find him listening to music, probably Jimmy Hendrix, or Led Zeppelin, the