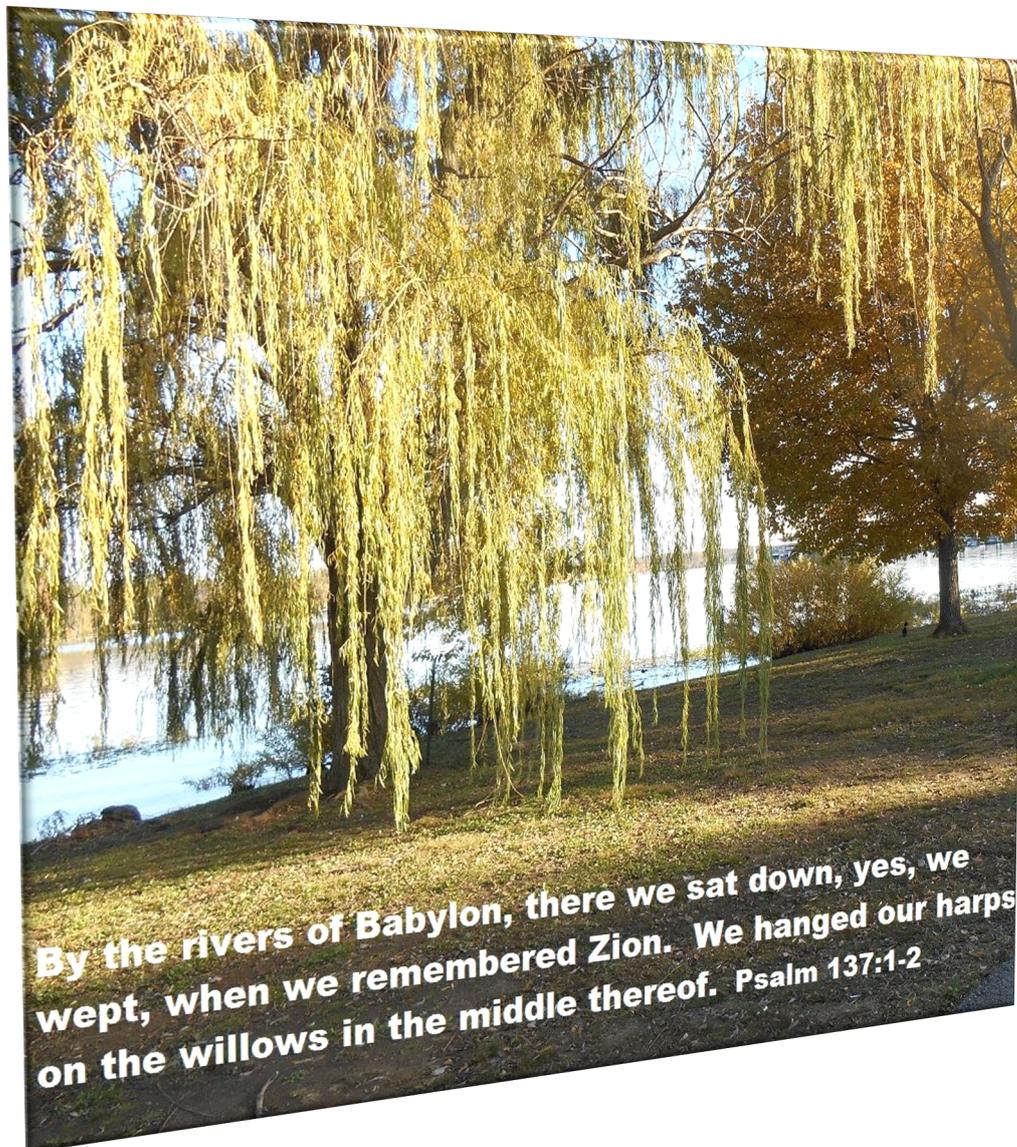


KNEC NEWS



September 2020
Digital



Kirknewton and East Calder Parish Church of Scotland
Scottish Charity No: SC006973



Moving Towards a Post Covid Church

*By the rivers of Babylon we sat and wept
when we remembered Zion.
There on the poplars
we hung our harps,
for there our captors asked us for songs,
our tormentors demanded songs of joy;
they said, 'Sing us one of the songs of Zion!'
How can we sing the songs of the Lord
while in a foreign land?
(Psalm 137:1-4)*



We might ask ourselves that question, just as the Israelites asked in exile in Babylon, away from the Temple in Jerusalem, the place where they worshipped the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

Exile meant that faith had to be re-evaluated. What did it mean to worship God when away from the usual surroundings? How could you sing a worship song in a foreign land?

In some ways, the enforced lockdown due to Covid-19 has felt like a time of exile.

Since the beginning of lockdown, most of 'church' has taken place online. Up to the 17th August, we have had 26 Sunday services on Youtube. The average number of views was 141 (162 if you include Easter Sunday). In addition, 15 households are presently receiving a DVD copy of the services and a generous donor has offered to fund ten more DVD players for households who would like them installed.

The post Covid world we are in feels like foreign territory. But we are still attempting to sing "the songs of the Lord". Indeed, maybe we are discovering new songs or new ways to sing old songs.

There's a school of thought that says one needs to experience a state of utter disorder before reaching a place of reorder.

Jesus might have meant this when he spoke of seeds falling to the ground and dying. Death precedes resurrection. What things in us, and in church, are the things that are dying, and wait to be resurrected?

Jesus, in fact, said quite a lot about disruption - you must be born again (John 3), and, it doesn't matter *where* you worship, what matters is that you worship in spirit and truth (John 4).

As you will probably know, the Kirk Session met recently and agreed that we would not make use of our buildings again until the start of Phase 4 of the Scottish Government guidelines for easing restrictions on Covid-19. This means that we are still not sure when we will be able to gather again for public worship until that happens.

The Kirk Session appointed a team to look into reopening our church buildings and to complete the necessary risk assessment and begin to put the safety measures in place that we will need.

There is no doubt that things are going to be quite different for some time to come. Some of us will be wary of gathering together in a large group. Some of us may have lost the confidence to do so or are rightly concerned for their own health or the health of others. And some will be desperate to meet again.

Will our time of exile have taught us anything? Will we continue to connect with those we've met online? Will we ever meet them? What will we do differently? What will we leave behind? What will we begin anew?

The exiles in Babylon eventually returned home to rebuild the Temple. They rededicated themselves to the worship of God. They thanked God for delivering them. Worship and thanksgiving remained key elements for them and will be so for us as well.

As we 'rebuild' church post Covid-19, worship and thanksgiving will be our guiding principles too, in spirit and truth (or in the Spirit of Truth). Alongside prayer, of course.

In his recent book, *God and the Pandemic*, Tom Wright says that the thing the church must do above all at the moment is pray. He acknowledges that we will not even know what to pray for but that we will groan inwardly with the Spirit. We will join with our Lord Jesus, in the Spirit of Christ, in groaning for the renewal of all creation, praying where people are hurting, lamenting the things people have lost and longing for things to be healed and restored to God's way - Thy kingdom come.

Things will not always be like this. The earth *will* be full of the glory of the Lord as the waters cover the sea.

Let us set our hearts on God and go with what God is doing in us and through us.

I waited patiently for the Lord ... (Psalm 40).

Alistair

Funerals



Mr Willie McBride on June 8th at East Calder Cemetery.

Mrs Myra Walkinshaw of Whitburn on June 26th at West Lothian Crematorium.

Mr Archibald Hill on July 2nd at Kirknewton Cemetery.

Mr David Smith on July 23rd at West Lothian Crematorium.

Mrs Christina Cairney of Whitburn on August 12th at Whitburn Blaeberry Cemetery.



Extract from Session Minutes of 7th May, 30th June and 13th August

All of these meetings were on-line as face to face meetings were not allowed.

Resignations:

██████████ has tendered his resignation from the Finance Committee and ██████████ wishes to give up most of her administrative work in the church. Session added their thanks to those of the Congregational Board for all the work and service in their respective positions.

Listening Project:

There are accredited listeners just waiting on when the pilot can start. There has been no uptake of the offer of online listening.

Community Social Enterprise (Reuse and Thrive):

Ongoing. Continuing to recruit volunteers for when things can really start.

Minister's Report at 30th June:

YouTube - 17 online services averaging 173 views (143 if we exclude Easter Sunday's 600 views).

Facebook - 7 online services averaging 410 views.

DVD's - 15 on list to receive the recorded Sunday services.

Zoom prayer - 4 or 5 plus 1 person joins by phone.

What's App prayer every day 11.30am - good 'attendance'.

Zoom cafe – average of 12 people on a Thursday morning.

Bairns' Rock – 13 weeks on Facebook Live averaging 236 views (including a 980 and a 566 views).

Practical community support with East Calder Community Development Trust and Kirknewton Community Development Trust continuing with few requests for support.

News from Presbytery:

As Interim Moderator at Whitburn South our Moderator is providing funeral cover. Also moderated a Zoom Session meeting.

The Presbytery Planning Committee has met. There are recommendations for each congregation regarding buildings which remain confidential at present.

Charities:

Charities to receive retiring offerings over the next year were approved as follows: Compassion UK Christian Child Development (SC045059), Vine Trust (SC017386), The School Bank West Lothian (SC046483) and CrossReach (SC011353).

The Guild:

The Guild was unable to hold the AGM in May due to the lockdown so there is no leadership team in place and therefore no syllabus for when it might be possible to meet again. There is nobody so far coming forward to take over as President from ██████████ who has served for 4 years and now wants to stand down. Session thanked ██████████ for her service and her leadership and will pray for new people to come forward to take on the Guild leadership.

Boys' Brigade:

Session approved the appointment of ██████████ and ██████████ as helpers. It was noted that there is a plan to present ██████████ with long service certificates. At their request, this will not happen until it is also possible to present the boys with their awards.

Organisations:

Session noted that the Men's Fellowship has continued to meet remotely and would continue to do so over the summer. Also [REDACTED] House Group has been running online and the material has been shared with [REDACTED] House Group.

Being Church Online:

Will be crucial in the future. During the pandemic we have attracted more people than would normally come to a church building. And for those who cannot normally attend church in any case, online has been a real advantage.

Session thanked the Moderator for all his efforts in arranging the online meetings and producing the online church services.

Presbytery Elder:

[REDACTED] has served as our Presbytery Elder for 3 years and does not seek re-appointment. Thank you, [REDACTED] for that service. It is much appreciated.

Session appointed [REDACTED] already a freely elected elder on Presbytery, to be our Presbytery Elder.

Reopening Our Buildings:

The team looking at the reopening of our church buildings comprises the Moderator, [REDACTED] [REDACTED]. The team has completed the checklist and risk assessment and recommended the following to the Kirk Session which was agreed in full by Session:

We wait until Phase 4 before opening for regular public worship.

In the meantime we make use of all of our buildings for live streaming or pre-recording worship services.

We aim to start the BB in person around the end of September.

We arrange for a deep cleaning of the buildings by an outside organisation before regular use restarts.

We aim to put together a team to do regular cleaning.

We put in place the necessary "summary of procedures" required by the risk assessment and get an extract minute from the Kirk Session saying when we want our buildings to reopen for public worship.

We seek the approval of Presbytery to reopen safely for public worship.

Regarding opening the halls, the organisations should be informed of our plans. Current guidelines from the Scottish Government do not allow many, if any, of our external organisations to start up again indoors at present.

There was a discussion regarding cleaning the halls once they are reopened to outside organisations.

Should a case of Covid19 be traced back to an organisation using the hall, there is potential for severe reputational damage to the church. So, who should clean the halls before and after each organisation?

The organisations perhaps; but that may require us to monitor. Perhaps the church needs to carry out the cleaning.

EnerJ:

[REDACTED] has stepped back from the EnerJ team.

EnerJ will not start up again face to face until Phase 4 in line with our thinking for opening our buildings. In the meantime consideration is being given to doing something online. Further, young people need to be given more attention in the pre-recorded services.

Andrew Coutts
Session Clerk

Although we are unable to meet together at this time there are many ways for us to keep in touch. Some of the following may be of interest to you and can be contacted at knec-mail@knec4jesus.org.uk.



Prayer Meeting every Monday on Zoom or What's App.

Men's Group

Meeting on Zoom every second Saturday.



House Group Meetings via email every Wednesday.



Boys' Brigade meets on Zoom on Friday evenings.



KNEC Bairns' Rock

For pre-school kids and carers as well as grown-ups who loved to be kids. Begins again weekly on Wednesday 2 September at 10am live on the Facebook Page called 'KNECB'

Online cafe continues every Thursday from 10.30am on Zoom, details from Alistair.



Marriage Preparation Course starting at the end of September online.

Contact Alistair for details.



357083



acowper@churchofscotland.org.uk

'Church Chat' on What's App
'KNEC Messaging' on Messenger

Website: www.knec4jesus.org.uk to access online services.

Flexibility and creativity

The Rt Rev Dr Martin Fair says the Church will have to hold on to the spirit of the last few months as it faces the challenge of reform.

THE normal Moderatorial routine involves any number of engagements and lots of travelling, so it's not unreasonable for Moderators to share accounts of these events and travels via social media and the pages of Life and Work.

In my own case, that wouldn't amount to much. There are only so many ways you can spin 'Today I went nowhere and met no-one'!

With the sole exception of a trip to Edinburgh for the Commission of Assembly in early July, my world since my installation has involved sitting in front of my laptop, or on the phone, in the study of our manse in Arbroath. With movement restricted throughout lockdown, and with every event cancelled, there's been no option other than to sit tight.

But though that might sound like a cause for despondency, the truth is that there has been no shortage of opportunities to engage with the wider Church and beyond. Though some doors have slammed shut, others have opened and for that I give thanks to God.

Given that Moderators are subject to the same limitations of space and time as every ordinary mortal, my predecessors have been limited to one, or possibly two, pulpits each Sunday. Through July and August I, on the other hand, have appeared in several hundred digital pulpits!

It seemed to me that one way in which I could support ministers and congregations would be to provide two ready-made Sunday services that could be used more or less anywhere, anytime. I was delighted that many welcomed this offer and downloaded these services to give themselves something of a well-earned break.

Another way in which I've sought to engage is through a series of interviews called *It's a Fair Question*. In these Zoom conversations, I've chatted with a variety of folk about a whole range of subjects, some particular to the life of the Church and some more general. I've talked with ministry colleagues, Julie and Dan, about their experiences of contracting Covid-19 and with Andy and Fraser about their successes in beating heroin addiction.

Beyond that, there have been discussions about racism, about losing a baby and about music and faith. These thirty-minute online programmes have attracted average audiences of over 10,000 viewers, far in excess of the numbers of folks who would have gathered in a church or hall for an evening meeting.

My point is this: even in the midst of a crisis or seeming disaster, there are almost always positive ways to respond and new ways of doing things.

If that's true for me then it seems clear that, largely speaking, the Church as a whole has embraced the challenge of navigating a way towards these open doors. Having spoken on the phone to around 200 ministers, I've been delighted to hear of how ministers and congregations have stepped up and indeed welcomed the opportunities that have presented themselves to communicate and engage in new ways. In one way or another, we've been imaginative, creative and flexible. All good.

With the sole exception of a trip to Edinburgh for the Commission of Assembly in early July, my world since my installation has involved sitting in front of my laptop, or on the phone, in the study of our manse in Arbroath.

But the truth is that we're going to have to continue to exhibit these qualities in the months ahead. Our initial response to the pandemic has been encouraging but the big issues of reshaping and reforming the Church -and being genuinely radical about it – are still before us. Financial concerns, an over-supply of buildings, reorganising Presbyteries and, primarily, how to equip ourselves for mission instead of maintenance – grappling with these issues will require of us creativity and flexibility in bucketloads.

Not to mention an absolute reliance on God.

'Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding.' (Proverbs 3:5) ✠

The Rt Rev Dr Martin Fair is minister at Arbroath: St Andrew's and Moderator of the General Assembly in 2020/2021.

Life and Work September 2020

M
U,
S
I
C

O
N
L
I
N
E

A North Lanarkshire church has released a series of music videos during the coronavirus lockdown.

'Classic Hymns from the West', came about after the Rev Calum Stark, minister of Bellshill West, suggested a midweek programme of music in addition to the church's online Sunday services.

Each video includes a series of hymns played by the church's organist and choirmaster, Duncan Mackay, with visuals added by Nathan Shepka.

Episodes in the series have included 'classic hymns', 'old Sunday School favourites', 'wonderful world worship' and 'requests week'.

The videos are available on the Bellshill West Facebook page. Bellshill West is not the only church releasing music videos: following a lifeandwork.org on Scottish Church's Disability Group's list of hymns on video both Armadale Parish Church in West Lothian and Queen's Park Govanhill in Glasgow commented to draw attention to their YouTube channels.

Life and Work September 2020



Bible Bite

A short story from the Bible

It can be read in the Bible in
Matthew 12:1-14, Luke 6:1-11

The Pharisees watched Jesus to see if he
broke any of God's laws, or the rules they
had made up to stop the laws being broken.

Jesus' disciples were hungry so
they picked some wheat from a
field as they walked.



The Pharisees said to
Jesus



But King David
broke the rules
when he ate the
bread that was only
for the
priests*



And priests are
allowed to work
in the temple on
the Sabbath*



Don't you understand when
God says 'Keeping rules
doesn't make up
for not having
kindness'?*



If you understood, you would
know my disciples did nothing
wrong.



The Pharisees followed
Jesus to the meeting place



The Pharisees wanted to accuse Jesus
of breaking rules, so they asked him
a trick question.



If your sheep
fell into a ditch
on the Sabbath
you would
lift it
out.



People are worth far
more than sheep, so it
is right to do good
on the
Sabbath



Hold out your hand.



The Pharisees left and made
plans.



CONTACT DETAILS

Kirknewton & East Calder Parish Church
c/o 8 Manse Court
East Calder
EH53 0HF
Email: knec-mail@knec4jesus.org.uk

