

NORTH LEITH PARISH CHURCH MAGAZINE

October 2021

Dear Members and Friends,

It was really good to meet a number of you the other week at the Saturday lunchtime gathering and to be able to share some of the latest news on future developments. It was also an important day where we were able to recognise the terrific work which Katherine Taylor has offered at North Leith as a Locum Minister.

While Katherine will be a huge loss to North Leith I am especially pleased that she will be the new parish minister in Tranent where I have lived for the past 12 years.



LEITH CHURCHES ROTA FOR WORSHIP & PASTORAL CARE

At this point in time it would be very difficult to get another Locum to lead services and provide pastoral care. In the spirit of One-Church-for-Leith, we have been able to agree a rota to support North Leith where various people from the other 3 churches will lead Sunday Services and where the 3 ministers will provide pastoral cover*. This involves the other churches sharing in a very practical way and our very own Jimmy & Tim leading a service at Leith St Andrews. Arrangements are for the period from October to December where what happens in 2022 will be shaped by the Presbytery Plan.

PRESBYTERY PLANS & PRIORITY FOR MISSION

All Presbyteries in The Church of Scotland are working hard to prepare plans for the next 5 years where we face huge challenges.

The plans will be radical and far reaching with over 30% loss of ministers over that time with many reaching retiral age and the reality that we cannot continue to manage and afford all the existing church buildings. While this is an unsettling time for the church it is also a time to agree that our priority must be for mission rather than just keeping the show on the road. Edinburgh Presbytery's Draft Plan will be available sometime in November it will involve every congregation in significant change.

MY RETIREMENT

Reaching retirement age in January, I will leave my current post as Transition Minister at Meadowbank at Christmas-time where we have plans in place for a union between Meadowbank and Willowbrae and a new ministry. This will also be the time for me to retire as Interim Moderator for North Leith and Presbytery will appoint a replacement to work on your behalf. I remember well how and why I volunteered to take on the position after a trip to Israel-Palestine including Jimmy, Margot and Tim when I heard that Alex McAspurren was moving to a new charge. The reason I volunteered was that I was convinced that One-Church-for-Leith could offer an exciting and dynamic future church for Leith. My hope and prayer for you is that this can be realised in the new Presbytery Plan.

With love and light

Russell McLarty, Interim Moderator

*[*If anyone has a pastoral care requirement or question, please contact your elder or the Session Clerk in the first instance.]*

A Farewell from Katherine

Dear Members and Friends,

By the time you read this letter, I will have left North Leith to get ready to be ordained and inducted into my first charge as minister of Tranent Parish Church at the end of October.

I have been blessed to have spent the last 18 months as locum minister with you. Thank you for your kindness, support and encouragement. I have especially valued all the conversations which I have been able to have. When speaking to visitors who have dropped into the church building over the last while, I often talk about the church being alive and I think that has been so clear throughout the past months. The food bank has always been open, the church doors have been open whenever possible, the Guides, Brownies and Rainbows have been welcoming young people and folk have been caring for each other through phone calls and visits. This is in addition to all the work which has been done in the background to keep the church a safe place to be.

I think that this living church took a real step forward on Saturday 25th September. The national church has encouraged all congregations to set aside time to thank God for keeping us and leading us through the last months and to allow us to respond with our own gifts. North Leith celebrated this time with a lunch in the hall. Those who were able to come could sit down together and share sandwiches, sausage rolls and scones and conversation. It was lovely to be able to be together in this way, for the first time in many months. There was talk of the future, of the path ahead being the sharing of ministry and worship with the three other Church of Scotland's in Leith and you can look forward to a variety of preachers over the next few weeks. The congregations have been preparing for this step for a long time and they are now actively taking forward the

national plans to reshape the church to encourage growth in the coming months and years. It is a matter of living out what the prophet Isaiah writes:-

See, I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up; do you not perceive it? (Isaiah 43:19)

Part of that new thing is I think a move from church not only being inside but outside too. The knitted flowers on the railings are a symbol of that. They are being refreshed and have moved to a new spot. Who knows where they will go to next. There is space for more, for those who like knitting and crocheting. The church garden has been well looked after and has produced not only lovely yellow roses but a crop of potatoes. We now know the names of the trees. North Leith has made a Care for Creation panel from recycled materials which will be joined together with those from other congregations to hang outside on the walls of New College on the Mound in support of the Glasgow Climate Change Conference.

I think that all these things are visible signs of the love of Jesus which is alive in our hearts and which spills out, ready to be shared in conversation, creativity and kindness with the people and the community around us.

May God guide your paths in the future.

With love and thanks, blessings and best wishes, *Katherine*



AT NEWHAVEN HARBOUR

A lookout point across the sea
yet something nearer interests me
It's like a picture there that floats
enclosed are many bonnie boats
The tide comes in and then goes out
the boats were gently bobbed about
And stood on high above them all
the lighthouse guarding firm and tall
Some for fishing, some for pleasure
the harbour's safety is its leisure
And seagulls in the air may call
to set the scene so nautical
People strolling on the quay
enjoy locations lure like me ...

A sonnet written in July 2021 by Norma A Macarthur



Our Trees

Two Edinburgh students persuaded the Church of Scotland to support their proposal to survey trees on church property throughout the country. Though no botanist I have a long standing interest in trees, and with a bit of help from Tim Bell I took it on. It would have been best to do this in the spring as flowers and fruits are the key to plant identification, but a lot can be done with leaf shape and how the leaves are arranged on the twigs, and we were given a tree leaf key from the Natural History Museum. We thought members and friends would be interested in the result.

Starting with the South side of the church, the most obvious are two old willows forked very low down – how old I do not know, perhaps somebody knows. Not the elegant White and Crack Willows found by rivers but probably Sallow or Goat Willows Salix caprea. The one nearest the street sheds its catkins – commonly known as pussies – on the church garden and the surrounding street. When I was a child people used to collect twigs with pussies to put in vases. Willows are either male or female, and this one is male. We'll need to wait for the spring to see what the other one is. These willows are quite common: there's one in the house garden at the end of Madeira Street, and others in cycle paths in our area.

Right at the corner, more a shrub than a tree, and consisting of a complex of many twisted stems interspersed with ivy, is a spindle tree (Euonymus), I think a Rough Stemmed Spindle Tree Euonymus verrucosus. Spindle trees were so called because their branches were used for spindles in home spinning. They are commoner on the chalk lands of the south of England, but they'll do well enough on the limy surrounds of buildings built with lime mortar.

In between the willows there is a glossy evergreen that is relatively young. It is actually a species of cherry, no doubt of Mediterranean origin, and commonly referred to as Cherry Laurel or just “laurel”. but a laurel that has nothing to do with the bay laurel wreathes with which Roman generals were crowned at their triumphs There are not a few

of them in our area. The house I grew up in in Inverness had a “laurel hedge” alongside the drive to the garage. It is botanically Prunus laurocerasus, as much a Prunus as other cherries, plums and peaches.

The account of the South side finishes with two little Rowan saplings. The rowan is one candidate for Scotland's national tree, growing on hillsides higher than any other. Some call it Mountain Ash because of its leaves, but ash it surely is not. Real ashes don't produce berries like this, and moreover have their leaves in pairs along the shoots. Botanists classify it as a Sorbus and it is Sorbus aucuparia. It has many similar cousins with similar leaves and berries growing all over the Northern Hemisphere.

On North side of the church we have a different picture, where the trees are more recent. I imagine there would have been older trees taken down – some people's memories may still be fresh -- when the hall was built and the nice garden laid out in front, which Sheila Christie and Ian Jameson tend so faithfully. We have two groups of trees, one group near the church, and the other against the wall.

The group near the church are two birches (Betula) and one Japanese Cherry (Prunus serrulata). There are very many varieties of Japanese Cherry, and I have no idea which we have here. Many types of birch are widely planted in parks and gardens or seed themselves, almost all with the silver bark that we know so well. Many of us will recognize Betula pendula, commonly called Silver Birch, but could easily have been called Weeping Birch, because of the way its branches hang down like Weeping Willow. This is the one most commonly planted and seems to be dominant in most of northern Europe. The other, rarely planted deliberately but native to much of Scotland, is Downy Birch, Betula pubescens. There are many of those in our neighbourhood, looking much more like normal trees. However, they interbreed, which makes it difficult for those of us who want to distinguish them. Of our two, I reckon the bigger of the two, planted to celebrate the centenary of the foundation of the Girl Guides, is Downy Birch. The other looks like it sowed itself, and is younger, and is hard to be sure about, possibly a hybrid.

There are no problems about the area on the hall side next the wall: one Holly Ilex aquifolium and one Elder Sambucus nigra. The elder looks as though it is quite old, how old I have no idea. Equally, I have no idea whether anybody has thought of harvesting its flowers for elder flower wine.

Niall Martin

CLIMATE CHANGE

Over the summer the Leith Bible study group considered the topic of climate change. We used some materials available from Tearfund. One short video which we looked at referred to a book called "The Future We Choose" by Christiana Figueres.

Christiana Figueres was the Executive Secretary of the UN Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change during the 5 years leading up to the Paris Agreement in 2015. Since then she has maintained a strong interest in global affairs and written her book published in 2020.

Recently I took part in another climate change course, this time organised by Trinity College in Glasgow. Once again, Christiana Figueres was referenced both in a TED talk which she has given and in excerpts from her book.

"This decade is a moment of choice unlike any we have ever lived. All of us alive right now share that responsibility and that opportunity. There are many changes to make over the next 10 years, and each of us will take different steps along the way. But all of us start the transformation in one place, our mindset.

Faced with today's facts,

- **We can be indifferent, do nothing and hope the problem goes away.**
- **We can despair and plunge into paralysis**
- **We can become stubborn optimists with a fierce conviction that no matter how difficult, we must and we can rise to the challenge."**

Think of what we achieved in the past 20 months of the pandemic.

- Changes in our individual behaviour and our mindset.
- Changes by our government and NHS
- Global efforts to produce a vaccine in record time.

While the pandemic has already lasted longer than any of us could have imagined at the outset, all our efforts since March 2020 mean that the virus, while still threatening is coming under control.

The climate emergency poses a greater long-term threat to humanity. We can and must change our mindset and behaviour just as we did with Covid even though the threat does not seem so immediate to us.

In our climate service back in August I summarised a few things. Here they are again.

- we must continue to act in our small ways, and always keep trying to find new ones
- we must support those around us who are already acting in new ways
- we must show solidarity with the most vulnerable by continuing to support those charities who are helping them to adapt and mitigate the direct effects of climate change where they are
- we must listen to Jesus' words and act on them.

In her book Christiana Figueres paints a picture of 2050 if we successfully meet the climate challenge: The air is moist and fresh, trees are everywhere, all homes and buildings produce their own electricity, clean drinking water is available to all. Petrol and diesel cars have been replaced and fewer people feel the need to own a car anyway. There is much work still to be done but now governments have recognised climate crisis factors for the threat multipliers that they are, allowing us to predict future problems and address them quickly.

She concludes her TED talk like this -

"I invite each of you to ask yourself: What is the future you want, and what are you doing to make that future a reality? You will each have a different answer, but you can all start by joining the

growing family of stubborn optimists around the world. Welcome to the family.'

If you have the internet you can view the short 7 minute talk at https://www.ted.com/talks/christiana_figueres_the_case_for_stubborn_optimism_on_climate
Excerpts from her book picturing the world in 2050 can be found at <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2020/feb/15/best-case-scenario-2050-climate-crisis-future-we-choose-christiana-figueres-tom-rivett-carnac>
<https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2020/feb/15/worst-case-scenario-2050-climate-crisis-future-we-choose-christiana-figueres-tom-rivett-carnac>

Jimmy Hudson

Thank You, Thank You, Thank You

At the September Session meeting four of our elders stood down from Session membership: David Black, Ewan Bruce, who will also be lifting his lines as he settles in Morayshire, Donald Cook and John Summers. Between them, these gentlemen had 158 years of active service as elders. They all served in many different capacities and deserve many, many thanks from us all for the tasks they took on willingly, conscientiously and lovingly.

Saturday 25 September was a day of thanksgiving and celebrations, in a number of ways, all of which have been recorded in this magazine.



The gifts we gave Katherine included a scarf, some books / book-tokens and a beautiful small silver cross on a chain. In addition, the congregation was so generous, we were also able to pass on to her a sum of money that she has told us, in her Thank You card, she will use in her new ministry.

A big thank you is also due to all of you who contributed then, as well as before and since, to the National Giving Day for church funds. At the time of writing the total raised amounts to £1,815.

Recently we responded to an invitation from the University of Edinburgh, New College to create a group or community patch for two banners to be displayed on the Mound in Edinburgh. The banners are being hung on the towers of New College overlooking Princes Street providing a striking installation in an iconic spot, visible from a distance. The artwork raises awareness of Climate Emergency and the COP meeting in Glasgow; and is a faith-based statement of support for the COP26.

A picture of the beautiful North Leith patch is on the back page of this magazine. It was designed and made by Beryl Curlett and Linda Mckee; many thanks to them and to those who provided the recycled material from which the work was made.

Anne Lamont, Session Clerk & Treasurer

Changes of personal details

Please remember to let us know any changes of **address** or **phone number** in order that we can keep the roll up to date. Also we will be pleased to have any new / updated **email** addresses.

Similarly, for those who give by Gift Aid, please let the treasurer know if your income tax status has changed.

Magazine Contributions

Thank you to those who contributed to this magazine.

Contributions for a Christmas magazine will be gratefully received.



Examples of other patches can be viewed on the New College website at [Example patches – Cop26 at New College \(ed.ac.uk\)](https://www.ed.ac.uk/cop26)

We can all make a difference

“We need a whole new way of thinking. The political system created is all about competition. That must come to an end, we need to cooperate and work together and to share the resources of the planet in a fair way. We need to start living within the planetary boundaries, focus on equity and take a few steps back for the sake of all living species.” *Greta Thunberg*