

May you have the gift of Faith, the blessing of Hope,
and the peace of His Love, this Christmas and always.



CHRISTMAS WORSHIP AT TINTO PARISHES

Cairngryffe Parish Church
Libberton & Quothquan Parish Church
Symington Parish Church

Our Worship this Christmas will all be online.

Thursday 24th December

Christmas Eve Worship at 7.00pm

Friday 25th December

Christmas Day Worship at 11.15am

All Are Welcome

We use Zoom to gather for worship.

It requires a specific link to be able to access the service.
This is widely available within the Tinto Parishes community.
If you would like a link please contact Rev. George Shand on
George.Shand@churchofscotland.org.uk

Our 7.00pm **Christmas Eve** worship will be recorded and be available a little later in the evening on the Symington Church website.

Go to the homepage of symingtonkirk.com

On the same page you will find four Advent Carol services, 24 Carols in all, which we ran over the Sundays of Advent



CHRISTMAS GREETINGS TO YOU,
AND ALL MEMBERS AND FRIENDS
OF OUR TINTO PARISHES
from the Minister, Sessions Clerks, and Kirk Sessions

WORSHIP on Sunday 27th December 2020

10.00am—In-person worship at Symington Parish Church, led by the Congregational Worship Group.

11.15am—Online Worship—on Zoom—led by Rev. George Shand

The cover picture comes from Bethlehem, from Ma'an Lil-Hayat (Together in Life), a work-related wool-felting project for young people with profound disabilities, which is part of the international L'Arche network.



We have made a donation to the project for using their photograph.

Winter
2020
Advent to Epiphany

The Tinto Parishes
FOCUS
The church in the community



Kirk and Community News
For the Churches in Tinto Parishes

THE TINTO PARISHES



Cairngryffe Parish Church
Libberton & Quothquan Parish Church
Symington Parish Church



TINTO PARISHES: An open and welcoming community of faith

Minister: Rev George C. Shand MA BD (01899 309400) george.shand@churchofscotland.org.uk

Session Clerks:

Cairngryffe Parish Church - Charity Number SC 017001

Mrs Mary McLellan, Ledaig, Haghholm Road, Cleghorn, ML11 7SG (01555 871114)

Symington Parish Church: - Charity Number SC 009095

Mr Robert Carson, 07786 624 068 or robertdcarson@yahoo.com

Libberton & Quothquan Parish Church - Charity Number SC 016304

Mr Paul Dobie, Cairnview Cottage, Libberton Muir Road, Quothquan ML12 6NB

01899 308248

WE WILL REMEMBER THEM.

The front page picture is of the Memorial window within the Old Covington Church. We sought permission to enter the building and have a photograph taken.

The photo is courtesy of Angus-Milner Brown.

The top Panel says "GREATER LOVE HATH NO MAN THAT THIS THAT A MAN LAY DOWN HIS LIFE FOR HIS FRIENDS."

The left Panel says "IN ALL THY WAYS ACKNOWLEDGE HIM AND HE SHALL DIRECT THY PATHS"

The right Panel says, "BE THOU FAITHFUL UNTO DEATH AND I WILL GIVE THEE A CROWN OF LIFE"

And the Bottom says, "TO THE GLORY OF GOD AND IN LOVING MEMORY OF THOSE BELONGING TO THE PARISH WHO FELL IN THE GREAT WAR 1914-1918" and it mentions the following names of the fallen. HENRY DARGIE, WILLIAM GALLOWAY MARSHALL, JAMES MCDONALD BROWN, JAMES MILLER, PATRICK TWEEDIE.

THE TINTO PARISHES: *The Church in our Community*

The Church of Scotland serving the South Lanarkshire communities of Carmichael, Covington, Libberton, Pettinain, Quothquan, Symington, Thankerton and an extensive rural hinterland.

Visit our websites:

www.symingtonkirk.com

www.cairngryffekirk.org.uk

www.libbertonquothquan.org.uk

Webmaster: Robert Carson

Webmaster: Jim Watt

Webmaster: Paul Dobie

And find us on



Facebook
'The Tinto Parishes'

FROM YOUR MINISTER



Greetings, and can I first of all apologise. Over these past months we have been very limited in who we could communicate effectively with – people with email, and people shielding who received a shorter version of the FOCUS magazine by post.

However, for Christmas we wanted to produce FOCUS as we did pre-Covid, so we can again connect with everyone in our Church community. This has been dogged by my technical and time constraints, and communication difficulties. But here we are now!

Your Church Magazine comes with our very best wishes for the Christmas season, and for a better 2021 for all of us.

Your friend and minister,

George

PEACE BE WITH YOU.

A LONG ADVENT.

'The people were struggling for what seemed like an eternity. There was a profound sense of helplessness, and many people experienced that in feelings of sadness or depression. They were very aware of their human vulnerability and unable to fix the problems in their lives. They waited for help, from outside.'

Perhaps this is a description of how ordinary people felt in Palestine some 2,000 years ago, under Roman occupation. The idea of a Messianic Hope had been developing for hundreds of years – but the expected deliverance had not yet appeared. The occupation by the colonizing Roman Empire was transforming every aspect of spiritual, financial, and community life. It was confusing, threatening, and it seemed like there would be no end to it. 'Surely now is the time for the Messiah to come and save us!'

Or does this describe our experience in our world under pandemic now. For nine months we've been waiting; restricting our connections with each other; waiting for someone else (scientists, vaccine developers, manufacturers) to lead us on a route out of this danger.

Advent is a time of waiting – waiting for a vision of hope to be reborn. Perhaps this year we are already well steeped in waiting. The environment is pretty tough outside, it hasn't looked good for quite some time, yet as Christian communities, in trust, we wait, we prepare, knowing that however tough times are, hope is continually being reborn – truth, peace, joy will prevail. God is at work amongst us.

OUR ADVENT WORSHIP

Over the four weeks of Advent our worship will reflect that hope growing amongst us and coming to fruition at Christmas. And a vulnerable child shall embody HOPE.

Surrounded by powerful and dangerous forces in and around us, we learn again that the power of God is not found in hardness and conflict, but in care and vulnerability. We will remember again and relive the surprise that our ways are not God's ways. How and where and when God intervenes will defy all our human assumptions about what power actually is.

The key scripture readings for this advent will be:

Sunday 29th November – **Gospel of Mark 13:24-37**

Sunday 6th December - **Gospel of Mark 1:1-8**

Sunday 13th December - **Gospel of John 1:6-8,19-28**

Sunday 20th December – **Gospel of Luke 1:26-38**

You can perhaps see from this that our Gospel focus over the coming year will be shifting to the Gospel of Mark –agreed by scholars to be the earliest of the Gospels, and the basis for much of the content of Matthew and Luke's Gospels.

Probably the word used most often in Marks Gospel is.. 'immediately'. The telling of the story moves at a very quick and exciting pace. And we look forward to a quicker pace of hope in the year ahead, exploring and being energized by a return of connection, and some exciting new opportunities.



FOUR CAROLS+ *Sunday evenings in Advent*

Complementing our morning worship during Advent we are also having Carol Singing online for each of the four Sundays at 7.30pm—singing along with pre-recorded versions of your favourite carols.

If you have internet access you can find recordings of these events on the Symington Kirk Website—www.symingtonkirk.com

There will be a host of Carols you can sing along to in what remains of Advent and into Christmas and the weeks after Christmas.

WHAT'S HAPPENING IN TINTO PARISHES

1st March 2020 was the day that the first case of COVID-19 was reported in Scotland; in the middle of the month the WHO declared the virus a pandemic; and on the 24th, four days after our First Minister declared in Parliament that we were facing "the biggest challenge of our lifetime", the country was in total Lockdown.

Our churches had already been instructed by Presbytery not to open for Sunday worship on 22nd March.

Nine months later, as we approach Christmas, still in thrall to the virus, we can look back on a process of entering 'uncharted territory' - having experienced the confusions, the hardships, the isolation, the hurt so many have endured, the mistakes made, and the extraordinary active care for each other that was expressed within our communities.

For the first six months our worship together continued regularly on-line, with around 50 people regularly gathering electronically. We posted out a regular mailing to those folks we knew were shielding, and instituted a telephone line—01899 205410—as a 'reflection line' of thoughts and prayers, and now a twenty five minute selection from Sunday morning worship.

Then in mid-October, Symington Kirk reopened on a Sunday morning at 10am, albeit with number restrictions and other safety measures. The online worship continues, but at last for those who have no access to, or skills for computer there is the opportunity to gather again in the church for worship. And no doubt in the new year, as vaccine becomes widespread, and restrictions reduce, we will be able to reopen all our churches.

NEWS FROM SYMINGTON

Jock Gilchrist

On 20 June, Symington lost one of its well-known characters, Jock Gilchrist. Jock spent almost all of his life living and working in and around Symington. His interest in sheep farming saw him frequently at Lanark Market, even in his later years. He and his wife Annie organised many successful events over the years raising thousands of pounds for charity. Jock was an active member of Abington Bowling Club and a long-standing member and supporter of Symington Church. He will be greatly missed by the community.



We also hold Helen Duthie in our hearts and prayers, on the death of her husband Jock in late November.

Re-opening of Church

At the meeting of Symington Kirk Session in late August, the elders unanimously voted in favour of re-opening for Sunday morning worship.

An ad-hoc committee of Rev George, Jessie Duff, Douglas Mackenzie, Eric Carlyle and myself was formed. Since then the committee, office-bearers and others, in particular Douglas and Christina Mackenzie, have been active in putting in place all the measures and procedures that the Church of Scotland and Scottish Government require of us. Following a visit and inspection by Lanark Presbytery, we received approval to reopen the Church on the 4th October.

As a result of this approval worship in our church building started again on Sunday 11th October, at 10am. As you might expect, there are various restrictions we have to comply with when gathering together but due to the good efforts of visitors and Church members there have not been too many problems.

Robert Carson, Session Clerk.

NEWS FROM CAIRNGRYFFE.

Throughout these last nine months, our Kirk Session has been able to meet electronically, and at every meeting has taken time to carefully consider whether now was an appropriate time or not for re-opening. Every meeting has come to the same conclusion—we should continue to wait until a safer time with less restrictions. Perhaps that time may well be within sight.

Session Clerk. I am sorry to let you know that, regretfully, due to changing personal commitments, Mary McLellan, has tendered her resignation as Session Clerk as of 31st December. In her formal letter of resignation Mary said this, "*I would like to say that it has been an honour and a privilege to serve our congregation in both positions of Depute Session Clerk then Session Clerk over the last thirteen years.*

As always, my heart will lie with Cairngryffe and what Jack and I consider to be our church family, and we both wish only the best for the Members of Session and all of the congregation."

The Kirk Session is now exploring the way ahead for the position of Session Clerk. We have a dilemma also about when, as a congregation, we can gather to thank Mary for her commitment to the life and work of our church family, and for her creative and graceful approach to her responsibilities. We will delay on this for a little while, in the hope of better opportunities ahead.



NEWS FROM LIBBERTON & QUOTHQUAN PARISH CHURCH

Our news, like those of the other churches, is also quite limited. Our Kirk Session has continued to meet, and as with the other churches, has deliberated on when it might be appropriate to reopen for worship. We have treated this issue very seriously, including at one point inviting the Presbytery Clerk to help us examine in detail everything that would be required of us to enable reopening. We now look forward with anticipation to possibilities in the new year.



Here we offer an interesting winter-themed article from 'the annals' - from our March 2002 issue of 'Libberton & Quothquan Kirk News'. A reminder of life here seventy years ago.

Nature Notes - A Winter's Tale.

It's the winter of 1947; Quothquan is cut off from the outside world. These are the days before mains electricity; it is the era of paraffin lamps and candles for light, coal and logs for heat. No double glazed windows. The most immediate problem is to get the milk away from all the farms around the village - Quothquan Mill, Burnfoot, Eastertown, Loanhead, Roadhead and Parkhouse.

They were all dairy farms at that time, and of course cows did not stop milking just because there was a snow storm. So an effort had to be made to get the milk out. The farms did have the telephone, and so a plan was laid. One of the farms had a new high-powered tractor, a Fordson Major. So at first light it set off, gathering the milk from the farms as it went along. The roads had to be discounted as they were drifted feet deep. The campaign depended on a squad of men armed with shovels and wire cutters, a 45h.p. tractor pulling a trailer of milk churns, and Bob Anderson, farmer at Loanhead, blazing a trail astride his Clydesdale horse.

The preferred route was via Baitlaw farm, the Black Well Tryst and on to Biggar, but that proved impossible as the snow encountered was so deep that Bob's horse started plunging, unseating the rider and landing Bob in an undignified heap in a snow drift. So they back-tracked to Quothquan, and, via the track from the east side of Loanhead Farm, and down the road end to the west side, again cutting the fence, they got to Parkhouse Farm. Thence they progressed to Thankerton, handing over their precious load to the milk lorry, getting empty churns in exchange. The main road to Biggar was passable, so round they went, leaving large gaps on the baker's shelves!

Late in the afternoon, exhausted by their labours, and loaded up with empty milk churns and bags of bread, our valiant villagers returned to deliver the much needed basics. Jimmy Venerus did the door to door delivery as they

proceeded through the village. I was not present, but I can just see him in his pawky way, as he knocked at each house, shouting "Baker!"

His bluff was called, however, when one old lady cried out: "Any tea bread?", I don't doubt Jimmy said he would "put it in the book for tomorrow"!

The winter of '47, as anyone who lived through it could testify, was harsh, and for country folk, farmers and their workers in particular, VERY harsh. But didn't it bring out the very best in human nature and in community spirit? I do recall that Quothquan even made the national news at 6 o'clock that evening (radio, of course) with a report on how this little village, the name of which no outsider can spell, saved itself.

NEWS FROM 'TINTO PARISHES'.

Online Worship.

The big question in late March was, "How on earth could we be church if we couldn't get together?" The weekly gathering for worship is such an important part of our identity as a 'community', for meeting each other, for supporting each other, for passing on information, and, for many, combating isolation.

A partial answer was our discovery of a conferencing and meeting computer program called Zoom. Rev. George is very grateful to Paul Dobie and Murray Brown and family for the initial training and experience of Zoom, because by 5th April we were able to start online Tinto Parishes worship on a Sunday morning—and if you remember, 5th April was Palm Sunday, so we also had a whole week of evening meditations to follow during Holy Week. At the same time we developed a weekly e-mail mailout, later a monthly post-out to those who were shielding, and also later a Telephone number— 01899 205410—accessible at any time, which we use to share recordings of parts of the weekly worship. Over this season of Advent and Christmas we are also posting videos of our worship onto the Symington Website and folks can view them at any time, and anyone with a smart-TV can also access them.

It has been a long journey of 'adapting to circumstance' as we seek out ways to maintain, or bring back, our connectedness.

With mass vaccination on the horizon, we are beginning to see the tantalising possibility of a reduction in restrictions enabling us all to safely return to worship in church.

It will be interesting, then, to see what we have learned from this experience, and how we can use these new technical skills in the ongoing life of our church and in our outreach.

Community Outreach Worker.

In February 2020 our network of local churches (Tinto Parishes, Douglas Valley Church and Upper Clyde Church) was given permission by the Church of Scotland to appoint an outreach worker in our area, to help develop initiatives around dementia and isolation, and some work with young families in the area. That, of course, had to be put on hold because of the Pandemic, but in November we were given permission to recruit and on 5th January 2021 we will add a new face to the ministry teamwork in our broader area. Angela Brydson is a Deacon in the Church of Scotland, has been working on similar projects in the Annandale and Eskdale areas, and will now be full-time across our churches. She has lots of experience, lots of energy and enthusiasm, and we will soon meet Angela regularly at worship and more, hopefully, as things begin to open up.

Hazel Buchan.

Rev. Bill Buchan has been an important asset for our Tinto Parishes worship since he and his wife Hazel moved to Biggar two years ago. Many members of our congregation will have met them when Bill was doing Pulpit Supply. Sadly, Hazel, a woman vulnerable in health but strong in grace, died in November. We will hold Bill, and Lesley, Ruth, Iona and Bill (Jr) in love and support at this sad time for them all.

Tinto Parishes SUNDAY+ phone line.

The line is available to call at any time,
and a new recorded extract from Sunday worship, is added weekly.



01899 205410

The extract generally includes about 25 minutes of the service—
including scripture reading, reflection, prayers and music.

Available to anyone with access to a phone.

REFLECTION.

*We invited **Paul Dobie**, Session Clerk of Libberton & Quothquan Church to reflect on some of his experience of these last nine months. Before the Lockdown Paul travelled extensively with his work. These last months he has been home-based, connecting with colleagues through technology.*

Everybody has a view on Coronavirus. And everybody has a fear of what it might do to them or their loved ones "if" they get it. For some people the fear is small, but for others it's deep, insidious & scary.

We worry about the future of our economy, some people worry about their jobs & businesses, and some people struggle with isolation.

But the homeworking revolution has enabled the working man & woman to perhaps re-connect with their families, people have been forced off the mouse-wheel-of-modern-living and given time to reflect, & many people have learned new skills.

We all have a tendency to focus on our own woes, but of course in the past societies have had to cope with their own challenges. In the Middle Ages country folk could count on a famine roughly every 20 years - a time when "tightening the belt" had real meaning. And the older folk in our congregations will remember experiencing the "hungry gap" in the early spring when all the stores had been used up but the new crops were still to be ready. And then of course there was the Black Death in medieval times when there weren't enough people to bury the dead. And wars right through all the ages with families sending their children off to an uncertain future, with destruction & with economic ruin.

Perhaps what really counts is how a people responds to its adversity. How we all rise to the challenge. Perhaps it's in these difficult times that we see what people are really "made of".

What might Jesus have made of it all? For sure he grew up under the turbulent times of Roman occupation. What would his message for us be? He already speaks to us through his words in the Bible:-

"I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world, you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world." John 16:33

"Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven." Matthew 5:16

"If any of you wants to be my follower, you must turn from your selfish ways, take up your cross, and follow me. If you try to hang on to your life, you will lose it. But if you give up your life for my sake and for the sake of the Good News, you will save it." Mark 8:34-35

“My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father’s hand. I and my Father are one.” John 10:27-30

Perhaps in these difficult times we have an opportunity. Perhaps we need to follow our good shepherd. Perhaps we need to let our lights shine. Perhaps we need to reach out to our friends & families & communities to share Jesus’s message of hope & joy and salvation.

Paul Dobie

FINANCES.

There are no financial statement in this issue of FOCUS. We are close to year end, however, so there will be reports in our next issue.

We are gratified that members of our congregations who give through standing orders have continued making their payments. This has really helped with cashflow and with claiming gift aid. Where there haven’t been opportunities to get together, many members contributing weekly through the envelope scheme have continued to put their offering aside each week, until there is a way to get it to an elder or directly to the treasurer.

We are all very thankful for the commitment of our members, and very grateful too to those members who have given additional payments.

The next edition of **FOCUS** will be issued for Spring 2021.

More details will be circulated nearer the copy date.

If you have any queries, I can be reached at:

Charlie Todd, 63 Station Rd, Thankerton, Biggar ML12 6NZ

Tel: 01899 308327 or by email at kandctodd@gmail.com

REMEMBER: If you do not receive the FOCUS Magazine regularly, but want to keep up with news at Tinto Parishes, you can ask for an electronic copy to be sent to you.

Contact Rev George on George.Shand@churchofscotland.org.uk

Value The Present..

Imagine there is a Bank that credits your account each morning with £86,400. It carries over no balance from day to day. Every evening it deletes whatever part of the balance you failed to use that day. What would you do? Draw out every penny, of course!

Each of us has such a bank. Its name is TIME.

Every morning, it credits us with 86,400 seconds. Every night, it writes off, as lost, whatever of this we have failed to invest to good purpose. It carries over no balance. It allows no overdraft. Each day it opens a new account for you. Each night it burns what remains of the day. If you fail to use the day’s deposits, the loss is yours. There is no going back. There is no drawing against “tomorrow”. You must live in the present day’s deposits. Invest it so as to get from it the utmost in health, happiness and success! The clock is running. Make the most of today.

- To realise the value of one year, ask the student who failed an exam.
- To realise the value of one month, ask the mother who gave birth to a premature baby.
- To realise the value of one week, ask the editor of a weekly newspaper.
- To realise the value of one hour, ask the lovers waiting to meet.
- To realise the value of one minute, ask the person who missed the train.
- To realise the value of one second, ask the person who just avoided an accident.
- To realise the values of one millisecond, ask the person who won the silver medal in the Olympics.

Treasure every moment you have! And treasure it more because you shared it with someone special, special enough to spend your time. And remember, time waits for no one. Yesterday is history. Tomorrow is a mystery. Today is a gift. That’s why it’s called the present !!

Taken from Libberon and Quothquan newsletter 2000





THE STRUGGLE.

1 December 2020

God with us in our individual struggles,
God with us in our common ordeals:

there is a freedom that comes in knowing that life is simply hard;
not because we've done something wrong,
or because we fail to see something obvious to others,
but simply because life itself is hard.

May that never become the licence to devalue another person's hardships
or the invitation to let our fears
fill the space that opens up.

May it become instead
a moment
to marvel at your gift
of unconditional love:
the security that provides us
with a confidence
not our own. **Amen.**



Swans on Biggar Pond

Rikki Duncan

(Facebook: Biggar Community Pages)

2019

SIGNS OF YOUR GRACE

God of days with multiple arcs.

God of the stars in the sky:

there are countless reminders and signs of your grace,
your promise to always be near.

May we in our habits and the stories we tell
remember the truth underneath.

May we notice and witness to a steadying strength:
the love that cradles us all. **Amen.**

30th November 2020

Prayer Promoters

Symington Parish Church –	Nancy Overend	Tel 01899 308469
Cairngryffe Parish Church –	Liz Hiddleston	Tel 01899 221664
Libberton & Quothquan Parish Church -	Freda Stobo	Tel 01555 840718

Looking back, the last Presbytery Report in FOCUS precedes the March 2020 meeting. How things have changed since then!
Jim Watt, Presbytery Elder for Cairngryffe Church gives us an insight into the last nine months at the Presbytery of Lanark.

MARCH. The March meeting took place as normal, being held prior to lockdown and it was reported that all members of the congregation of Lesmahagow: Abbeygreen had expressed their wish to leave the Church of Scotland and that details had been agreed concerning the sale of the buildings to the congregation. They formally left on the 26th March at which date the minister, Rev David Carmichael, demitted and resigned his status as a minister of Word and Sacrament within the Church. He and the congregation have joined the Free Church. On the same date, the parish of Lesmahagow: Abbeygreen has been united with that of Lesmahagow Old and Coalburn, to be known as Lesmahagow and Coalburn, and the assets of Abbeygreen transferred to the united congregation. The proceeds of the sale of the building will be held by the General Trustees for the maintenance of the congregation's properties.

A number of proposed events were intimated by the committees, however these have, of course, all had to be cancelled or postponed indefinitely, including the instruction the congregations hold a 'Student Sunday' collection in March, April or May to go towards the living costs of students training for Ministry of Word and Sacrament in the Presbytery. There was also a discussion period around the proposals for reforming the number of Presbyteries as agreed by the 2019 General Assembly.

The planned re-dedication of the refurbished Carstairs Church took place as planned on 12th March with the then Moderator of the General Assembly, The Rt. Rev. Colin Sinclair preaching and carrying out the re-dedication. This was the last event he was able to attend before he, and the rest of us, were 'confined to barracks'!

Since then Presbytery meetings, like many other meetings, have taken place via Zoom, something I'm sure many people, myself included, had never heard of back in March!

MAY. At the May meeting Rev Elspeth Mclean of Forth: St Pauls reported on the positive impact Zoom worship had had on the congregation. The Clerk thanked ministers for the work they had undertaken to ensure services of worship and community work was still ongoing during the Covid lockdown. The Moderator expressed the thanks of Presbytery to the Clerk for the co-ordination work and support he has given throughout the period. The meeting then split into 'breakout rooms' to allow sharing of what had been

happening; what had been going well; what had surprised us; what was concerning us and what we saw for the future. Feedback included concerns over the loss of face-to-face contact, financial concerns, and a hope that churches do not automatically return to the way things were.

JUNE. Among the papers circulated prior to the June meeting was one detailing how a number of congregations across presbytery were dealing with the situation and continuing to worship, bear witness and serve their communities.

The Guild. Mrs Dorothy Wiseman, Presbytery Guild Convenor presented her annual report to Presbytery. As well as outlining the many ways Guilds were supporting local, national and international projects she shared their disappointment that the session had been cut short and asked Presbytery for their support in enabling groups to meet once more when that became possible. She spoke encouragingly of the way Guild members had managed to keep in contact and support the more vulnerable among their membership.

Mrs Karen Gillon from the national office, and an elder at Carluke: St. John's then addressed the Presbytery. She spoke of the ongoing challenge for the Guild in seeking a return to normal activities given the vulnerability of many members. She explained that all groups are being communicated with and encourages churches to continue to foster the links between church and Guild. Mrs Gillon expressed the understanding that this is a very difficult time for the Church and our nation but encouraged all churches to ensure that our Guilds were part of the discussions on how to reopen and safely resume activity.

A group discussion then followed on the ways in which churches were working during lockdown, and the ways in which churches could move out of lockdown when the time came. It was noted that it would be much more difficult to move out of lockdown than it was to move into lockdown for our churches. This was further emphasised in the report of the Presbytery Support Committee which outlined the requirements, in terms of obtaining approval to re-open, that would need to be followed. Additional Presbytery elders were appointed for 2020-21, including Denham McDougal of Cairngryffe Church, and the dates for Presbytery and committee meetings were agreed, to be held over Zoom if regulations required.

SEPTEMBER. Following an on-line communion service, Mrs Anne Cochrane, Presbytery Elder for Carnwath Church was installed as Presbytery Moderator for 2020-21. Anne thanked Presbytery for the honour and paid tribute to George as her predecessor during what had been a difficult time.

SUMMER. Over the summer period a number of churches had sought permission to re-open following implementation of the guidelines. These had been approved under powers and this was homologated by Presbytery. Rev Paul Grant, Minister of Law Parish Church was appointed as Joint Depute Clerk of the Presbytery from 1 September 2020.

Commissioners were appointed to the two day online General Assembly in October. Grants were approved to Biggar and Forth: St Pauls to provide equipment for the live streaming of services. Grants were also approved to each congregation in Presbytery to enable them to reengage with congregation and community following the Covid-19 lockdown and to stimulate worship, activity and mission.

The standing orders of Presbytery were amended to allow the Presbytery Support Committee, comprising the Moderator, Clerk and Joint Depute Clerks, to undertake much of the routine work of Presbytery and to temporarily stand down the standing committees (other than the Complaints Committee and the relevant Vacancy Procedure Committees), so allowing free discussion of the larger, more challenging issues such as Presbytery reform. These new arrangements to remain in place until December 31st 2020 or such an earlier date as Presbytery agreed, with the possibility of extension should the Covid restrictions still be in place. A new timetable for Local Church Review Visits was proposed in order to get them completed before any Presbytery reform might occur.

NOVEMBER. The (Zoom) meeting on 17th November was addressed by Rev Doug Gay from Trinity College who gave us a presentation on Presbytery planning. His talk was interesting and thought provoking and he admitted that he did not have all the answers. This was followed by a group discussion period and then back to the main meeting for feedback, comments and questions. It was intended to further inform the discussions which Presbytery will be having to fulfil the instruction from Assembly to 'robustly review Presbytery Plans'.

Presbytery were informed that Rev. Sumit Harrison had peached as sole nominee at Carstairs and Carnwath and his induction will be on the evening of Wednesday 16th December, with the majority of Presbytery attending on-line.

Bryan updated members on the situation regarding numbers at worship now that we were in Tier 4 (max 20 *in total*). These numbers also apply to funerals, weddings and baptisms.

Finally Bryan intimated the sad news that Rev Bill Buchan's wife Hazel had passed away that morning.

Jim Watt (Presbytery Elder Cairngryffe Kirk)