



## Chalmers Memorial Church Newsletter Summer 2021



*The LORD will be king over the whole earth. On that day there will be one LORD, and his name the only name.  
Zechariah Ch14 v9*

Dear friends,

**The Manse, June 2021**

I did some calculations this morning – the number of days between 15<sup>th</sup> March 2020 and 26<sup>th</sup> June 2021 (the day that I write this letter). The answer Google came up with was 468 days. The significance of 15<sup>th</sup> March 2020 is, of course, that was the last service in Chalmers Memorial Church before the first big so called “lockdown”. That day we went to Church as normal, though knowing restrictions lay ahead. However, as it turned out, we did not reopen after that until September closing again in December and only re-opening (yet again) on Easter Day 2021.

We have made it thus far with our latest re-opening and, if the latest information we are hearing from the Scottish Government is anything to go by, it does not seem that further major lockdowns are part of the ongoing strategy to contain the Covid 19 virus, certainly not now that the vaccine programme has displayed such significant success.

It did strike me, however, that 468 is also the number of days that some members of Chalmers Memorial Church will not have been at any service of public worship, the equivalent of something like 66 weeks. It's been a rocky road for most of us during this last year or so. We've all “locked down” as best as we can. We've all missed seeing the people we love the most and some of us have shielded both to protect ourselves and to protect the ones that we love the most.

It does seem that, at some point fairly soon, the regulations about social distancing will be modified and that may increase capacity at Church services so that we would no longer need to pre book places at worship. It may also enable us to re-start the early services and even look at after-Church teas and coffees. It is also likely that our Church halls will begin being used by organisations again as we move into the Autumn.

I want to offer, in all sincerity, the opportunity to any who are pondering as to whether it is now time to come back to worship that they contact me directly after I return from holiday on the 20<sup>th</sup> July, and I will meet them at the Church itself during the week and let them see inside the sanctuary and personally show them what we have done to make our premises as Covid safe as we can. In any case, it would be good to simply chat. This genuinely sincere offer is there, and the decision is yours, as it should be.

All of the regulations around this (and they are plentiful!) are monitored by our own Covid Subgroup who have met often (via Zoom) to keep an eye on the latest guidelines and to track a way forward within them for our own congregation. I am grateful to them for their honesty and diligence in this task and to the Kirk Session who have discussed these matters so carefully.

Prayer is crucial in days such as these and my own prayer is, just as yours will be no doubt, that God will continue to be with us and guide us as we move forward in the days to come.

In the meantime, may I wish you a restful and calm summer as we give thanks to the God who, as the hymn reminds us, guides his “flock from age to age”.

Your friend and Minister,  
Robin Allison (Rev)

**Our Minister - Rev Robin N Allison**  
**Braemar Villa, 2 Links Road,**  
**Port Seton**  
**01875 812225 / [rallison@churchofscotland.org.uk](mailto:rallison@churchofscotland.org.uk)**

## Online Worship

We continue to produce a weekly recorded Podcast. These recorded messages last around 20 minutes and contain the prayers, bible readings and reflection from the weekly Sunday Service. They can be accessed in two ways:

One is via the podcast website at: <https://chalmersmemorialchurch2020.podbean.com>

The other way, for those with no internet access, is to listen via telephone by dialling the following local rate phone number - 01875 444 495. After the welcome message you simply wait 20 seconds approx. and the audio should begin.

## Fabric Update

If you passed the Church on Friday the 4<sup>th</sup> June, you will have seen the weathervane being examined "close up". We had engineers checking the condition of the weathervane, the steeple and the Church roof. While at the time of writing the report has still to be received, the engineers did suggest the overall external condition was relatively good albeit some slate work is likely to be needed. They did confirm the steeple is off centre and will need fixed to prevent some structural damage. Overall, this was a worthwhile exercise as these are areas which are not readily accessible for us to have a closer look. A quote to paint the steeple slats has also been requested.



Some water damage on the east side of the Church occurred during a storm in May which was found to be due to a rotten windowsill. A quote to fix this problem is in hand but has still to be received. Rotten windowsills seem to be a recurring theme!

The gas boiler in the hall was recently serviced and several areas of concern were highlighted most of which, but not all, refer to low gas pressure, possibly due to the supply pipes nor being to the correct diameter. A verbal quote has been received to fix all the issues brought to our attention which is somewhat high. Further quotes have been requested but the recommendations we have received to date is that it would be much better and far less expensive to install an electric cooker. Consultation will take place with the main kitchen users once detailed costs are obtained.

*John Murdoch, Fabric Convenor*

## Memorial Tree

Because of the many restrictions during the pandemic, we were not able to join in church with those who had lost loved ones. Memorial services in which we celebrate the lives of those who have died are an important part of the grieving process and we wondered how we might in some small way remember them. It was decided to plant a tree, which is now in place in the garden on the east side of the church. It is an Amelanchier, which has small white flowers in the Spring and colourful foliage in the Autumn.



## Funerals

Mrs Elizabeth "Betty" Hunnam,  
1<sup>st</sup> March 2021 at Prestonpans Cemetery

Mrs Mary McLune,  
1<sup>st</sup> April 2021 at Greenlaw Cemetery

## Churches Together

This group has not met recently but hope to do so when we get back to some kind of normal.

However, as in past years, we were able to provide Cockenzie Primary School with copies of the Scripture Union Booklet "It's Your Move" for every pupil in Primary 7. This contains advice and encouragement for young people as they move from Primary to Secondary education. These are presented as a gift from the Churches in Cockenzie and Port Seton.

*George Smith*

## Church Finance

We continue to be extremely grateful to all members of the congregation for their continuing financial support of the ongoing work and ministry here at Chalmers.

During the first quarter of the year, we received £6,275 in respect of tax reclaimed on Gift Aid donations, which makes such a difference to our Income. For any taxpayer who does not currently donate in this way, and may wish to do so, please contact John Murdoch who can supply further information.

We had no major items of expenditure during the January to March period, during which time our building remained closed. There was a small surplus of Income over Expenditure at the end of the quarter.

As we are now back worshipping in our sanctuary, and restrictions are gradually easing, we praise God for all he has done for us in meeting our commitments over what has been an extremely difficult time.

*Ian Bulloch, Treasurer*

## SESSION SECTION

We are aware that we have again not been able to hold our Annual Meeting to report on the past year, but our obligation to keep everyone aware of finances was ably kept by Ian Bulloch in the last Newsletter. The approved Accounts are now safely registered with the Charities Regulator and can be found online at [www.oscr.org.uk](http://www.oscr.org.uk) by entering our Charities number SC004630. They include the description of how our church found ways to continue sharing worship, maintain buildings and keep contact with local community organisations during 2020. Hard copies of the accounts are, of course, available to anyone who wishes them.

The Kirk Session continues to maintain order and monitor movement on Covid-restrictions. The Covid Sub-Group have been keeping a close eye, not so much on what the Scottish Government announce as restrictions change, but on how the Church of Scotland then instruct us to act. There is always much detailed guidance on mitigations which must be in place before any relaxation of measures can be done. This has proven challenging at times, but thanks are due to those who have taken responsibility for this.

It was good to see the return of those members who took the tentative steps to return to 'live' worship – and they continue to come, with 50 to 60 people attending each week, so we are re-assured that people feel safe with the notices, face masks, hand-hygiene measures and required distancing being clearly marked. As and when the required safety distance is reduced – as is anticipated in a few weeks' time – we shall again take time to follow the guidance carefully before, hopefully, our building capacity is increased, and we can return to all being able to attend a main service at 11am. The Early Service could start up again shortly thereafter – all being well!

Worship first, then we do hope our Organisations will be able to return as they are able, depending on continuing safety advice. We are thankful to Colin and Anne Sutherland who have agreed to be our new joint Hall Lets Convenors and will liaise with groups re when they wish to start again and explain any current safety procedures required. Preparations are ongoing here, too, as we try to plan ahead.

Wishing you all a peaceful summer.

Mary Gordon  
Session Clerk

## Stewardship Committee

This group has not met recently, but we will do so soon. The Church of Scotland Stewardship and Finance Committee are encouraging churches to hold a "Day of Giving". During the period of the pandemic, many churches have seen a considerable downturn in their income, as congregations have not been worshipping as normal. We have held a day of giving at Chalmers for several years now, on which you, our members, have been very generous in your support. We plan to organise such a day, probably in October; watch out for more news!

*George Smith*

## A SHORT VIEW OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY, MAY 2021

I was privileged to attend the General Assembly this year with our minister as an Elder Representative. Reading the many reports prior to the event prepared me to face both good and less-good news, which would result in significant decisions being made.

### Good news included:

- ongoing work and concerns of the church in social areas, such as providing care through *Crossreach*;
- work being done to support local churches and community groups during the last difficult year;
- the importance being put on placing 'Mission' at the heart of everything the church does;
- developing ecumenical relationships with the Scottish Episcopal Church and the Church of England, and also all denominations in Scotland as a new working Scottish Christian Forum is drawn up.

### Less good news included:

- the reasons behind recommendations from the *Faith Nurture Forum*, who are in charge of training, providing support for and resourcing ministry. With over 300 vacant churches having been allowed to accrue over the past years, the time had come for a full review of resources – finance, buildings and people – to plan how the Church could provide the best support to its members nationwide. The need to reduce the number of churches had been recognised, but not how to do it. The Forum's review predicted that by 2025 the church would only be able to afford 600 full-time-equivalent ministers, and 60 locums to cover vacancies – a reduction of approx. 200 posts.

So, this year, a *Presbytery Mission Plan Act* was passed. It sets out the difficult choices and steps which will be taken to unite churches, group churches together and close churches, all over Scotland. Each Presbytery has been allocated their staff numbers, and local Presbytery Plans will be drawn up to agree where their allocation of staff will go. The General Trustees have provided a 'toolkit' to help Presbyteries assess which church buildings will be retained or not required. These plans have to be worked on and finalised by the end of 2022.

This is a huge task and will slowly re-form the church as we know it. This is why I term it 'less-good' news. It is *not bad* news. No-one likes change. No-one likes challenge – least of all one as large as this! But, somehow, I ended a very intense week of meetings and debates feeling that, if the future is daunting, it could also be exciting...

Our main challenge is to put 'mission' at the heart of what we decide and what we do, to make it so.

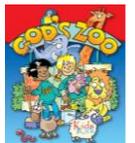
Please keep the Presbyteries and the wider church in your thoughts and prayers at this time, as difficult decisions are made.

Mary Gordon, Elder Representative - June 2021



Unfortunately, we are not running a Scripture Union Holiday Club this summer. We made this decision earlier in the year, unaware of what level East Lothian would be by July. We have been sad to hear about positive cases within our local schools and wish you and your families well.

We are hoping to re-start **Kids Kirk** and **Youth Kirk** in September. We may have to restrict our numbers attending to adhere to the Church of Scotland Covid Guidelines. As we halted our 2019/2020 programme, we will pick up with God's Zoo, following animal stories.



Please stay safe over the summer and we look forward to being back together again soon.

**God Bless, Sheila, Amanda & Irene - [KidsKirk@chalmerschurch.co.uk](mailto:KidsKirk@chalmerschurch.co.uk) or text on 07980 059 974.**

### Hall Lets

If you require details on access to our Church Halls. Please contact Colin & Anne Sutherland  
07584 904523 / [candasutherland@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:candasutherland@yahoo.co.uk)



Please recycle this newsletter and care for the earth as God intended