



From the Minister's Desk

Dane Sherrard

I have found these last weeks to be difficult ones, not least because over a very short period of time several of our church family members have died.

Molly Hodges was one of our Elders, our church photographer and a constant support. Trevor Howard never missed a Sunday in church and was one of the most generous people I have ever met. Alexander Trotter was the father of our church family, always anxious to do anything he could to ensure that things went well for our congregation. Pete Gibbens was also an elder and was thoroughly irreplaceable in his support

for everything that we did and always full of ideas.

Four of the most wonderful people I have ever met. We will miss them but, of course, our thoughts are with their families for whom their loved one's death leaves a very big hole.

One of the privileges of being the parish church is that we are given the opportunity of standing alongside families at times of real sadness: to offer what practical help we can, and to share our conviction that after this sadness there will come happiness; that one day we shall be reunited with those we love.

That's why, of course, every Sunday in Fogo Kirk is an Easter Day as we celebrate that Jesus who was dead is now alive and we remind ourselves of his promise that, whatever happens to us and wherever we are, God loves us.

That is the most wonderful promise that was ever made and it is for us all! That's the message we are here to share.



Fogo Kirk News

"where belonging matters"

November, 2022

Bucking the trend!

It's good news for all friends of Fogo Parish Church — your small village church is growing and is in better health than ever before.

Last year in the whole of the Presbytery of Duns there were twenty-six new members. Twenty-five of them were in Fogo Parish Church, and there are more people worshipping in your church than anyone can ever remember.

A few years ago the minister received a phone call from a parishioner who wondered if he and his wife could come to the church. 'Of course,' said the minister, 'I'll wait for you at the gate and walk down the path to the church with you.' 'No,' said the caller, 'We don't want to come this weekend. We thought we'd come in three weeks' time on Palm Sunday.'

'OK,' said the minister, 'I'll wait for you then.' And so he did. The couple arrived and became constant members of the congregation. Eventually, after a year or so, the minister plucked up his courage to ask, 'Why did you want to wait for Palm Sunday?' 'Well,' he was told, 'We knew there would be folk in church on Palm Sunday. We didn't want to arrive and find no one else in church!'

There is certainly no fear of that now — in fact there are more dogs in church nowadays than there used to be people six years ago. (They are all perfectly behaved and sit with their owners in the box pews, although recently some have moved with their owners into the main south aisle of the church. Perhaps they find the carpet more comfortable!)

The other big change is that today all of our services are live-streamed which means that someone who is wondering about coming to church is able to have a look on-line and see what it's like before coming along in person.

So many visitors (and there have been visitors almost every week for the last three months) find your church to be so beautiful — but then you know that already.



Soup and Sandwiches in the South Aisle

A side benefit of our comfortable and attractive seats in the South Aisle is that we can move them around and make our building more suitable for every occasion.

We now have three round white tables enabling us to comfortably accommodate twenty folk for lunch after church on a Sunday or on a Wednesday when we share in a soup and sandwich lunch followed by a film.

At present this is an experiment but the church has been equipped with a generator system which will enable all of the facilities of the church to continue to operate during a power cut. So when the power goes down, come and join us in church for something to eat and drink, to watch a film, chat with friends and recharge your mobile phone.

But you don't need to wait for a power cut. Conscious that many of us are worried about the cost of heating our homes, it is planned to have refreshments available in the church throughout the winter because the church is not only always open but, because of its air-to-air heating system, it is also always warm.

Watch our notice-board to keep up-to-date with all that is planned — and do remember that this is your church.



Two new members of the Kirk Session team

At a recent service two new Elders were welcomed into the Church leadership team. They are Veronica Walker and Alan Leighton, both of whom have been sharing in our worship for quite some time.

Veronica was born in Africa where her father was a missionary. Back home in Scotland, Veronica's father was minister in this presbytery, in both Gordon and Legerwood congregations. Veronica went on to complete training for the ministry of the Church of Scotland before taking up positions teaching the Christian faith to children as a religious education teacher and sharing her musical talents. She is married to Ken who is a Church of Scotland minister, like Dane, now retired, but delighted to continue to serve.

Alan came to Scotland from Zimbabwe, lives in Gavinton, and works, largely from home, for a government department. Alan brought his Christian faith with him from Zimbabwe and he plays a leading role, Sunday by Sunday, in the worship at our church. Alan is married to Kym who is a nurse at the Borders General Hospital.

Elders play an important part in each Sunday service but they also have responsibilities for caring for members of our church family as well as for the planning of our way forward. We are fortunate in having an excellent team of men and women who fulfil this role within our congregation. Under God's guiding hand, our congregation is in good shape.

A Round-up of some of the Good News



Some of our congregation on a recent Sunday when Laura (right in the front) conducted our service

If there is going to continue to be a Church in our country people will have to continue to offer themselves for training as parish ministers. That's exactly what one of our members, Laura Smith, has recently done — and we are all so proud of her.

Laura, a pharmacist by profession, has been an elder of our congregation for quite some time. Now she has felt the Call to offer herself to be trained as a minister. In preparation for that she is now through in Glasgow getting experience of some of the larger city churches — but she will never forget that this is her home church and we will continue to support her on every step of her journey.

As part of our Advent celebrations Laura will be conducting our service on Sunday 4th. December which is the second Sunday of Advent. Following the service there will be a soup and sandwich lunch which will enable us all to catch up with Laura's news.

So why not come along and be part of the church of the future as our worship is led by Laura? We can promise you a warm welcome, to say nothing of a soup and sandwich lunch in the warm and comfortable surroundings of your church. You might discover that this is a special place and that we are a church family to which you would like to belong.



The Coffee Bar (above) and one of the seating areas (below)



Looking to the Future

Many of our readers will be aware that all over Scotland the futures of village churches are under threat. The reasons are, of course, very straightforward: Fewer people are attending churches. There is a severe shortage of ministers and congregations are running short of money.

Before describing what is happening in our presbytery it is important to set our own situation in context. More people are attending Fogo Parish Church than for many, many years and we now enjoy a good congregation on almost every Sunday of the year.

Our congregation has a team of members, more than a dozen of us, who have all learned to lead our worship and we are learning how to care for each other and for our parish so that even when our current minister has to give up, we can confidently continue on our own.

And finally, because our congregation is so generous, all of our costs (insurance, heating, contributions to the central church) are paid, month by month by the standing orders of our members. We also have a mission fund which enables us to continue to develop our mission and service to our community and beyond. (We help to support financially a school in Bethany, near Jerusalem — a school which accepts the poorest children of the area regardless of their faith or background. We support our mission partner in Malawi in his work with broken families in setting up small local businesses to enable them to support themselves.) Of course, no-one in our church community is paid for their work for the church. Whether we provide the music, clean the church, look after our funds, conduct our worship or care for our parish, it is something we consider to be our privilege.

Looking to the future, our church family is anxious that ownership of Fogo Parish Church is transferred from the Church of Scotland (who will no longer be able to support it) to the Fogo Parish Church Community Trust, a trust which has been created to safeguard the church building not just for the congregation but for the wider community of Fogo. At the same time the congregation is developing all of the facilities within the church so that it may become a really good facility for everyone.

In the future there will be only four full-time ministers to serve the whole of Berwickshire and the town of Berwick. We shall continue under our own steam, relying on the support of the Holy Spirit and, as long as we are here, there will be someone to assist you should you wish our help. This is your church: we are here for your baptisms, your weddings and for your funerals, and this is for you whoever you are — not only for those who choose to be part of our congregation.

Soon it will be Christmas!

There will be a full programme of services this Christmas and you will know that you are invited to join in with any of them you wish.

Sunday 27th. November at 10.30 a.m.
Service for the First Sunday in Advent

This service will be led by the Reverend John Hunter whose father was minister in Fogo.

Sunday 4th. December at 10.30 a.m.
Service for the Second Sunday in Advent

This service will be led by Laura and will include the Sacrament of Holy Communion followed by a soup and sandwich lunch.

Sunday 11th. December at 10.30 a.m.
Service for the Third Sunday in Advent

Advent Calendar Service with the assistance of Alice and Eck. If there are children in your home, this would be especially appropriate for them — and for you too, of course!

Sunday 18th. December at 10.30 a.m.
Service for the Fourth Sunday in Advent

The Ceremony of Nine Lessons and Carols — your favourite carols and the reading of the Christmas story — Christmas is now only a week away!

Saturday 24th. December at 6.30p.m.
Christmas Eve Christingle Service

Definitely one for all of the family — oranges, candles and the magic of the Christmas story.

Saturday 24th. December at 11.20 p.m.
Christmas Eve Watchnight Service

Sing your way into Christmas surrounded by friends and listen to the Christmas story in our beautiful church lit by candle-light.

Sunday 25th. December at 10.30 a.m.
Christmas Day Family Service

Fun around the Christmas tree — songs, a story and a short celebration of Christmas Communion.

Sunday 1st. January at 10.30 a.m.
A Service for the new Year

We shall remember those we have loved and have missed especially at this Christmas season. Come and share with us if you can.