

# Newsletter

*Crown Church, Inverness*

December 2020/ January 2021: No. 766

Parish Minister: Rev Douglas Robertson



## SUNDAY SERVICES

### **“O come let us adore him—Christ the Lord”**

Douglas will be broadcasting live on Sunday mornings at 11 am. To watch these and previous recordings please go to the Crown Church facebook page (a facebook account is not required to see the service)

9.30 services have been suspended for the time being.

Sunday 6th December	<b>Sacrament of the Lord's Supper at 11 am then special prayers</b>
Sunday 13th December	Morning Worship at 11 am
Sunday 20th December	Morning Worship at 11 am
Monday 21st December	Prayer Service online at 7 pm
Christmas Eve	Worship at 6.30 pm
Christmas Day	Family Worship at 10.30 am
Sunday 27th December	Morning Worship at 11 am
Sunday 3rd January	Morning Worship at 11 am followed by special prayers
Sunday 10th January	Morning Worship at 11 am
Sunday 17th January	Morning Worship at 11 am
Sunday 24th January	Morning Worship at 11 am
Sunday 31st January	Morning Worship at 11 am
Sunday 7th February	Morning Worship at 11 am followed by special prayers



For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given:  
and the government shall be upon his shoulder:  
and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor,  
The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince  
of Peace.

Isaiah 9:6

## From the Minister

Dear members and friends of Crown Church,

*Christmas is coming, the geese are **getting fat....***

Christmas celebrates the most **remarkable birth of the world's most** remarkable baby some 2000 years ago, and no matter what covid restrictions we need to observe, that central fact does not change and Christmas most certainly has not been cancelled.

Because of cleaning requirements and the need for volunteers who are not in **any of the "at risk" categories, we will** only be offering a Christmas Eve service on Dec 24<sup>th</sup> at 6:30pm, and a Christmas Day service on the 25<sup>th</sup> at 10:30am. There will be no midnight service this year.



Mary and Joseph turned up at Bethlehem without booking in advance and discovered that the place was **chockers! They couldn't find a room and had to kip** down in the animal house instead. To avoid a similar situation, if you plan to attend either of our Christmas services in church please do contact the office as soon as possible. We can then let you know over the **phone or by email if we still have "room at the inn",** rather than turn you away at the door – which we are legally required to do if we reach our capacity. Both of the services will be live-streamed on Facebook, **as we do on Sundays, so you won't miss out by**

staying cosy at home, cuddling a mug of delicious hot chocolate.

***.... please put a penny in the old man's hat....***

While Christmas is a time of celebration, feasting, sharing and gathering (albeit on zoom this year), we should always remember that for some people the festive atmosphere serves to highlight their own difficult circumstances. They may be estranged from family, or have been bereaved during the year, or suffer from anxiety or depression or loneliness quite apart from the covid situation. They may have lost their **job, or be homeless, or just generally struggle to "do life".**

**.... please put a penny in the old man's hat....**

While Christmas is a time of celebration, feasting, sharing and gathering (albeit on zoom this year), we should always remember that for some people the festive atmosphere serves to highlight their own difficult circumstances.

They may be estranged from family, or have been bereaved during the year, or suffer from anxiety or depression or loneliness quite apart from the covid situation. They may have lost their job, or be homeless, or just generally struggle to "do life".

Recognising this, there will be a short service to offer prayers and ask for God's blessing for anyone

who is struggling. This will be on Monday the 21<sup>st</sup> at 7pm and will be online only (i.e. no congregation in the church).

**In addition, there are many practical ways that you can help to ease someone's pain.** There are many ministries that you could volunteer with, and charities that you can support, putting the proverbial 'penny in the old man's hat'.

**.... if you haven't got a penny.....**

And if you are one who is struggling yourself, whether financially, emotionally, spiritually or otherwise, please don't be scared to lift the phone and call someone. You can call me, or your elder, or any other friend or member of the church. As Bob Hoskins used to say (a long time ago now!) "it's good to talk".

I do wish you all a very happy and blessed (if slightly more muted than normal) Christmas festive season.

Douglas

The Bible Quiz has started!

Tuesday first December saw the first round of the Christmas Bible Quiz (on zoom) and a great time was had by all.

Lots of entertainment. 3 more quizzes to

come all at 7:30 on Tuesday 8<sup>th</sup>, 15<sup>th</sup> and 22<sup>nd</sup> of December. Everyone is welcome. Please email Jude or Lesley on

[judedmond@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:judedmond@yahoo.co.uk) or [lesley.mcroberts@btinternet.com](mailto:lesley.mcroberts@btinternet.com)

and a Zoom link will be sent to you.



## Inverness Foodbank

As you may know, the Foodbank is being used more than ever as a consequence of the virus. If you would like to support the Foodbank, you can drop off any donations at their warehouse on Glebe Street. Alternatively, you can contact Liz Gray or Alex Grant who will be happy to pick up any items you can spare. We **don't have a current list of items that are in particular need but here are some of the things which have been asked for previously:**

- Long life juice
- Tins of potatoes
- Tins of mince/stew
- Oatcakes/crackers
- Shower gel/shampoo
- Small washing powder/gel
- Tins of corned beef
- Tins of ham
- Jam



Our thanks to Lesley McRoberts for this picture which shows **Crown Church's entry into Crown School Nursery's Tattiebogle event.**

The Tattiebogle bears an uncanny resemblance to a certain member of her own family!

# Stamp Appeal

This year the Stamp Project proceeds **will benefit The Women's**

Development Centre (WDC) in Kandy, Sri Lanka which runs a project to support women and girls who have been victims of rape and sexual violence.

The WDC gives these women somewhere to stay, and supports them in caring for their children, helps them return to education if they wish, and trains them in skills they can use to make a living when they leave. The WDC has a social enterprise and café where the women can work and sell their hand-made products.

The team at WDC care for and heal girls who are vulnerable and often discarded by their families. It is impossible not to be moved by what they do. Help support them by collecting used stamps which are then sold on.

**I am still collecting used stamps although we haven't been able to take them to church as usual.** Please save them and when circumstances allow we can get them to the Glasgow Presbytery Office.

Please separate UK and Foreign stamps into different bags or envelopes. If you wish I can collect them. Thank you. Liz Munro.



## Minister's bench

Our thanks to Heather Beck for this picture of the new bench which was presented to our minister at his induction service.

**Thanks also to Heather's** husband, Kenny, for carrying out all the work on the bench which, as you will see is looking beautiful. The bench will be placed close to the existing bench overlooking the church garden.



# Toddler groups are back, baby!

**It's wonderful to be able to report that we've managed to reopen our toddler groups** with an all-new look and feel! There were a few hurdles to jump in order to get going again, including: operating within the parameters of Church of Scotland COVID guidance (currently on version 7.1 and an enthralling 65 pages in length); no available hall space; requirement of an online booking system; risk assessment and policy production; equipment overhaul; cleaning and disinfection procedures and protocols; advertising; etc. Many years ago a wise man told me to think of these sorts of distractions as 'the things of this world' which we must do in order that 'the things of the Kingdom can burst through.' I liked this more inspiring approach as, to be honest, he could have simply said "*it's your job – get it done!*" The work to get there feels less arduous and more filled with expectation when your perspective is that **we're working towards something of Kingdom welcome.**

So with much work, learning and planning we were finally able to reopen groups in November. The groups are limited to four households per session, pre-booked online and based in the Sanctuary of the Church building – and I must say what a beautiful **use of the space it seems to be! There's something particularly special about using the Church's Chancel area to welcome little ones in Jesus' name; to serve their** parents and carers with the chance to join with others safely (cont on next page)



After 8 months of being stuck indoors too. One parent commented that "it warms my heart to see [my daughter] able to play in a space like this." Comments like this make me feel like the efforts are all worth it. Having been a long believer in the huge benefits of toddler groups, such comments also affirm my belief that the best thing Young Crown could offer the community was to restart these groups. These groups speak right from the words of Jesus in Matthew 19; that welcoming little ones is a **highest calling because the kingdom of God belongs to such as these. There's a unique** spiritual connection in the small groups when the Sanctuary of the church is used for this purpose – a very special gift both for us and for the community.

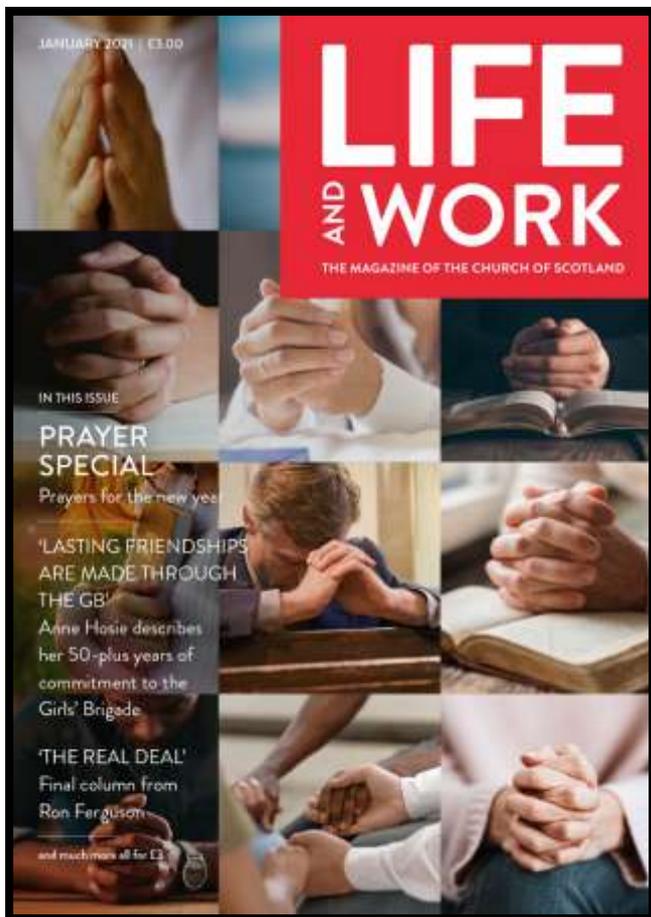
**As Christmas approaches, one unlike any other we've known, these wonderful groups** are a real connection to that first nativity; we can participate in welcoming each baby (/toddler!) just as a sleepy Bethlehem stable welcomed a baby over 2000 years ago. Whilst Young Crown will be working towards a few ways of creating community and story around Christmas in a new way this year, we can certainly point to toddler groups and feel delighted that there is hope for all; joy in what can happen; peace about things past and love in the welcome we are able to extend. Each little window **into God's Kingdom of love, joy, peace and hope is for sure a Christmas blessing.**

Wishing you a blessed Christmas and New Year – **may God bless you. Whilst I don't** know what the next year looks like, I do know that God knows, and He is faithful!

Struan



Thanks to Lesley McRoberts and her happy band of volunteers who produced such an attractive presentation and made such good use of the church garden over the remembrance period. It has been much admired.



LIFE AND WORK  
JANUARY 2021

## Prayers for 2021

The Moderator of the General Assembly, the head of Christian Aid Scotland, the Chief Executive of the Scottish Bible Society, the National Convener of the Guild, the CEO of CrossReach and others offer their prayers for the new year.

## 'Lasting Friendships are Made Through GB'

Jackie Macadam learns about the work of long-standing Girls' Brigade leader Anne Hosie

## 'Covid-19 Has Challenged Us at Every Level'

Dave Kendall, the Church of Scotland's

chief officer, looks back at his first year in the job and ahead to the challenges of 2021

## Chaplain to a King

Robert Beaken offers an insight into the newly-published diaries of a Scottish churchman who became a confidante of royalty and political leaders

## The Real Deal

In his final column for Life and Work, Ron Ferguson writes on his friend Jim Wallace, Moderator-Designate of the 2021 General Assembly

## Reap the Harvest

The Very Rev Albert Bogle urges churches to look outside their walls and engage with those who have found Church through technology

## An Inspiring Church

John R Hume reflects on the industrial heritage of a village church in Ayrshire

## Online

Visit [www.lifeandwork.org](http://www.lifeandwork.org) for news and exclusive features, including Coronavirus Diaries from Church of Scotland mission partners across the world. You can also find us at [facebook.com/lifeandwork](https://facebook.com/lifeandwork) or on Twitter @cofslifeandwork

# *Prayer Diary for December 2020 and January 2021*

This prayer diary has been prepared by the Discipleship Team. We hope that you will find it useful. You may like to detach it from the newsletter and use it to pray for our church and community.

If you have particular prayer requests for the next month (October 2020) please do email them to our church secretary, Gloria who will pass them on, or e-mail Jude Madeleine; [judedmond@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:judedmond@yahoo.co.uk)

## December 6-12

Give thanks to God for the Advent season as we wait in anticipation with Hope, Peace, Joy and Love for the celebration of the birth of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Thank God for the good news and significant progress being made towards development of effective COVID-19 vaccines; Pray that the vaccination programme will start to be rolled out as soon as possible, to provide protect against the virus.

Thank God today for all the religious communities around the world which have assisted all those in need during the pandemic, despite knowing the risk.

**'I will heal my people and let them enjoy abundant peace and security.'** (Jeremiah 33:6)

Pray this verse of hope over communities throughout the world which have become even more vulnerable due to COVID-19.

## December 13-19

Pray for all elderly people in our community, for those living in their own homes or nursing homes and care homes. Pray for strength, resilience and peace among them, their families and staff who support and help look after them.

**Pray for God's heart to be with the refugees and those in countries with inadequate health system;** that the care and comfort of children and families will be in His glorious hands.

Pray for those who live alone and are lonely. Pray also for people affected by mental illness, and ask that God will grant them strength and hope for the future.

Remember the families and friends who have been affected by substance use; may they receive love, compassion and support, and may God guide them through difficult times.

## December 20-26

Pray for those who will find the coming festive season difficult; those who have lost loved ones recently and are facing the first Christmas without them or those who spend the festive period alone. Pray that God will be with them all and provide comfort.

Pray for all those who cannot see loved ones in care homes or in their own homes at this time, for compassion and understanding on all sides.

We rejoice in the Christmas story and give thanks for the birth of Jesus, and knowing that He came on earth and died to save us. Pray that the real meaning of Christmas is not missed, and that the precious truth remains a reality in the hearts and lives of everyone. Pray for all children, young people, and their families; may their lives be deeply enriched. May parents feel empowered, and their children feel nurtured and loved.

### December 27- January 2

After what has been a difficult and challenging year, give thanks to God for the New Year ahead, and hope and pray that each day of the coming year be filled with joy, peace and love.

Lord God, You offer freedom and peace to all people. We pray for those in prison. Please break the bonds of fear and isolation that exist. Support with Your love, prisoners and their families and friends, prison staff and all who care. Help us to forgive one another, to act justly, love mercy and walk humbly together with Christ in His strength and in His spirit, now and every day.

Ask God to open our eyes today to the beauty of His world and to prompt us to care for and protect what has been gifted to us. Pray for the advancement of conservation and renewable energy and that our governments will prioritise looking after our earth. Pray for the homeless and those cut off from their families, in particular during those long cold winter months, that practical help be made available to meet both their physical and spiritual needs.

### January 3-9

**Pray for each and every member of the congregation and our community, that God's spirit continues to flow throughout their lives whatever their circumstances.**

**Pray Isaiah 40:31; "Those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like angels, they will run and not grow weary; they will walk and not be faint." Pray that God would give us all strength to do His will.**

Heavenly Father, we ask you to watch over all marginalised religious groups which have become even more vulnerable because of the pandemic. Grant them protection from the virus itself, and from those who mean them harm. May they be filled with hope and trust that one day they will be able to practice their faith in freedom and safety. Amen.

Pray for our nation; for comfort and peace of mind through challenging and uncertain times.

### January 10-16

**Give thanks for our families and friends. Remember God's promises that goodness and mercy will follow them and may they receive His peace each day.**

Lord of all, you rule over all of creation. You have given everyone free will, but we still live in a fallen world where countless millions are not free to choose or change their beliefs. Your Kingdom is Now and Not Yet. We ask for the privilege of being in some small way a part of bringing your Kingdom on earth, by extending Christ-like love and compassion to everyone who is in need – no matter what their religion or belief. In the name of your merciful, loving and compassionate son, Jesus Christ, Amen.

**Pray for God's Blessings over Judith as she progresses in her studies and training of full-time ordained ministry in the Church of Scotland. Ask God to give her and her family strength and courage throughout her training.**

### January 17-23

Pray for practical and political help for all those suffering from fuel poverty and for those most at risk in the cold winter. Ask God to open our eyes to neighbours or other people in our community who are perhaps struggling to heat their homes, and **whether there's anything we can do to help**

**Pray for God's light and love to shine into the minds of all who are depressed,** anxious or suffering from dementia.

Pray today for all those who are homeless, and for people sleeping rough because **they don't have safe shelter. Pray for people who have been denied adequate support** to be able to continue seeking help, and for them to find safe and secure homes.

Pray for those who have experienced trauma and addiction that they will receive all the support they need, and help them nurture their strength and motivation to recover.

### January 24-30

Pray that just as God loves and cares for us, we would also similarly love and care for others. Help us to be loyal to those who need us.

Pray that God will continue to bless each one of us every day, remembering that we are never alone and that He is always with us.

Whatever your own family situation today, thank God that He has adopted you as a son or daughter into His family. Thank God for relationship and the opportunity to share life with other people, ask Him to reveal more of His intended plan for families to You and to teach you how to love those around you like He does.

Pray for the work of the Eco-Congregation Scotland. Praise God today for the earth that He has gifted to us, and all the beautiful plants and animals He has created for **us to enjoy. Commit to caring for every part of God's creation, and ask Him to** prompt you to be a good steward of the earth.

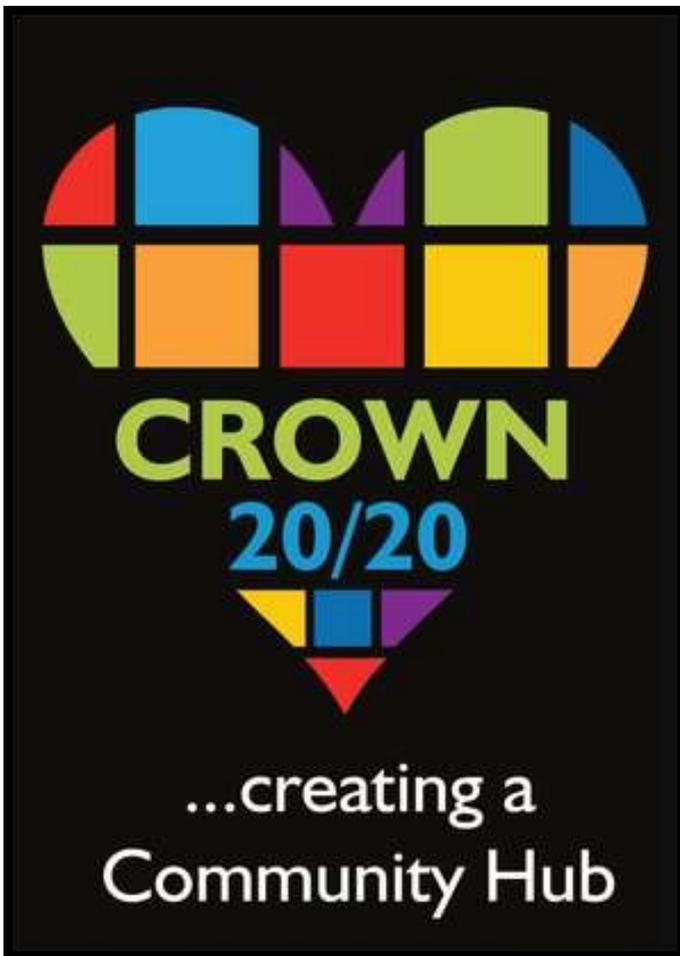
### January 31 – February 6

Offer a prayer of personal thanks to God today: Lord, I thank You for prayer – that I can come before You and call You Father; that You listen to me and care about everything I bring before You. Today, above all else, I choose to give You thanks.

**Pray for God's revival in our community and congregation. Ask God to open the** eyes of the people around us, that they would see His unfailing love and sense His powerful presence and purpose for our lives.

Pray for people living in fear in their own homes to be able to ask for help. Ask God to provide help for healing of the physical and psychological wounds of those who are suffering domestic violence, and pray for health and social care services, and the police, to be able to keep vulnerable people safe.

Remember and pray for those who are experiencing everyday life challenges with great difficulties and whose spirits are weakened; may they find support and **comfort through relationships and appreciation of life's daily triumph.**



# Update from Crown 20/20 Group

**“Crown Church aims to invest in a major upgrade of our church buildings to provide a warm and welcoming home for worship, equip us with modern and accessible facilities to support Christian outreach into our community and to help our church meet the needs of that community.”**

Dear Members of the Congregation,

As we share in the Advent season the Group have been greatly heartened by the support and generous giving of members of the congregation towards the costs of

delivering our ambitious plans.

We are indebted to everyone who has made a donation to the Crown 20/20 Development Fund. The total stands at £33,625 and - in closing this appeal - we want to sincerely thank everyone for their kindness. **I'm quite certain there will be** future opportunities to help financially with future phases of our project.

We are also delighted that our application to **The Highland Council's Inverness Common Good Fund** for £30,000 towards the renovation was successful. This grant is greatly appreciated and recognises our aims of upgrading such a significant building in the heart of our community and the benefits that will flow for local groups using our premises.

We are still awaiting word from the **Climate Communities Action Fund** to which we applied for finance to cover paying for window replacement scheme in the Upper Hall.



So how is the upgrade progressing? Firstly to the Upper Hall, where Contractors I&K Ferguson are well under way in their refurbishment and indications are that they will complete the contract by early February, next year. We hope that the replacement of the windows in the Upper Hall will follow at this time.

Discussions are ongoing regarding the co-ordination of the fire alarm system with The **Highland Council's plans for the Lower Hall**. Also we are considering re-siting to the Upper Hall the audio visual equipment currently in the Lower Hall. We are also considering whether it would be wiser to replace the equipment, and are awaiting costings. A small team is considering and consulting over décor for the hall itself, the kitchen and the toilets. A computerised view of the proposed kitchen is below.



Further very welcome news is that The Highland Council has agreed to install the larger 8-person lift, which allows Fergusons to finalise the space to be left for it upstairs.

News on the Lower Hall conversion to 2 nursery classrooms for Crown Primary School, is that there have been no objections to the plans published by The Highland Council and shared with neighbours. However, the timetable has been delayed due to the need to remove asbestos found in the building following a detailed examination.

It is estimated this removal programme will take 17 weeks to arrange and deliver, though this estimate includes generous time to make further investigations as areas are opened up and to deal with any further asbestos. The new completion date of the nursery unit is 6 August, next year, in time for the start of the 2021/22 school session. The Council have examined the asbestos sites within the building and are organising the removal programme.

We are also aware of the need for repairs to the flat roof over the upstairs toilets following leaks and this will need to be taken care of.

Thought is being given to arranging for an outside store to house temporarily the contents of cupboards in the kitchen, the lower hall and the old kitchen when these have to be cleared for work to begin.

The last word in this update goes to our Chairman, Jimmy Gray.

He said: "Our message from the initial phase of the 20/20 vision remains a very good and positive one for all concerned.

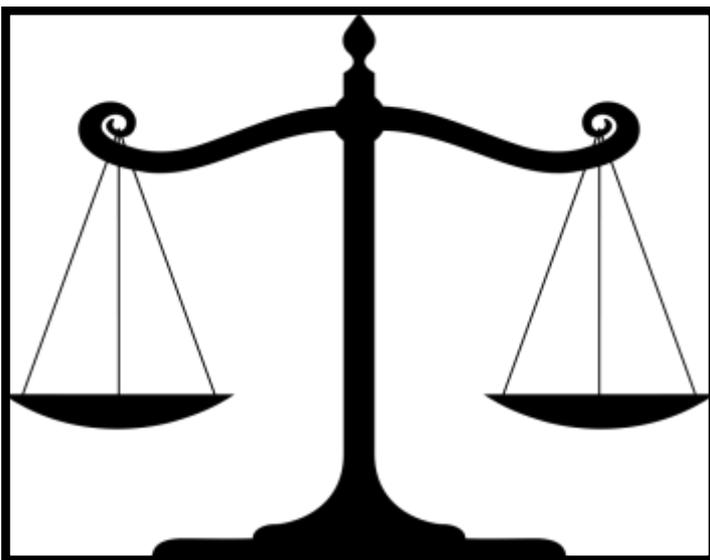
"From the church's perspective, it clearly demonstrates a willingness to share our facilities with our neighbours in need, the school and their need to accommodate the nursery and the youngest in our community on their first steps into the big wide world. *In our Father's House there are many rooms.*

"For the Council, the message is that rather than continually building new and using up valuable open space, it is investing in conversion of existing buildings and leaving valuable green space for children to play and grow.

"For the Crown community, the message is one of everyone coming together and working to build a better future through sharing."

Well said, Jimmy. It's great to finish this update on such an upbeat note. Thanks to everyone for your support for the Group and what we are striving to achieve.

## Crown 20/20 Group



There follows the second half of Dr **Dempster's interview with the present** moderator, the Rt Rev Dr Martin Fair. If you missed the first half, it appears in the November issue of the church newsletter.

Living the preached Word

JD *I'm interested in what you studied for your Doctorate at Princeton Was that related to Justice and Equality issues? Or was that more theological in its subject-matter?*

MF It was much more the latter. By then, I had been in parish ministry for about eight years, and I had been growing as a preacher. I wouldn't go so far as to say it's what got me up in the morning, but of all the elements of ministry I was relishing the preaching task more and more.

So the theme of my doctorate was very much around what it is to preach, and how we can encourage congregations to live with the preached word. Its title was **'What happens after the preacher says Amen at the end of the sermon.'** Because so often the reality is people will go out the door of the door and say **'Oh thank you for that, minister. Thank you for that. Oh, that spoke to me today!'** But by the time they've had their lunch they've pretty much forgotten about it. So I was looking at developing small groups and all sorts of ways which worked with the sermon through the coming week My doctorate was about the Word of God and how we preach it and how people appropriate it and how we become accountable for living out that word of God.

Facing doubt

JD *I wanted to explore whether Martinever has doubts about the faith, so I asked him. **'You speak a great deal about the life-transforming potential of Jesus Christ. Do you ever have doubts, and if so, how do you deal with them? I mean, doubts about God's existence, doubts about the goodness of God?'***

MF I would say that I have almost pushed myself to face up to doubts. During the rise of New Atheism, I deliberately was reading **Richard Dawkins' God Delusion**, deliberately reading some of Sam Harris, Christopher Hitchens, and



**those guys. We've got to face up to the challenges, and to what the accusations are, and so absolutely I wrestled with that. I think if you're not prepared to test your faith in the face of battle then what's it going to be in those moments when you really need it?**

So yes, I have, but I have to say that I am not shaken in my set of core **beliefs, and that in fact I'm probably all the more certain of them. Not just through the academic rigour of debate, or of thinking things through but backed up absolutely by the personal experiences of what I've seen.**

So take for example the work that our church has done among people with drug addiction problems, which we launched in Arbroath in 2006 – the **Havilah Project. I couldn't tell you now the numbers of folks who have recovered from addiction, and who prior to that had been through every programme that the health board was able to offer. And one after another those guys got nowhere. They just continued in the cycle of addiction.**

And yet as we began to offer something different to that, or let me say complementary to that, one after another of them got free from drug addiction, got their lives completely turned around, transformed.

Today they would credit that to the work of the Christ who breaks the chains. **So I guess what I'm saying is: 'Yes, I think the Christian faith is absolutely coherent and rational, and can stand up to scrutiny, but that belief is backed up by 'Yes, and this is what I see happening.'**

Care meets evangelism

JD *So there are two things going on in Havilah. You're caring for people, and you're also introducing them to Christ. How do those two balance? Or would you say they are one, because the care you are giving is a Christ-inspired care?*



MF / **think that's well-put. It's definitely** that. However, the ordering is important. We were determined at the beginning that there would be no barriers put up to anyone coming in, and no preconceptions. So people could come into the project and might come for weeks even months, and never hear mention of God, Jesus, Scripture, Church, Prayer, nothing. We were determined that our faith would be lived out in a welcome, non-judgemental compassionate approach. Our ethos was unshakable, but we were determined not to

make it the presenting factor.

But what has happened without fail is that when people have experienced that **welcome and that compassion, they have always been moved to ask 'Why is it that you people are in this business? Why are you treating us like this, when ordinarily we get treated almost as if we were something that you stood on?'**

So at that point we would say 'Well, it's because we believe that you are a child of God, and that he loves you,' so that comes, but it comes upon invitation. And I think it sort of chimes with that verse in Peter's first epistle when he says 'Always be ready when asked to give an explanation for the hope you have within you.'(1 Peter 3:15) But the important bit in there is 'When asked.' So we don't knock it into people's heads, but they always ask.

They always ask, and we're always ready to share. And sometimes to begin with in response to that people will say, 'Ah, you know, I've no time for religious gobbledegook.' Even then, they'll come back to you a little while later and say 'Gonna tell me a wee bit more about that?' And so it absolutely is known, it becomes just who we are.

Love and theology

JD *I was interested in Martin's view of the relationship between the love someone expresses and their theological perspective. 'What's the balance between theology and showing love? Is showing love more important than the particular theological framework someone holds, whether they're an evangelical or a liberal or whatever? Or is important to keep the theology and the love engendered by that theology hand in hand?'*

MF I would say it's impossible to separate them out. What we believe informs who we are and how we live. That said, some of the best expressions that I've seen across the church have been evidenced in all parts of the Church, so a having a liberal or a more traditional evangelical theology does not guarantee a particular outworking and so I guess what I'm going to say is 'by your fruits you shall be known' ultimately. And I think, if I could put it as crudely as this, that one day we won't stand before the Throne and be asked so 'Give me your 10 key doctrinal foundation points' but it will be 'I was poor and you helped me, I was naked and you clothed me,' and I've seen those teachings expressed in action from across the Church, and I've seen them neglected across the Church. So I think in the final analysis, I will ally with those who will work it out firstly, even more than to ally with people who may share exactly a doctrinal formula.

Discernment in engaging with the community

JD *It would be easy for a church to look at you and say 'Arbroath's got this wonderful guy called Martin Fair, and he's got this Havilah project. What can we do in our local community? We don't have a Martin Fair. Our minister has different gifts. How can we discern what is the right expression of community engagement for us?'*



MF The first thing to say is to acknowledge that the Havilah Project is not, was not actually my idea. And some of the best things that happen in our congregation by way of community engagement did not spring from me. **And I'm not just saying that by way of acknowledging that it was actually someone else. What I'm saying is that the role of the minister, to my mind, is creating an environment within the Church where others feel free to express themselves, where others understand that they are called into ministry and where it is quite possible for ordinary folk in the church to be coming to the minister and the more identifiable leadership and saying 'This is what's laid on our hearts,' and to be given an open door to pursue that.** What I did in ministry was to create that kind of environment. So it was a small group of folks within the church who came to me and said 'Look around us in our community. There is so much need. So much social exclusion. What are we doing about it as a church?' And really my response to them at that point was 'Well, you tell me!' 'You tell me what we might be doing about it.'

So I think what I've been as a minister is a facilitator and an enabler, and a creator of the space, whereby others have come up. Now the significance of that is this –

**Havilah is owned by the church. If just the minister comes up with ideas, it's a sort of top-down arrangement, and folks maybe 'get it' or not. But if it comes from the folk, people will 'get it'.**

So here we are, 14, 15 years later on and the thing is absolutely alive because it came up that way, and therefore I don't think it's dependent on me as such. So that's the important role of ministry rather than I think leading all the time in terms of being the ideas factory.

Many times people have asked me about Havilah, and I've said 'Please don't reproduce it. Please don't think that this is a franchise. It might have no relevance in your community whatsoever. And before you do anything like that, **you've just got to immerse yourself in a community.'**

If I was going as a missionary, maybe in more old-school days – **let's say to Senegal** – the first thing I would do would be learn the language. Before I **even started trying to work, I'd need to learn the language, I'd need to learn the culture** – you know, 'how things happen round here'. And in the same way, churches need to learn the language of the context they're in, they need to know who's who, what's what and how it works around here. And only then they would begin to see where those missional opportunities might lie, where we can partner in what's going on, where we can identify gaps in provision, and that's when we begin to move. And what's going on in Morningside will be totally different from Milton (a housing scheme in north Glasgow) It just differs. There's no right, no wrong, but what we do has got to be applicable to the context.

Faith in the time of COVID-19

JD *How does Christian faith help us face the future in these uncertain times?*

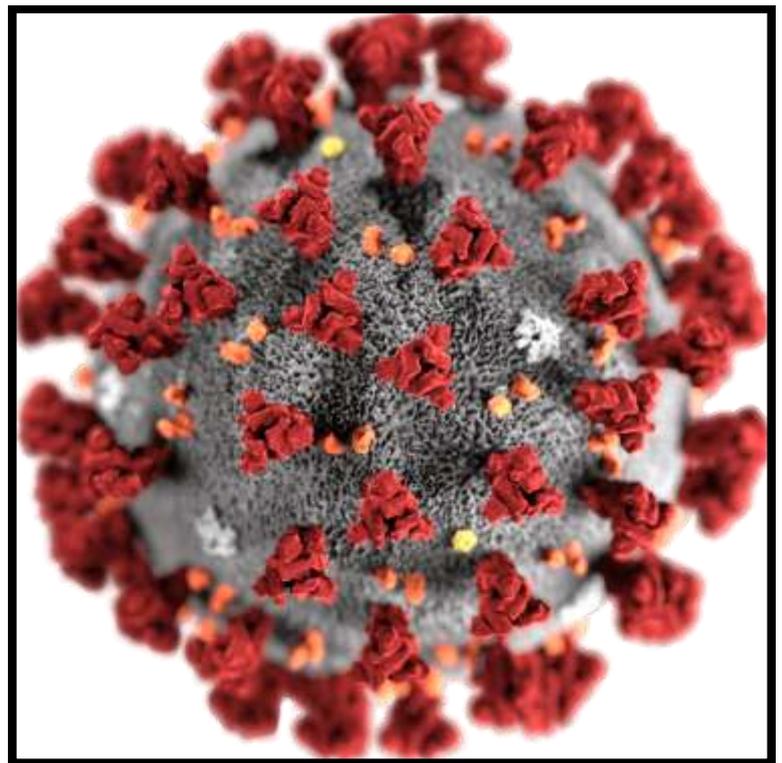
MF Yesterday I had to write the upcoming article for Life and Work, the

**Moderator writes one, and that's exactly**

what I addressed. Faith is often confused with certainty – in fact the two are not the same at all. Faith is crucial in so **much as it doesn't need to know what the future holds because it knows the one who holds the future. I mean that's** a little bit of a cliched phrase but I believe it 100%. So, we have a God **who says to us 'I will provide manna for you for today. Don't go storing it up for tomorrow. Trust me that it will be there tomorrow.'** So you have 'strength for today and bright hope for tomorrow.' **That's what faith offers us.**

So I go forward confidently with no **sense of what next week's all about,** what the church is going to look like in

days to come, but absolutely rock-solid in my sense that God is in it, and that God has plan and purpose for his Church, for this country. I think if ever there was a time when **Christian faith was important, it's right now.** But again to say that should not be confused with any certainty, because anybody who claims certainty right now I think is deluded.



JD *Martin, thank you very much for your time, and for sharing so freely with us.*

## Daily Bible Readings for December and January

Sunday, December 6, 2020

Monday: *End of Babylonian Captivity*, Ezra 1:1-11

Tuesday: *Lament over the Ruined Country*, Joel 1:1-12

Wednesday: ***Call to Repentance and God's Response***, Joel 1:13-20

Thursday: *Dedication of the Temple*, Ezra 6:13-22

Friday: *Ezra Restores Torah as Law*, Nehemiah 8:1-12

Saturday: ***Dedication of Jerusalem's Wall***, Nehemiah 12:27-47

Sunday, December 13, 2020

Monday: *God Is Gracious*, Isaiah 63:7-14

Tuesday: *Prayer of Repentance*, Isaiah 63:15-64:12

Wednesday: *New Creation*, Isaiah 65:17-25

Thursday: ***Edom's Betrayal and Israel's Restoration***, Obadiah 1:1-21

Friday: ***Jerusalem's Victory***, Zechariah 12:1-13:1

Saturday: *The Coming Messenger*, Malachi 3:1-7

Sunday, December 20, 2020

Monday: *Introduction to Luke*, Luke 1:1-4

Tuesday: ***An Angel Tells Zechariah of John's Birth***, Luke 1:5-25

Wednesday: ***Mary's Song***, Luke 1:46-56

Thursday: *Birth of Jesus (Christmas Eve)*, Luke 2:1-14, [15-20]

Friday: *Shepherds Visit (Christmas Day)*, Luke 2:8-20

Saturday: *Birth of John the Baptist*, Luke 1:57-66

Sunday, December 27, 2020

Monday: *Prophecy of Zechariah*, Luke 1:67-80

Tuesday: *Jesus Grew in Wisdom*, Luke 2:39-40

Wednesday: ***Isaiah Brings an Answer to Hezekiah's Prayer***, 2 Kings 19:20-34

Thursday: *Purification of a Woman after Childbirth*, Leviticus 12:1-8

Friday: *The Law Concerning Dedication of Firstborns*, Exodus 13:1-16

Saturday: *Levites Become Substitutes for Firstborns*, Numbers 3:40-51

Sunday, January 3, 2021

Monday: Psalm 2:7-8

Tuesday: ***God's Servant***, Isaiah 42:1-9

Wednesday: *Laws Concerning Festivals*, Exodus 23:10-17

Thursday: Psalm 113

Friday: Psalm 96

Saturday: Psalm 123

Sunday, January 10, 2021

Monday: *Genealogy of Jesus*, Luke 3:23-38

Tuesday: *Jesus is Tempted in the Wilderness*, Luke 4:1-13

Wednesday: *Comfort, O Comfort My People*, Isaiah 40:1-11

Thursday: *God Will Restore Jerusalem*, Isaiah 52:1-12

Friday: ***Elijah's Flight***, 1 Kings 19:1-9a

Saturday: Psalm 29

Sunday, January 17, 2021

Monday: *Jesus Casts Out an Unclean Spirit*, Luke 4:31-37

Tuesday: ***Jesus Heals Peter's Mother-in-Law***, Luke 4:38-39

Wednesday: *Jesus Heals and Casts Out Demons*, Luke 4:40-44

Thursday: *The Spirit of the Lord*, Isaiah 61:1-3

Friday: *Elijah Helps a Widow*, 1 Kings 17:8-16

Saturday: *Elisha Heals Naaman*, 2 Kings 5:1-14

Sunday, January 24, 2021

Monday: *Jesus Cleanses a Leper*, Luke 5:12-16

Tuesday: *Jesus Heals a Paralytic*, Luke 5:17-26

Wednesday: *Jesus Calls Levi (Matthew)*, Luke 5:27-32

Thursday: *The Question about Fasting*, Luke 5:33-39

Friday: *God Does a New Thing*, Isaiah 43:14-21

Saturday: *God Forgives Sins*, Isaiah 43:25-44:5

Sunday, January 31, 2021

Monday: *Jesus Teaches and Heals*, Luke 6:17-26

Tuesday: *Love for Enemies*, Luke 6:27-30

Wednesday: *Love for Enemies*, Luke 6:31-38

Thursday: *Love for Enemies*, Luke 6:39-42

Friday: *A Tree and Its Fruit*, Luke 6:43-49

Saturday: *Jesus Speaks in Parables*, Luke 8:1-3

Sunday, February 7, 2021

Monday: *Jesus Speaks in Parables*, Luke 8:4-21

Tuesday: *Jesus Calms a Storm and Heals the Gerasene Demoniac*, Luke 8:22-39

Wednesday: ***Jairus' Plea and a Woman Restored***, Luke 8:40-56

Thursday: *Jesus Sends Out Disciples*, Luke 9:1-9

Friday: *Jesus Feeds the 5,000*, Luke 9:10-17

Saturday: ***Peter's Confession***, Luke 9:18-27

Readers in Church

December 6 Liz Forbes January 10 Brian Macgill

December 13 David Taylor January 17 Eileen Ardern

December 20 Charles Gallacher January 24 Neil Morrison

December 27 Gus McGowan January 31 John Barbour

January 3 Fiona Carter February 7 Brian Irvine

## NEWS OF THE CHURCH FAMILY

### DEATHS

Mr Donald MacLennan, latterly of Kingsmills Nursing Home on 30th October

Mr Lindsay Stewart, Lilac Grove on 12th November

Mrs Winifred MacCulloch, latterly of Castlehill Care Home on 15th November.

Mr Ivor Gordon, of Eliburn, Livingston former Member and Elder of Crown Church on 16 November.

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For just now, the newsletter is not being printed and distributed in the usual way but if you know of anyone who is unable to see the newsletter on screen and who might wish a paper copy of the newsletter, please let us know and we can arrange for one to be printed and delivered

Finally, this is our last edition as editors of the church newsletter. We have both thoroughly enjoyed the experience and are extremely grateful to all of you who have given us so much help and provided so much material over the course of the last few years. It has been both a privilege and a pleasure.

Bruce Merchant and the communications team are actively seeking our successors and we confidently expect that a new editorial team will be in place in time for the February 2021 edition of the newsletter. Bob and Marion

Items for the February Newsletter by Sunday 31st January please!

Please send any articles, photographs or news to the Forrests at:

marionandbobnewsletter@gmail.com

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