

Greenbank Connections



May 2020

Issue 689

Scottish Charity SCO11325



Easter 2020 (design by Emma Crawford)

*"His agony unmade, his
cross dismantled -
Glad to be so - and the
tormented wood
will cure its hurt and grow
into a tree
in a green springing corner
of young Eden..."*

*from Edwin Muir -
"The Transfiguration"*

Greenbank Parish Church, Edinburgh

Online version: www.greenbankchurch.org/about/the-newsletter/

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Staying in Touch

Martin continues to send out a weekly email to the congregation and friends. In order for us to comply with Data Protection regulations, unless you are an Elder or Board member you need to register on the website before you can receive it. This is done by going to:

www.greenbankchurch.org

then clicking on the line sign up for regular email contact with Greenbank, and following the instructions.

Since all events normally held on Greenbank premises have been cancelled, there is no monthly calendar in this issue. **All 10.30am Sunday morning services continue to be broadcast live (see article on p4).**

From the Minister

Dear Friends and Neighbours,



How strange it is to be writing this having “seen” so few of you in the last few weeks. There have been snatched glimpses and greetings across supermarket floors, in the park, or passing by in the street. There have been Skype and Zoom meetings, email exchanges and phone calls. Each one seems like a wee gift in this time of lockdown. I know you're all still “there” and indeed that our livestream has drawn together so many of you on a Sunday morning and in Holy Week, but even my “ambivert” ways are challenged by the physical disconnection of these times!

There are times when it seems like we are living in a dystopian novel created by the late Alasdair Gray or Margaret Atwood. How perceptive the work of these authors becomes – prophetic almost, both warning and predicting. We see that they got some of our characteristics and behaviours right: observe the instinct towards self-

preservation in the rush for toilet paper, hand sanitiser, pasta, tinned tomatoes, and home baking raw materials! Those few days before we knew how the virus might take off and affect us were tense days of “everyone for themselves” alongside a tremendous willingness amongst many to provide a helping hand in the community where possible.

Through it all, the best of our humanity shines through the fears and the hardships, and the levers of the state have been thrown at the crisis to try to mitigate its worst effects, and for that we can be grateful as we see that there are decisions to be made about how the resources of the planet can be used, and that the forces of economics are in a sense doctrines that can be applied and modulated rather than surrendered to. Rarely has there been such a widespread interventionist approach to local economic models.

We can be sure that when we start to emerge into the recovery phase of COVID-19, there will be temptations and pressures for politicians to return to their “root position”. It seems clear to me that none of our current models offer perfect salvation for society, so there is work to be done to assess what might be achieved for the future. Is that possible? Can we overcome the defaults of human nature and come to some kind of new economic and social model in this country that can stand up in a globalised world and lead to opportunity and flourishing combined with care and compassion, or are the current bold gestures and outpourings of compassion a “flash in the pan” that will fizzle out?

As I look over the readings for the second Sunday of Easter (from Peter’s speech in Acts, the First Letter of Peter, and the Gospel of John), issues like this are present in

the minds of the authors. How would those early followers of Jesus remain motivated under pressure? Would they slide back into the “safety” of old ways, despite the powerful experience of Jesus in his challenging lifetime, and then the testimony to his resurrection? Each of these texts is part of the motivational corpus of the New Testament that we often fail to recognise is linked to really quite extreme life experiences among those communities.

Whilst we all long for a return to the face-to-face gatherings of our community life, let’s take this time of continuing lockdown to ponder our vocation as disciples of Jesus in 2020. Let’s bring our collective wisdom as Christians and people with different skills, insights, and passions to the task of envisioning both our own communities and our wider world by asking the “what if” and “what about” questions in a constructive way. Now is the threshold time – we have the potential of another “Easter” for humanity.

With my love and best wishes to you all,



Martin Ritchie

This Month’s Cover

Our cover this month features an artwork by Emma Crawford, commissioned as part of a series by Greenbank Parish Church. The artwork, and the quotation from the poem *The Transfiguration* by Edwin Muir, were referred to during the Good Friday service, which will be available to watch via our website until Saturday 9th May.

Watching Services Online*

For those at home wishing to access live-streaming of worship from Greenbank, the instructions are as follows.

Using a computer connected by cable (or wirelessly) to the internet via broadband, open the web browser, search for and select the 'Greenbank Church Edinburgh' website, at

www.greenbankchurch.org

The website's homepage has a button 'Watch Services' (shown separately, and within the image of the homepage.) Click this and a new tab opens which on a Sunday morning shows a black rectangular box. During the Sunday setting up time,

between 10.20am and 10.30am, this displays a picture. The pre-service organ music should also be audible. To move to a full screen display, click on the angled arrows (normally bottom right of rectangle). From 10.30am you should be able to watch the live service.

To watch a recording of a service, visit the same web page and scroll down to the rectangle showing an arrowhead. Click on the arrowhead to play the most recent service, or select a previous date (along the top of the player) and then click on the arrowhead. Recordings are available up to four weeks after the live broadcast.

David Ferguson



**This is a revision of the article which appeared last month.*

Greenbank Parish Church
Edinburgh

Home Worship About Us What's on Halls Adults Youth Church Business Calendar Recordings

Register Login

Welcome
to Greenbank Parish Church of Scotland, Edinburgh

We are a friendly and outward-looking Christian congregation with a desire to love and serve God and our parish and community. You will find us at the corner of **Braxfield Terrace and Comiston Road** in the Greenbank/Morningside area of Edinburgh.

Our services are currently **online** only, because of the Coronavirus outbreak. Please click the 'Coronavirus Advice' button below for more information. Sign up for regular email contact with Greenbank.

LIFE [WORK] Watch Services Twitter Facebook

What's On Worship Times Corona-virus Advice Lockdown Life (photo comp)

Donate

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Chancel, Easter 2020 (during the Coronavirus lockdown)

Life and Work: May 2020

Inside this Month

Feeding the Hungry

Reflection on foodbanks and impact of COVID-19.

'God has not finished with Scotland'

The Moderator-Designate, the Rev Dr Martin Fair.

Assembly Cancellation

Church's business meeting cancelled for first time in over 300 years.

War's End

The role of churches in peacebuilding across Europe on the 75th anniversary of VE day.

....plus much more across 60 pages



Because of the current COVID-19 pandemic, the *Life and Work* editorial team has decided to make the online version of the May 2020 issue available **free of charge**.

You can read it from the Greenbank website: go to the homepage at www.greenbankchurch.org (see opposite for a picture of the homepage), click the red LIFE AND WORK logo, then follow the instructions.

Weekly 'Lockdown Life' Photographic Competition

Notice the bottom rightmost button on the home page (shown opposite). Clicking it leads to a page describing Greenbank's weekly '*Lockdown Life*' photographic competition. Elsewhere in this issue there are some samples of the most popular photographs received so far. Why don't you take part?

Positive Feedback!

We've been really happy to receive a lot of feedback from members of the congregation, community, and all sorts of people across Scotland and around the world who have been part of our virtual congregations on recent Sundays and in Holy Week. Here are a few of them!



“Dear Rev Dr Ritchie and Members of Greenbank Parish Church,
My husband and I are friends of Katie & Josh (Katie’s mom was my roommate in college and remains my dear friend). I thought you’d enjoy hearing that on Easter Sunday, April 12, 2020 between 2–3pm Eastern Standard Time / 7–8pm GMT, 8½ hours after the Greenbank Church service started, my husband and I enjoyed the service in our living room. I sang along and celebrated communion – pic of my communion wafer and “chalice” of wine attached.



What a lovely and moving service in this difficult time. While COVID-19 is causing grief, anxiety, and separation, it is also opening up new worlds, new connections, and new opportunities. That we were able to participate in the Greenbank Church service 8.5 hours after it actually occurred is surely a miracle. Next it will be holographic participation, then warp drive, and someday perhaps, tessering* (for any Madeleine L’Engle fans out there). In Christ all things are possible. Thank you for making it possible for us to worship “with” you today. Many thanks, Brandi and Barry Levine”

*tessering is a form of travelling – of wrinkling space and time [Google]



“Thank you all for making Easter so special with all that you did in Holy Week and not least the service on Easter Sunday. It has been a good time.”



“I should like to thank all who were involved in whatever capacity with the Holy Week services which I found really inspiring in our present circumstances. There was a lot of work and thought had gone into these services which was greatly appreciated by those who participated. Many thanks.”



“I would like to take this moment to thank God for technology which has enabled us to be reached in our homes and places of work through online streaming even during this time of lockdown whereby we are unable to attend Church in person.”



“Thank you to all involved in producing a full service in these difficult times, it is so appreciated.”



“Absolutely brilliant, and so encouraging to us poor souls stuck at home. Praise the Lord for so much talent at Greenbank Church. Congratulations and many thanks to all concerned.”



“Hi Greenbank Church, I just want to thank everyone who is involved in keeping us all together during this lockdown. It’s great to have the newsletter every week and to enjoy all the great photos. The services have been wonderful although I do miss the fellowship of being in the congregation and am looking forward to the great excitement of being together again. Many thanks to you all and keep well.”



“Thank you so much for making it possible to share communion in a meaningful way with other fellow worshippers this Maundy Thursday. Indeed you are to be congratulated on making not only the Service tonight, but also on the past three Sundays, true acts of inclusive worship.”



“I write to say how much I have appreciated all the Holy Week services. As someone who initially was sceptical about the use of the internet for services I did not expect to find them a blessing! So I ask you to pass on my appreciation to everyone who was involved in any way to the success.”

From the Eco-Group

At the service on 26th January when the Rev Sally Foster-Fulton, Head of Christian Aid Scotland, preached, the congregation were asked to fill in a questionnaire about their knowledge and attitudes to climate change. The 90 responses threw up some interesting comments which the **Greenbank Eco-Group** has been considering and which they would like to share.

It was comforting to note that a whopping 93% accept that we are in the midst of a climate emergency, although it was questioned whether the current warming is just part of a repeated cycle which has been experienced in the past. The Eco-Group considers that the scientific evidence clearly shows the current warming is man-made and therefore needs man to counteract it. It was heartening to see that someone had changed their mind having heard Sally's sermon.

Greenhouse Gases

One of the tough questions we asked was to try to name the top three greenhouse gases. Only 9% were able to name all three, but between 25% and 30% were able to name one or two and some were even able to write the correct formulae. The top three offenders with (in brackets) the increase in presence in the atmosphere since industrial times are: Carbon Dioxide (40%),

Methane (150%) and Nitrous Oxide (20%).

Note that Methane is 28 times more effective than CO₂ at trapping heat, and worryingly is currently set to have the second highest increase in levels recorded in the last two decades. There is much scientific discussion going on as to the primary cause of this increase. Although some blame livestock, there are signs that global warming may release Methane from marshland.

Waste Management

We also asked about food waste. A small number of respondents had a shot at estimating the quantity thrown away. The currently accepted total of food and drink waste each year in Scotland is just shy of one million tonnes, of which more than half is as a result of household waste! The congregation's answers on the most wasted items were maybe based on personal experience. Their top three answers were bread, fruit/salad/vegetables and meat, but a report by Zero Waste Scotland suggests that, country wide, the chief offenders are milk, bread and fizzy drinks.

Given the contribution made by food waste to Methane levels, transportation costs and household expenditure, this is an area that needs serious consideration.



This plastic packet was found on the beach while walking. It's a TV snack of a quarter chicken which then cost the equivalent of 15 pence. This well-preserved state shows how well plastic packaging lasts after 50 years at sea or in sand; cooking instructions are supplied on the back.

Plastic

Respondents were asked about the time taken for plastic items to decompose. In truth there does not appear to be a correct answer: the estimates for a plastic bottle vary from 400 to 1,000 years. Possibly it never fully disappears but remains as micro particles of plastic all through the food chain. What is clear is that we are disappearing under a sea of plastic waste. The adjacent picture provides a striking example of just how long lasting plastic can be.

One final thought. Given the current lockdown, this is the ideal time to consider whether all those previously essential business trips were really necessary, or could the same results be achieved via the use of technology? Over to you.

Donald Milne
Eco-Group

Christian Aid Week 10-16 May

Although there will be no house-to-house collection this year, Christian Aid Week is definitely going ahead! The appeal this year focuses on drought-hit communities in Kenya and the impact of the climate crisis around the world. However, Christian Aid is also raising awareness of the impact of COVID-19 on communities living in poverty, and will be working in these places to help limit the impact.

We will be streaming a Christian Aid service from Greenbank on **Sunday 10th May**,



and we will be asking you to donate to the annual appeal via the Christian Aid website – www.christianaid.org.uk. Online donations are preferable but you can also telephone 020 7523 2269.

Fiona Watt

Rev Duncan McPhee



Duncan, taken by his grandson, Michael Hill, at Duncan and Beth's Diamond Wedding in 2016



*Braidburn Valley on a sunny afternoon
See p5: 'Lockdown Life' competition photograph*

News of the death of the Rev Duncan McPhee will be received with great sadness by members of Greenbank. He served as Pastoral Assistant in the congregation from 1995 to 2000. Having served as a Parish Minister and as part-time Presbytery Clerk to the Presbytery of Hamilton, he moved to work in the Church of Scotland Offices as Secretary-Depute to the Board of National Mission. Following his retirement from that post he joined the ministry team at Greenbank on a part-time basis, so returning to his first love – the work of the parish.

He took a very personal interest in the elderly and housebound members of the congregation and was a much appreciated regular visitor to many, liaising with the Pastoral Care Team. In addition he occupied the pulpit on a number of occasions – often (but not only) when I was on holiday. In later years he did not enjoy good health and for the past sixteen months was resident in Lennox House.

An only child, he greatly enjoyed the bustle of family life with his wife Beth and his four children, Elspeth, Iain, Ailsa and Mairi as well as his nine grandchildren and his great grandchildren. We remember them at this sad time.

He will be well remembered in the life of the wider Church of Scotland and his time at Greenbank brought blessings to many through his pastoral care and his participation in the ministry of the congregation.

Ian G. Scott
Minister, Greenbank Parish Church
(1983–2006)

Lest we forget — Drought and Fires in Australia



When we are focusing so much of our attention on COVID-19, the Uniting Church of Australia has written to the Church of Scotland about the devastating bushfires there in late 2019 and early 2020. Record-breaking temperatures and in some areas as much as seven years of severe drought fuelled a series of massive bushfires when millions of hectares of bush, forest and parks burned. Over thirty people died as a direct result of the fires and hundreds more from the effect of poor air quality. There were dramatic consequences for wild life and for homes. Thousands of houses were destroyed, forcing whole communities of people to seek shelter elsewhere. The drought had already forced many farmers to

get rid of their animals and stop planting crops.

Although Australia has always known fires and drought, climate change is making natural disasters go from bad to worse. At a time when governments around the world have declared a climate emergency we, as Christians, **must** take action. For instance, we can think about how we heat our homes, the means we use to travel and consider the food we eat. Our sister Church in Australia is calling on us to pray and work for a future where the world can flourish and where coming generations can live and enjoy the wild beauty of God's creation.

Grace Maweu
World Mission Team

E-QII, E-Costa, Sunday Club, and More!

What a change this has been, for all ages and walks of life! While we are separate in the body, we are together in spirit! QII and my weekly Costa coffee hours have turned into E-QII and E-Costa (both names given by one of our teens).

E-QII has continued with much the same sort of silliness and seriousness that QII normally had. We were thankful to be able to invite Margot Fergusson into one of our meetings to learn more about her life – and how COVID-19 had been impacting her work. Our set topics have changed as we take each week as it comes; it has been a welcome breath of relief as we have a chance to catch up each week. As you will not be surprised to learn, we miss each other, and miss meeting at Greenbank.

My weekly E-Costa call has gone international! I have invited my brother and his youth group into our calls, so if you come on, you'll have a whole gaggle of

Americans to chat to as well. You can usually catch a funny story or two from the Chaffee household in our younger days too!

Finally, on request from some parents, we started a Sunday Club shortly after the livestream service finishes, for upper primary school children to get on-line and socialise. I can appreciate how dramatic a change it must have been for them to go from all the interactions of Primary School to far, far fewer ones. It has been a welcome addition to their weeks as we chat, play a game or two, and have a small craft activity.

While the changes have been large, I have reminded QII that the church was never just the building, but the people within it. And now, it seems we are getting a crash course in how to be church outside of the church – and I am eager to see what we learn from the experience!

Steve Chaffee

Guild

In a spirit of determined optimism the Guild have started to prepare next session's syllabus, and we hope to have a choice of interesting, exciting and fun speakers ready to book whenever we can get going. We are also hoping that lockdown will have lifted for at least some of the Summer Coffee Mornings; ginger-



bread, lemon biscuits, cake and much more are being planned. Unfortunately, thinking about baking makes some of us hungry. (... I may have to go and have a little something when I finish this!) We are keeping in touch with phone calls, email, the website and, of course, Martin's letter and the Services.

Edith Armit

Social Bite

Appalling and almost incredible as it may seem in 2020, there are still many people in the United Kingdom who are too impoverished to provide themselves and their families with sufficient, nourishing food. A recent survey by the School of Dentistry in Dundee University found that there were families in that city who could not afford toothbrushes, while in Cumbria some teachers are bringing in breakfast for their classes because the parents of certain children cannot afford to feed them breakfast. There is sound evidence too that children who grow up undernourished can suffer from arrested brain development, which in turn leads to further social problems. It is tragic beyond words that such problems still exist in our country fifteen years on from the *Make Poverty History* campaign, which ignited such idealism in our own city and elsewhere.

I am acutely aware that many members of our church already give generously to charity, and that, collectively, the Church of Scotland does great work in many departments of our public life, but that said, I have often pondered whether we, as a church of around 950,000 members in Scotland, could do more directly to address the immediate problem of hunger within Scotland. Unfortunately, I cannot escape the conclusion that the logistical demands of any such effort would probably be insuperable. But I believe there is something we can all still do.



Many of you will recollect that *Social Bite* undertook the provision of stovies for the YACHT Ceilidh last September. This organisation, which originally provided work in cafes for disadvantaged people, including those recovering from addiction, has now transformed itself into a provider of some 3,000 daily food parcels for the needy in some of our cities. Please may I ask you to go to their website

social-bite.co.uk

There you can view an impressive video of their kitchen in Livingston in full operation, and you can also find out how to become a regular donor. Please remember: “mony a mickle maks a muckle”.

Donald R. MacLeod
Convener, Social Committee



*The Haircut: would you trust your sister?
See p5: 'Lockdown Life' competition photograph*

Thought for the Month

Rainbows and the Rainbow

In recent weeks many windows have been displaying rainbows. Most are very simple, with an arc of seven colours painted on a sheet of paper. Some demonstrate ingenuity: in one bungalow the rainbow starts and ends in two ground floor windows, with the central section in the upstairs window. Many carry positive and encouraging messages, reminding us to keep the rules on social distancing and washing our hands, or thanking NHS workers for their dedication and courage, or telling us to stay safe. Without exception, all of them are colourful, cheerful, and uplifting — and are signs of hope.

In mid-March, the study series on *Genesis for normal people* became one of the many church activities to be cancelled. If it had continued, the next meeting would have focused on the story of Noah, complete

with the ark, all the animals, the universal flood, and, of course, the rainbow. At one level, far from being a story for children, this can be read as a horrific and disturbing account of the extermination of humanity. However, that would be to misunderstand totally the aim of the ancient writers, who wished to concentrate above all else on a compassionate God.

That is the point of the rainbow. Although a weapon of war, the bow is an undrawn bow. God is not in pursuit of any enemy. God is depicted as adaptable, touched to the heart by the plight of creation, and willing to accept hurt to keep hope alive. According to the story, in the midst of it all God remembered Noah. And this is good news, especially for all who at any time experience the dark night of being forgotten. The gospel of this God is that

God remembers. It is the remembering by God of creation and of humanity that gives hope. At a time when we are threatened by a tsunami of disease, a flood of despair, and a seemingly relentless outpouring of bad news, this is why the rainbow is such a powerful symbol of hope in God, the One who not only remembers us but has experienced our life in its entirety.



Our Wonderful Minister

See p5: 'Lockdown Life' competition photograph

Peter Graham

Welcome Teams

Since the congregation is not currently attending worship at Greenbank, there will be no requirement for Welcome teams until further notice.

Teams will be contacted when congregational attendance at worship in Greenbank resumes.

Flower Rota

As the Church is currently closed, provision and distribution of flowers is suspended until further notice.



Congregational Register

There were no changes in the Congregational Register this month.



*Isabel Hunter on her speedy scooter
See p5: 'Lockdown Life' competition photograph*

Coffee Rota

Since the congregation is not currently attending worship at Greenbank on Sunday mornings, there will be no coffee after the Sunday Service until further notice.

Coffee teams will be contacted when congregational attendance at Sunday morning worship resumes.

The Ministry Team can be contacted directly:

Rev Dr Martin Ritchie (Minister)

tel: 07984 466 855

email: MRitchie@churchofscotland.org.uk

Mr Steven Chaffee (Youth Associate)

tel: 07729 000 788

email: stevechaffee@greenbankchurch.org

Note that the Church Office and buildings are currently closed to personal callers, and the Administrator is on furlough.

The office telephone and email account are monitored for messages:

email: greenbankchurch@btconnect.com

*To make contact with any organisation featured in **Greenbank Connections**, please use the telephone number or email address given, if there is one. Otherwise email the Church Office.*

Website: www.greenbankchurch.org

**Postal address: Greenbank Parish Church
Braidburn Terrace, Edinburgh EH10 6ES**

Material for the June–Aug 2020 issue of *Greenbank Connections* should be emailed by gam on Friday 22nd May to

greenbankconnections@gmail.com

Summer Walks Update

Since the last edition of *Connections* the full lockdown provisions have prevented me creating and publicising walk routes as I had anticipated. As it happens, the Eco-Group has also been discussing the value of celebrating our local environment in the current conditions, with the aim of marking this in some way during our *Creantiontide* worship later in the year.

So here is a challenge. As you take the local exercise opportunities available to us, please let me know about any new things you have found out about in your neighbourhood in the course of walking, and describe any particular local routes that you have enjoyed and would want to share with others. Please send details to me at

davidinnesjack@gmail.com

and they can perhaps be shared via Martin's weekly newsletter and the next issue of *Connections*.

Here are a couple of suggestions from me to start you off:

- Some of you will remember last year's walk through the Braidburn Valley to the Pentlands. We stopped at the old well house on Cockmylane, and realised it was a collecting point for the springs that fed Edinburgh's water supply in the 1700s. A wander through the suburban streets in this area will lead you to the stone constructions around the original springs – some in gardens and elsewhere.

- Another option for a longer walk is to take in the ancient stones of south Edinburgh. Most people know where the Bore Stane is on Morningside Road, but can you visit the Buck Stane and the Caiy Stane as well? If you are not sure where these are, please contact me!

David Jack



The Caiy Stane



The Buck Stane