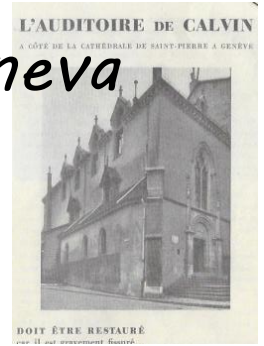




Church of Scotland Geneva

Auditoire de Calvin



July 2021

LETTER FROM THE MINISTER:

Warm greetings, as ever!

It's a time for hard questions!

The critical shortage of ministers facing the Church of Scotland in the short to medium term means that hard questions have to be asked about how we deal with that reality.

The Presbytery of International Charges has posed these questions for Kirk Sessions. They raise issues that run deep and probe hard.

"Presbytery Mission Plan

Questions for Kirk Sessions

1. How are the Five Marks of Mission, (defined in the Act as follows:

"the "Five Marks of Mission" shall mean:
The mission of the Church is the mission of Christ:

1. To proclaim the Good News of the Kingdom

2. To teach, baptise and nurture new believers

3. To respond to human need by loving service

4. To seek to transform unjust structures of society, to challenge violence of every kind and pursue peace and reconciliation

5. To strive to safeguard the integrity of creation and sustain and renew the life of the earth;")

exhibited in the life and witness of your congregation?

2. What mission opportunities do you see for your congregation both now and in the future?

3. Are there opportunities for ecumenical partnerships locally, including the sharing of buildings?

4. a) Is there another Presbyterian church where (or near where) you are?

b) Is there another English-language congregation where (or near where) you are?

5. a) Can ministry in your congregation be sustained without a full-time minister of word and sacrament?

b) If not, why not? And in what ways could Presbytery assist in sustaining your worship and mission?

6. a) Do members of your congregation currently take part in leading worship?

b) Are there people in your congregation willing to be trained in worship leading?

7. a) Do you see a role for online church in either your local setting or, more broadly, in Presbytery?

b) If you do, how would you see it working?

8. a) Can your congregation reasonably meet the costs of a full-time minister?

b) Does your congregation take seriously its financial responsibility in providing for its life and witness, including ministry provision?

b) If not, are steps being taken to improve the situation?"

Phew! No small talk here!

Our Kirk Session will be looking at those hard questions and exploring what the implications might be of the answers we give.

In truth, I think most of us know pretty clearly what the mission of the Church is – and what we are here to do – and are committed to being that church, and doing those things -as best we can, in the place in which we find ourselves.

And I confess to getting a little tired of “people” suggesting, or implying, that we don’t think about all of this as part of our shared and on-going life together. It’s never been in my sense of what we are about that we have to justify our existence to someone, on the basis of criteria they have chosen to judge our worth or effectiveness by!

There are too many men and women of vision and restless commitment to the Gospel within our church family, ever to allow us

to tread water, or sit back in our ecclesiastical armchairs and snooze!

We all want to share the faith, care for others, embrace the world, fight injustice, make good things happen in the lives of men and women. It’s what we do, and who we are – what we have always done, and who we have always tried to be: why we serve gladly, give generously - and pray earnestly!

No boxes need ticked for that to be our culture, our motivation and our dream!

However, the process may well invite us to look harder at some areas of our congregational life and witness that would benefit from closer and more robust scrutiny, just in case we are kidding ourselves on, imagining that we are more visionary than we perhaps think we are! We shall see.

Love as always

Laurence



Reconnecting after Covid?

The Caring for One Another Group

All the words of the pandemic – *infection rates, vaccination, masks* – and the two big ones – *social-distancing and self-isolating*... themes and memes that define and shape a unique time in the experience of most of us.

Isolation and distance – the very opposite of fellowship, togetherness, inclusion, hospitality and closeness – ideas that lie at the heart of our Christian vision and aspiration.



The newly re-formed Caring for others group, hopes to address some of the pain that we are feeling as a church family as a result of the necessary restrictions and limitations placed upon us this last 18 months. We want to make sure that the whole congregation is nurtured and nurturing, enfolded and enfolding.

This is not sentimentality or saccharine – it's what a loving Christian family is about and tries to be about. And it involves us all in being attentive and effective: attentive insofar as we endeavour to keep an eye out for those who might be struggling with the situation, or pressured and stressed, by the pressures and stresses – and then, effective - doing something about it!

Well -intentioned isn't enough, for it by definition leaves the situation un-resolved, that person still struggling with isolation or feeling distanced from the heart of things.

Once we have welcomed all those – of whatever age – who want to be part of the Caring for Others Group – (and that could be you, helping to drive the initiative!) – the plan is to take some steps to break down the distancing and isolation.

This will include a series of small gatherings – for coffee, afternoon tea or apero – just half a dozen people who live near one another – or nearish, to meet together with the minister for conversation and re-connecting after Covid.

It's hoped that each of these gatherings will stimulate further gatherings, and relationships will be refreshed, or even begun for the first time. Once we truly meet each other, a whole new dynamic is present, with all kinds of new possibilities emerging.

So, first, think whether you might be able to share in the work of the Caring for Others Group:

and second, be sure when you are invited along to one of these informal gatherings, that you take the chance to share some quality time with others in the congregation.

That way, together, we might be enabled to develop links, bonds, friendships and connections that are deep, enduring, and lovely.

For more information, or to volunteer, contact Jane Broere: jane.broere@wanadoo.fr

Church of Scotland Geneva

Finance Update, June 2021

Halfway through the year and following the recent discussions at the ACM, it's a good time to update the Congregation on the state of our finances this year. While the Church is always about far more than its money, it still doesn't hurt to make sure that we have enough to keep our life as a Church going and to be able to expand it further in whatever way we can. So, without delving into all the details of a full report or the like, here's a quick overview for you.



Provisional Status of Church Finances at 30 June 2021 (excluding Mission)

	Income	Expenditure	Surplus/Deficit
Budget	CHF 58,475	CHF 73,988	CHF -15,513
Actual	CHF 75,723	CHF 62,621	CHF 13,102

So overall, the initial impression is that the situation looks pretty good – income is up, expenditure is down and things are in the black rather than the red. This is certainly true and the generosity of the Congregation in sustaining the Church, even in the difficult times faced since 2020, is very much to its credit.

There are a couple of things to note though, before everyone relaxes too much. First is that the income jumped massively in June after the ACM thanks to a couple of extremely generous donations. Things were not looking quite so good up to that point but the generosity of one or two people really boosted them. This was probably a one-time event though, and keeping up sustainable income needs to be a key concern for all the Church.

Second, at the end of June, there were still some large, annual, one-time payments to be received for things such as Auditoire rent and Church of Scotland dues. The expenditure at the end of June is likely to be more than twice that size by the end of 2021 (in the whole of 2020 it was CHF 143,372).

So is it good news or bad news ? Clearly, as at the end of June, it was very good news in the here and now. Looking forward, it's a shade less encouraging with hefty expenses due (Auditoire rent in fact had just come in at the time of writing) and no certainty of income levels staying at the rate they reached in the first half of 2021. Nonetheless, the two things go together. The Church is facing a challenging time right now, as are most Churches, but we can be confident that our Church has the support of its Congregation and other donors to get through it. The donations, large or small, from everyone giving to the Church are making sure that we come through as well as we can, and that the Church will have the means to keep moving ahead so long as the Congregation remains committed to doing so. That is true of much more than money but the finances are a good indicator of how the Church life is going.

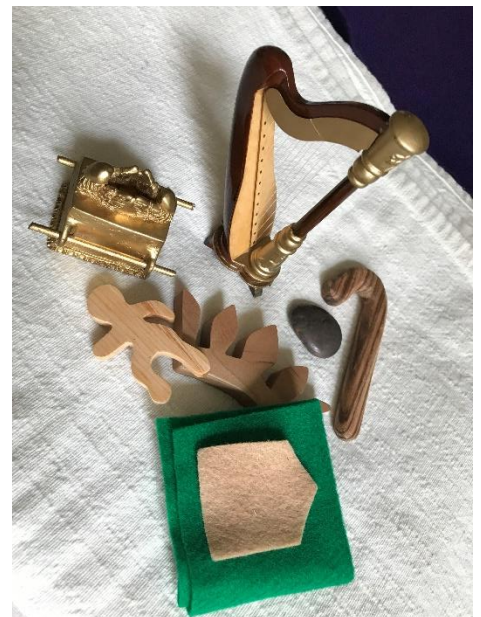
J.Ewart MacKenzie



SUNDAY SCHOOL ONLINE: THE MAKING OF...

Keeping a small group of under 10s occupied for half an hour on Zoom is no picnic. This is what our Sunday School team has had to take on since May 2020 due to Covid-19. Thankfully an online training workshop was presented early on by the Godly Play Foundation, giving presenters tips on how to do the lessons online. It made parts of the Montessori approach easier, such as not making eye contact while telling the story. Focusing the computer camera on the story objects help to engage the kids and get their imagination going. Presenting online also requires doing it from a table, which means that most sessions during Covid were presented from a kitchen table. Sunday mornings therefore offered a good follow up to breakfast. And each session included a virtual doorkeeper, a second adult, in the form of Grandad Arthur. He always took the lead in singing the welcome songs and giving his wise insights on the meaning of each story.

Godly Play lessons use basic materials, as shown in the adjacent photo, to capture key developments and symbols of every biblical event. The photo shows materials of the story of David, one that reminded the kids of a famous king who had to learn the importance of admitting mistakes you make in life. The kids got to know the annual church calendar, and diverse stories from the Old and New Testaments. Sunday school had plenty of lighter moments. Such as the lesson when one little girl was poking fun at her older brother and sister, suddenly there was a video image blackout, and when it reappeared the middle seat between brother and sister was suddenly empty. Or the moment when the internet connection at the presenter side collapsed, the presenter disappeared, and the Reverend had to pull out his guitar to keep the kids occupied until the presenter showed up again and Noah's flood could continue. There was the moment a little girl surprised her father by showing chaotic images at home, boxes all over, during a week when the family was moving to another house. There was also a little one who struggled to get up in the morning and tended to show up in pyjamas. And the talkative boy who laughingly said "that's not wine" while his father very seriously was trying to display to the kids the symbolic acts of holy communion. There was Singing Silent Night online and presenting during family services. No shortage of fun events, the Sunday School kids had an eventful pandemic year.



Cornis Van der Lugt.

If you would like more information on the Sunday School, Cornis can be contacted on cofsgsundayschool@gmail.com

Climate and development update: Malawi, Nepal and the climate conference in Glasgow, November 2021

By Cornis van der Lugt, Eco-Congregation focal point, and Peter Tulloch,

Mission Sub-Committee, Congregational Committee

Looking at extraordinary temperatures in June this year, a professor of the UK Met Office told BBC this month that “we are getting used to record high temperatures being recorded somewhere around the world every year now”. The consequences of “dangerous human interference with the climate system” is no longer something theoretical that may happen a hundred years from now. Its consequences are becoming more visible today, as we speak (or ponder). And it is becoming clear that while we need to prioritize climate mitigation and preventive action, we need to look equally carefully at climate adaptation (adapting to systemic changes that are inevitable by now).



Two pieces of good news: Firstly, nature can be surprisingly resilient in recovering from damage. We have seen this from past disaster events. Secondly, in terms of technology and economics it is perfectly do-able for us to limit global warming to well below 2 degrees Celsius compared to pre-industrial levels. So, what is the problem? It is a matter of political will and collective action, mobilizing societies and economies world-wide. And as far as this is concerned, we as humans collectively struggle to take preventive action or recover from damage. This also implies that as church we would need to think carefully about helping the poor, notably developing communities in Africa and elsewhere that suffer most from extreme events such as droughts and floods.

Preparations world-wide are underway for the next major climate conference (COP26) under UN auspices, to be held in Glasgow from 1-12 November. The Paris Agreement of 2015 will be followed by a Glasgow Agreement. The former managed to get all countries to sign up to commitments to reduce their greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions. The content of those commitments is voluntary, each country decides its own level of ambition. But the agreement provides for regular stock taking, and in advance of Glasgow governments had to submit updated pledges (Nationally Determined Contributions) with new targets for reducing emissions by 2030.

More countries, including the US and China, are committing to “net zero carbon emissions by 2050”. The “net” means you offset all unavoidable GHG emissions that remain, by for example investing in green projects. Glasgow will need to see agreement on progress, time frames for stocktaking, financing to support vulnerable countries, and new carbon market mechanisms that can be used between countries.

The Eco-Congregation initiative is supporting preparations for COP26, including a series of webinars this year (see <https://www.ecocongregationscotland.org/cop26/>). Churches across the UK and Ireland are also committing to hold a “Climate Sunday”, a climate-focused service on any Sunday before COP26. The Rev. Martin Johnstone, Chair of

Christian Aid Scotland, has been nominated Ambassador of the Glasgow Churches Together COP group to COP26.

Last month Peter attended one of the webinars, hosted by the Church of Scotland Faith Impact Forum (formerly World Mission) and Christian Aid, and focusing on the impact of climate change on the world's poorest people. It included three moving presentations from Rev. Johnstone and from CoS partners in Nepal and Malawi. From Malawi, we heard from Gary Brough, a CoS Mission Partner based in Mzuzu, next door to Ekwendeni. Gary writes in his blog:

“For me, the most succinct description of climate change came from a smallholder.. ‘I used to get five bags of maize from my garden every year. Now, I’m lucky if I can get two’... A community struck by drought one year could be affected by floods next year... the maize harvest can vary nationally by as much as 10-30 per cent year to year, but at local level that might mean next to no harvest at all for whole communities or districts.” (visit his blog at <https://broughsinmalawi.com/2021/06/10/climate-change-is-real-life-in-malawi/>)

The same situation was reflected in the Nepal presentation. Our own Graeme Clugston in Lalgadh has signaled many times the disastrous consequences of growing climate change in terms of floods, destruction of houses and crops, increase in disease and pressure on medical services.

What can we do as members of CofS Geneva? Consider a few measures:

- Take care of our own environment, by using products and services carefully with due attention to their impact on the climate.
- Pray for a good outcome to the COP26 conference, however cynical we may feel about political gatherings.
- Hold a Climate Sunday service during the autumn, using material supplied via the Eco-Congregation movement and Christian Aid.
- Support our Mission partners in Nepal and Malawi as they struggle with changing circumstances.
- Realize that we are stewards of the Earth's resources, not owners, and consider what this means in practical terms.



Report of Kirk Session

Much of the last two Kirk Session meetings have been taken up with how and when to return to the Auditoire. It was agreed that an enquiry should be made to the congregation to determine the extent of the wish to return. This has been carried out and it appears some of the congregation wish to return as soon as possible. Nicola Hollyman volunteered to attend services at Emmanuel and Holy Trinity to determine the measure they had put in place before returning. It would appear that a task force of members would need to be in place to ensure that the necessary precautions are carried out. It was agreed the aim would be to return in approximately 3 months; i.e. a probable date in early September or possibly before. It was considered important that there should be a hybrid of zoom and 'in person' worship.

Another major discussion was the long-term future of the Church of Scotland in Geneva in the light of the decision taken at the General Assembly to reduce the number of full time ministers in the International Presbytery to 4. This would have major implications when the current minister retires including possibilities of ecumenical sharing, twinning with the Scots Kirk in Lausanne and promoting the use of Ordained Local Ministers in the congregation.

The series of recent Bible Studies was discussed; they had been successful and it was agreed that they would continue as from 31 August. There was also a suggestion to start a prayer group. A proposal will be discussed at the next meeting of the Session.

The Sunday School has continued on-line. The Sunday School teachers are to be commended for making this happen. A Family Service will take place on 27 June.

Jane Broere has taken over the Caring for One Another group. Easter goodie bags were distributed to eighteen households and were well received. Jane will set up a zoom meeting to brainstorm on the way forward for this group.

Throughout the summer Laurence Twaddle will continue to conduct worship twice a week since it would be difficult to transfer the zoom account to anyone else. Thank you for your commitment, Laurence.

Mary Couper- on behalf of the Session Clerks.



D-Day - 6 June 1944

A memory from our very own

Ritchie Pannetti

This tale was originally an anecdote when discussing D-Day a few weeks ago but Lindy and Laurence thought it might interest others, so here it is!

After a scant three weeks' "training" in Leeds (in the very centre of England) I was dispatched on my own in the black-out and then on an overnight train journey to Plymouth where I was to join the staff of the Education Branch of the Royal Navy's Plymouth Command.

Our "chief" was a full Commander who had left his teaching position at Manchester University to join the Royal Navy as a volunteer.

As for me, I was a 4 foot, 11 and three-quarter inched teen-ager and the youngest member of his team.

I was also quartered in a converted house in the centre of the city and had no option but to walk a fair distance to get to the Dockyard.

That wasn't really a chore because I had a splendid view of the harbour packed with vessels large and small so when on the sixth of June 1944, I saw all the empty spaces I took to my heels to get to the office: had the invasion really begun?



Indeed it had and our main room was packed with staff from adjoining rooms. The atmosphere was electric!

Our Commander arrived, we stood to attention and then he read the official communiqué that the Allied Forces had

landed in France. Everyone cheered and everyone clapped.

He went on to say that the Education Office would now also serve as an auxiliary information centre and to this end he had procured a long map of the coast of northern France which would be affixed to a wall. The progress of "our boys" would be flagged daily and, he went on to say "I have decided that Wren Writer McInnes (me!) shall be entrusted with the task of keeping that progress up to date".

More clapping and more cheers except from Wren Writer McI who suffers from vertigo and the thought of clambering on to a chair and then a slightly wobbly table with a basket of flagged pins every morning was not exactly her cup of coffee.



However, she survived and the Vice-Admiral who had an office along the corridor took to calling in during the lunch break - when WW McI was often on stand-by seeing as how she was the newest staff member.

"Hello, my dear", he'd say, "tell me how our lads are doing today" and I'd do my best to get my tongue around place names I'd never heard of before.

So I got to know the Vice-Admiral quite well but he always called me "My dear" and I did wonder whether he found "McInnes" a tongue-twister that was akin to a well-known drink.

Ritchie Pannetti

Church News



Craft Group

We have been able to meet, on an irregular basis, during the past few months. With the easing of Covid restrictions we hope to get back to our monthly craft sessions. We will also look at different ways of marketing our items, should there not be a Church Fair this year. All ideas and new members welcome!

Contact Christine Buhler: buhlerchristine@hotmail.com



Book Stall

Our very successful book stall has been run for many years now by a group of volunteers. They now need a new Fiction and Bookstall Coordinator. Can you help?

BBQ

this year (Covid restrictions and maybe weather permitting) This is held in the garden of their home in Mollens in Vaud and is a highlight of the summer. Details and date to follow.



Family News:



Engagement:

Back in April David Broere popped the question and Mari Lill, his lovely Estonian girlfriend said YES to spending the rest of their lives together.

Congratulations to them and their families.

Birth

Elaine and Stephan Richtering are pleased to announce the birth of their daughter Olivia Joy Richtering on the 18th of March 2021; a baby sister for Amanda.

Grandparents Arthur and Hazel Griffith are delighted to welcome their lovely granddaughter into the family.



Introducing Scott MacSween



Hello. I am Scott MacSween and I will be joining the congregation and working alongside Laurence for the next few months. I am a candidate in training for Ordained Local Ministry (OLM) with the Church of Scotland. My placement in Geneva will be the first of two placements I need to complete, and it will continue until late spring of 2022.

I am Scottish by descent (the surname is perhaps a clue) but I live in Aix-en-Provence with my family – my wife Sasha, and two children Alex (16) and Penny (14). We have been in France since 2004 except for periods in East Africa and India for work. We are all keen sports – running, swimming, tennis and ballet (that’s Penny not me, no pirouettes by the pulpit I am sorry to say).

I am an elder at The Scots Kirk Paris, and an Equalising Elder on the International Presbytery. I have also had the privilege to attend the General Assembly as a Commissioner in two of the last three years. Our church is going through unprecedented changes and every charge and presbytery is affected but it is fascinating to hear the powerful arguments on all sides and try to discern the best way forward. The church won’t disappear but it will change.

I am studying towards a Theology degree through the University of Aberdeen – one of the two distance-learning providers for CofS ministry training. I have been studying with Aberdeen for two years so far, and have just completed my Certificate in Theology, and I will continue on to Level 2 in September – starting with New Testament Greek.

I work in Human Resources for World Vision International – we are a global Christian humanitarian organization. I lead a small team of people which uses data and technology to help leaders to make better decisions about their staff and their development needs and career progress. I have been with World Vision for 10 years, the first half in Kenya, Nepal and Senegal, and the second half in France.

Working in a global Christian organization is quite an eye-opener. Faced with so many different denominations, perspectives and preferences, it forced me to wonder exactly what I believed, why did I believe that, and how was that affected by where and how I grew up. I am not sure I have answers to these questions yet, it seems the more I learn, the less I realise I know – the motto “Faith Seeking Understanding” comes to mind.

It is hard to explain exactly what a sense of call to ministry ‘feels’ like, the answer is unique to each person and so that makes it a beautiful thing. For me it was a series of situations and conversations and circumstances which all seemed to be pointing to only one possible outcome, and in hindsight it is easy to connect the dots looking backwards.

I am inspired by writers like Henri Nouwen, Thomas Merton, M Scott Peck, relating faith to everyday life, connections and community, and the search for purpose and a life lived well.

It’s nice to be starting my placement in Geneva because I spent a couple of weeks in the city in 2019 and a few pieces fell into place for me then in terms of my sense of call. I am looking

forward to meeting many of you over the coming months – I hope to be with you every 3-4 weeks.

Scott MacSween

Update from Nourishing Minds

Nourishing Minds is an NGO that was founded, by the Broere Family, in 2019. The charity provides a daily cup of porridge to primary school children, in the Ekwendeni catchment area, of northern Malawi.



Nourishing Minds work, hand in hand, with the Resource Centre in Ekwendeni. The youth from the various youth clubs are the ones who tend the school gardens growing maize and soya beans. They also make the porridge under the supervision of adult elders in the villages where the 5 schools are situated. The whole project is overseen and coordinated by Shupo Kumwenda, the Supervisor of the Resource Centre. Everyone in Malawi and Europe are volunteers, which allows all money that is received to be sent to Malawi for the project.

English Books and DVD Sale

At last Nourishing Minds can hold a fundraising event! There will be an English Books and DVD sale (CDs and a bake sale too) in Divonne Les Bains from Friday 6th till Sunday 8th of August.



If you would like to be involved there are several ways that you can help:

Collect and donate English books and DVDs (clean and in good condition please)

Collect Migros bags

Ask your local supermarket for banana boxes

Bake for the bake sale

Help during the event

And, of course, you can come along and buy!

If you'd like more information or have a question, please contact Jane Broere jane.broere@wanadoo.fr or Lindy Twaddle lindy.lynn1956@gmail.com

The Gerontius Amenity

You wait 20 years for a trip to Africa and then 3 come at once. As a child I had thwarted dreams of becoming a medical missionary in Africa. But it wasn't until 2008/9 I did 3 trips to Africa, just within the space of a year- to Sierra Leone with Mission Direct, to Malawi, with the Church of Scotland Geneva, and to Uganda, with Mission Direct again.

Following my first trip to Sierra Leone, I had kept in touch (against Mission Direct guidelines) with a Christian lady by the name of Hannah Lassayo, who lived in Quarry Kissy, a slum area next to the nice hotel in which I was staying. Sure enough, the request for money soon came. Then there was one I couldn't deal with- her foster son Prince was in hospital and they couldn't pay the bills. My friend Sally Mears gallantly sent through her entire



conducting fee from a production of "The Dream of Gerontius". Then came another request for another foster child and I didn't get the request until the Saturday afternoon- it was Monday morning until I could go to the Post Office and send the money, so we decided to found a charity in Sierra Leone with a bank account that Hannah could access for herself and anyone she knew who needed health care. So, The Gerontius Amenity Fund was born. It's very small. Hannah takes people to hospital, pays their bills and sends me the receipts. Our first patient was a neighbour of Hannah's in Quarry Kissy who had TB. (see photo)

Last year we treated about a dozen people with various ailments.

We do not as yet have a website, although we do have a "just giving" page <https://www.justgiving.com/gerontiusamenityfund>. I am trying to work out how to set up a website that's accessible from Europe and North America but not from Africa. Any ideas anyone?



Hazel Glennie

And finally.... Just to show we did eventually get to meet our grand-daughter :



Study Leave



The world of work brings its challenges!

If you are in the thick of it at the moment – you will have your own set of tricky situations, conundrums and personality issues to deal with – and, even if you have long retired from work, you will still not have forgotten the pressure points and frissons that the workplace can generate.

Add to that, the demands of schedules, reduced resources, increased targets, and sometimes unrealistic expectations, all sometimes laced with a feeling of being used, taken for granted, or just plain exploited by systems and bosses who seem to have left their humanity back at home, when they set off for work, and you have a potent cocktail that can send your peace of mind reeling!

The working environment of a minister, is a strange one. Working alone can be very unsettling for some, especially those who come to ministry from a more normal working context – with water-cooler conversations, lunch-time banter in the canteen, conversations to help re-calibrate the day, colleagues to call upon, HR departments and Supply Units to make sure you have the tools you need.

I have had students working with me over the years, who found the aloneness hard to cope with – the commitment to complete discretion a huge burden, and the practical constraints of church budgets and staffing immensely frustrating.

I am particularly in awe of my colleagues in the Roman Catholic priesthood – living alone and unable to find even the comforts of family life and love available to them – to save them from being overwhelmed. Brave and utterly committed, they demonstrate a humbling dedication.

One resource that was introduced to the life of the Church and has proved immensely creative has been the opportunity for Study Leave.

Each minister with over five years' service in the Church of Scotland is allowed -indeed, encouraged to take two weeks per year Study Leave. A plan, a programme, a project is presented to the Ministries Council, and when it is agreed, the Minister is free to pursue that Study Leave proposal. Ministers can accumulate the weeks of Study Leave - up to 7 years' worth.

Over the years of my ministry in Scotland I was grateful, as were my congregations – for the refreshment, stimulus and personal growth, those times of Study offered.

My projects included tracing the story of Christianity from Jerusalem to Jedburgh – a 12 week journey of pilgrimage, that took me in the steps of St Paul – and on the Reformation trail – on to Ireland, and Iona.

On a separate Study Leave I also had to joy of returning to New College, in Edinburgh to attend lectures, tutorials and seminars, sharpening the mind, meeting a new generation of soon to be ministers, and sharing their thinking, dreaming - and impatience!

Another study project was to visit the six most “successful “ Churches in and around Edinburgh, to find out what made them tick, and what made them “successful” and try to learn from that.

(What I learned was that “successful” means different things to different people!)

I had hoped to take Study Leave here in May of last year, but things got in the way of that...not least the General Assembly – and I hoped again to revisit my original plan this year in May but our old friend Covid put the kibosh on that!

However, if circumstances permit, I intend to pursue Study Leave in late August/ September – details to follow.

It would be a sad irony if, as I do...I were to be robust in challenging my former Assistants and close colleagues to be sure to take the Study Leave allowed them -for their good, and for the good of their congregation – and then fail to avail **myself** of the refreshment Study Leave offers. That would be a silly mistake!

I always came back from Study Leave feeling that everyone, regardless of the work they did – should have the opportunity to have a time when they can refresh their thinking, follow a dream, fulfil an ambition. I believe that no matter what your occupation, each person should have the opportunity to re-calibrate and restore.

Love as always,

Laurence

