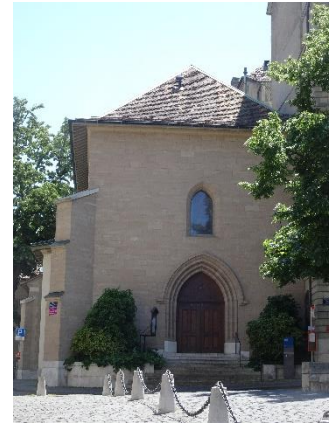


Special Newsletter

October 2020



Letter from the Minister

Warmest greetings, as always!

Do you remember when things were normal? It's kind of hard to keep a handle on how things used to be, when so much is **not** as it used to be.

Round about now, in any ordinary year, we would be gearing up for our Church Fair and Ceilidh in November.

- The bakers would be planning their baking programme...
- The bookstall people would be figuring out how to get all those books in the right order from the Salle to the Salle Communale, in Grand Saconnex:
- The lunch-makers would be calculating their quantities,
- The jam-makers jamming, the crafters crafting, the Christmas hampers assembled...
- The "Scottish" stall-holders gathering up their goods,
- The Bric a Brac and jewellery and children's' toy stall-holders would be collecting their rich bounty
- The Christmas cards would be ordered and good to go:
- Who knows when the champagne and smoked salmon, the Irish coffee, and the bacon rolls would be being readied...
 - The Pipe Band would be selecting their programme
 - And the Ceilidh Band would be tuning up!



And, the Church Treasurer would be looking forward to the possibility of balancing the annual budget, courtesy of the 13,000 Swiss Francs the Fair would bring into Church Funds.

But not this year! Not this year!

One more effect of these unique (we hope!) times is that there can be no Church Fair.

What to do? What to do?

Well, we have to do **something!** And this is our approach:

We are inviting members and friends to make a special gift, to help offset the loss of the Church Fair income.

So, for instance, someone like me, who enjoys a bacon roll, some lunch, some champagne and smoked salmon, an Irish coffee, buying some jewellery for that special lady in my life, (Lindy!!!) and perhaps something interesting from the bric a brac – last year a rather splendid standard lamp!! – well, *someone like me* is being asked to contribute the money I **will not be spending** at the Fair this year, direct to church funds...so that an equivalent sum might be raised: *though the bacon roll and the smoked salmon will be notional...virtual...the gift to the Church will be very real!*

Special situations require special responses. This will be our chance to respond to this challenge with imagination and good-natured generosity.

You will remember too, that it has been our policy to give a proportion of our Church Fair income to local charities in and around Geneva, and we have done this for a number of years. Last year the amount we were able to give as a proportion of our Fair income was 3000 Swiss Francs. Given the pressures on small charities in the present situation, we would love to be able to do the same this year.

Of course, this is a hugely difficult time for many people – and no-one, please, should feel pressured, or put upon, by this approach.

We have to do something, and this is what we are doing. Thank you for your understanding and support.

Next year...surely!! things will be back to something we recognise as normal

(I can almost smell that bacon roll – those African dishes, that Irish coffee!! – roll on 2021!)

Blessings as always

Laurence

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Climate Week 2020:

A sense of urgency as Eco-Congregation members reflect on more climate friendly lifestyles



During Climate Week from 14 – 20 September, the Eco-Congregation initiative supported special events that included a focus on food considering the Harvest month. Eco-Congregation hosted a series of online Climate Conversations, asking participants about their expectations for life by 2030 and what changes they wish to see in their local communities. On 2 October Eco-Congregation Scotland has also joined Christian Aid Scotland, Operation Noah and Friends of the Earth Scotland to launch the Scottish Churches COP26 Pledge, committing to fossil fuels divestment and support for a just and green recovery from COVID-19.

Scotland will be hosting the 26th Conference of the Parties (COP) to the climate convention (UNFCCC) in November 2021. The pace of increasing climatic change underlines the urgency of the matter. Latest data from NASA shows how the Earth is gradually heating up since the late 19th century. Since the year 2000, this trend seems to have accelerated. The month of August 2020 was 2.14° C hotter than the average month recorded on Earth since 1880. The UN Office on Disaster Risk Reduction announced in October 2020 that the first 20 years of this century have seen a “staggering” rise in climate disasters.

On 18 September our Eco-Congregation focal point joined the online Climate Conversation. Participants were asked to reflect on new lifestyles ten years from now, and what may be common practice by then related to weekly food shopping, local streets and public transport, growing local seasonal food, community energy generation, getting around, keeping the heat in, morning routines and working life. These highlighted climate action-related possibilities such as food sold with minimal packaging and bar codes that communicate their social responsibility standards, streets in city centres designed to be more pedestrian friendly, community gardening, district heating systems driven by for example a local wind energy turbine, improved rail infrastructure, good home insulation with triple glazed windows, showers with water timers and shared working spaces from where people can work on a flexitime basis.

It was evident from the online Climate Conversation that we are fortunate in Switzerland in that towns and cities are already quite advanced in many of these climate actions. One challenge is simply for us to make more effective use of these possibilities and support local entrepreneurs who take the lead in these areas. Participants also felt we are well positioned in Geneva to interact directly with international institutions on the global climate agenda. Themes to address include ways of promoting climate action and preparedness through missionary and developmental work abroad that we support.

Cornis Van der Lugt.

A wee word from the Editor

We haven't had a "normal" newsletter since March and the start of the pandemic. In weekly conversations with my best buddies in Scotland, where near lockdown conditions still pertain, they claim to have no news as they aren't doing anything much or going anywhere apart from a walk or the Supermarket. However we do find lots to talk about- often having to extend the 40 minute Zoom curfew.

So although we haven't been doing much together in our church family, I am sure that things will have been happening in your own circle that you may well, in normal times, have



shared over coffee or in chatting before the service. In the Manse, for example, we have gained a granddaughter and lost a beard.



So, for the next newsletter, which will go out post "fair" events, please can you send any little snippets from your lives/families to share with the wider church family so that we still stay connected. I already have a poem and an obituary stored.

I look forward to hearing from you,

Lindy Twaddle