Dear Friends,

Holy Week and Easter came with some lovely weather, and we had a great time taking part in the Good Friday Walk through our parish. We went from Holm Dell Drive to the new manse at Bramble Close in the Greenfields estate. It was uphill all the way but that meant we had to stop for breath, admire the views, and take time to read a few verses from the Good Friday story.

Maurice had made a large wooden cross which several of us took turns to carry. While not nearly as big and heavy as the one Jesus was forced to carry to Calvary, it did become quite a burden. This made us appreciate to some small degree the physical pain Jesus bore on our behalf. Of course his real pain was revealed in his agonising cry of dereliction from the cross, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” One of the hymns we sang at the manse is familiar to most of us: “We may not know, we cannot tell, what pains he had to bear; but we believe it was for us he hung and suffered there.” This explains that he was forsaken by his Father because on that cross he died that we might be forgiven.

At the manse we celebrated a short communion together, remembering the last supper which Jesus had with his disciples. His words, “This is my body broken for you” became very meaningful for us, as we took the bread and wine. As we ate and drank it became part of our body we were physically reminded that not only did the Saviour die for us, but through his Holy Spirit he now lives in us.
Continued from front page

This is a truth that we will focus on next month when we think about Pentecost (see Acts chapter 2). Pentecost is a reminder that the Holy Spirit was given to the early disciples to give them new strength and courage to be faithful followers of Jesus and witnesses to his power.

What happened on that first Day of Pentecost was rather strange, but the coming of the Spirit had a profound effect on the disciples themselves. Where they had been fearful they became courageous and bold; where they had been inward-looking, they were now filled with a desire to go and tell people that Jesus was the Saviour they were looking for and needed. Something very dramatic and powerful happened that day in Jerusalem. Have you discovered that Jesus, through His Holy Spirit, has come to live in you? Have you found his peace and guidance, his courage and strength to help you live for Him day by day? God wants us all to discover this and to come to know Jesus in a personal way – as our saviour, friend and Lord.

May God bless you richly.

Stewart D Jeffrey

Following Tony Livesley’s retirement as Locum in March Stewart has agreed to preach twice a month and to provide pastoral care on a voluntary basis. He will be very pleased to visit any who wish it – contact details are on the back page of the newsletter.

Farewell to the Bradleys

The number of people crammed into the garden and home of Maurice & Jean Bradley as we said farewell to them earlier this month was testimony to the many friends they befriended and got to know over this past year.

Maurice and Jean have now arrived safely in Uganda and are discovering more and more of what work God has for them there with the Watoto children. Please continue to pray for Maurice and Jean as they adapt to the new climate and culture. Pray too that they would be equipped for the work ahead of them.

Rev. Stewart Jeffrey has been visiting members of the congregation and some house bound members, which is being well received. It was noted that the congregation is in good heart, and has been busy recently with Rev. Peter Neilson particularly focussing on what our purpose is as a new church. Numbers are remaining constant and increasing gradually.

There have been no changes to the Congregational Roll since last meeting.

Annette Maclean’s idea of her starting a group for young mums and babies, based in the Manse was well received. Such a group would need also to have other adult help from within the church, besides Annette. Annette has a good grounding in the types of requirements for running such a group. Further liaison with health care team required

An update was given on the work being done by the Nominating Committee. The post of Minister is being advertised in Minister’s Forum.

Rev. Peter Neilson has been spending some time with the congregation, on two occasions recently, working on the congregation’s core values and identifying more information about those living in the Parish. Peter has suggested the need for a local leadership team which coincides both with Stewart Jeffrey’s own recommendations and one of the main functions which the New Charge Commission has. See page 7 for more info.

Annette’s safeguarding report was warmly received and the recommendation to appoint Mrs. Yvonne Fraser as a teacher for the children’s work at St Columba and Dr. Ken Morley as a helper within the children’s work were accepted.

The signs on the roundabout at the end of the distributor road / Dores Road are now in place and are receiving comment. There is to be a meeting with some of the congregation and a web designer with a view to revamping and improving the website.

Broadband & a phone are to be installed in the Manse on 24 May. It was agreed that white goods – family sized dishwasher along with a washing machine and tumble drier would be installed, and the remaining rooms would be carpeted or vinylled as soon as possible. Other furniture as required, eg beds to make the bedrooms serviceable for occasional use would be procured.

Christine’s report from the last presbytery meeting was received - full report available within minutes

The local Christian Aid representative has been in touch about our congregation taking part in Christian Aid and for this year, it was left that St Stephens would again undertake such collection as they could in our Parish, assisted by any in our congregation who wished to do so. This will be reviewed again before next year’s Christian Aid week.

A letter has been received from Duncan MacPherson indicating he wishes to stand down from the New Charge Commission.

Date of next meeting Thursday 23rd June
Prayer continues to be at the heart of all that we seek to do at St. Columba. Having just passed the milestone of our first anniversary as a new church fellowship, we are at the stage of seeking ways to engage with our new Parish by which we can bring the message of hope, love, and forgiveness which the gospel of Jesus Christ proclaims. There is much hard work to be done. Excitingly we are in the process seeking our first Minister. Please continue to pray for our congregation.

Give thanks for:
♦ Our interim moderator, Rev. Tony Livesley. The time which he and his wife Noreen had with us as locum in the earliest days was special.
♦ Wise preaching & pastoral care from our present locum minister, Rev. Stewart Jeffrey & his wife Margaret, with her musical gifts.
♦ Those in our Parish we are getting to know and for connections made at the Easter Family fun day.
♦ The sale of the former St Columba church building in the town centre to the Christian Outreach Centre scheduled for July and pray for their presence there to be a shining light for the City.

Pray specifically for:
♦ a deepening sense of God’s presence as we come together in worship.
♦ our continuing search for a minister.
♦ the emergence and raising up of a local leadership team drawn from our congregation.
♦ more connections with those living and working in the Parish.
♦ the right site for the building of a church to become available when we need it.

“And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love.”
1 Corinthians 13.13

Easter Celebrations
Our first Easter together as a new Congregation was one full of hope and celebration and was indeed a very full weekend! As Stewart mentioned on the front page, on Good Friday we took a reflective walk through our Parish stopping to pray and hear from the Scriptures, finishing with a special time of Communion at the Manse.

Saturday was full of fun as we hosted a community family fun event at Holm Primary School. Approximately 50 children came along with their families for a morning which included crafts, eggy experiments, a superb obstacle course and a great big egg hunt! The event was really well received and a huge encouragement!

Easter Sunday was very special as we joined with Hilton and Dores and Boleskine Church of Scotland for an early morning celebration at Dores Beach. Despite the chilly wind it was a glorious morning. A little later we joined together at Holm Primary School for some breakfast and some egg rolling before our family service.
Bridging the Gap

In November 1998, Hurricane Mitch ravaged Honduras. Although around 150 bridges were damaged or destroyed, the most modern, the Choluteca bridge, survived intact. But it suffered perhaps the greatest indignity - the river moved right out from under it. Today, the bridge stands abandoned. A white concrete sculpture, far from shore, it is aptly described as 'linking nothing to nowhere'.

The Choluteca bridge could be seen as a metaphor for the challenge facing the 21st century church.

The magnificent bridge - the Christian message of love and acceptance - has survived for centuries, enabling people to make their own spiritual journey. It has survived hurricane force winds of persecution, criticism and secularism. But the river of people's lives has changed direction radically over the past 100 years. If we are to continue to connect with them, we need to reposition the bridge.

We don't need to change the content of the message - we need to realign the bridge to make sense of the message. We need to find ways of ensuring the message connects with those who have no concept of what the church is about.

It's estimated that there are around 40 million people in the UK who have little or no contact with church. When it comes to community connection and credibility we often start in the wrong place with the wrong assumptions. We answer questions few have been asking, and so we seem irrelevant to most people's lives.

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In 2006 The Sun ran a survey of its readership. One of the questions asked was, 'What is the most important thing in your life?' 85% of those who responded answered 'Family'.

In short, hopefully, none of us are responsible for driving others away from church by our shortcomings and thoughtlessness! Rob Parson's "Getting your kids through church without them ending up hating God" is a book worth buying for many practical challenges for everyone.

Trevor & Pauline Hunt
Hi. We are L2 – Lewis, Lewis, Calum, Ross and Yasmin! We are a group of Primary 7 and Secondary Ones and meet every Sunday morning in the school entrance hall. We use Scripture Union’s programme which is called The Grid and every week there are games, activities and Bible teaching. We started this session with Ruth where we looked at different wedding traditions from around the world then acted out a cool drama featuring characters such as Ruth, Naomi, Boaz and Old Uncle Fred (he’s not in the Bible by the way). Since Easter we have been thinking about King David, his life and relationship with God. We had an interesting quiz where we had to rate the World’s deadliest creatures! Which would you say was more dangerous – a box jellyfish, a death stalker scorpion or the Brazilian wandering spider? This was all about treating things with respect – something which Uzziah didn’t do with the Ark of the Covenant. Find out what happened to him by reading 2 Samuel 6:1-11. We also read about how King David demonstrated his compassion and kindness to Saul’s grandson and thought about our own levels of kindness and how we can be kind to others.

During our time in L2 we have discovered that three of us have the middle name of ‘Robert!’. Can you guess which three? (Clue – it’s not someone whose name starts with a “Y!”) Great hilarity was caused by a sticky spiderman getting stuck where he shouldn’t be last week. Can you guess where that was? Ask any of us and we will let you know if you are right!

L2
John Hardwick

On Sunday 12th June we have a special guest speaker John Hardwick leading our morning service. John is a popular author, song writer and creative communicator who has produced CDs and DVDs of his songs, stories and sketches and written several books and well-known holiday club materials such as Starship Discovery and Jungle Jamboree. John is in Inverness as part of the aLive Festival where he will be running a communications seminar (for children’s workers) and then a Cool n Crazy Kid’s Praise Party on Saturday 11th June at Inshes Church. Sunday 12th June shall be a family service with the children staying in as John shares the Christian message through song, puppets and perhaps even a spot of juggling!

John Hardwick mentioned above is only one of many artists and speakers taking part in the aLive Festival which is happening across Inverness from Wednesday 8th June and runs through to Saturday 18th June. The festival which aims to Teach, Equip, Reach Out and Celebrate, features many well-known and respected artists! This is a really exciting event for the whole of the Highlands and it will be great to see churches joining together to support and be a part of this special occasion!

The highlight of the festival is the finale at the Ironworks on Saturday 18th June with four brilliant bands taking to the stage to lead an evening of vibrant and passionate praise and worship. Superhero and LZ7 (featured recently on Songs of Praise) were a massive hit at the Luis Palau festival 2 years ago and we look forward to welcoming them back to Inverness. For Lou Fellingham and Phatfish this will be their first visit to the Highland Capital - don’t miss them! Make sure everyone you know is aware of this great night happening at the Ironworks.

Big group discounts are available directly through David & Annette Maclean (01463 248280). For more information on this event and all the others happening as part of the aLive Festival visit the webpage

www.alivefestival.co.uk

Creative writing - The Truth Behind the Secret
When asked to do a piece for her Creative Writing class at College Joanna Kerr had a secret to be shared:

The truth behind the secret of life takes a whole lifetime to discover. It is like a pilgrimage to take you home to your love divine. You will have a guide the whole way through – just call on Him by name wherever you are – whenever you are. He loves you so and delights in your voice and so will rejoice when He hears from you – from the first to the last. He’s yours, your Prince, ‘the one’, a gem, a true friend.

The secret of life is that the whole thing is a journey, a journey home. Just call on Him and he’ll prepare your home to your exact liking. He knows your heart and He knows it better than you know it yourself, so He’ll prepare a mansion in the sky for you – just begin to dream – that’s all you need do and He’ll be up there preparing it for you. Ask Him to prepare places for your family and friends too and if you ask in His name, it will be done.

So you see, the secret is no secret really. You need only begin to ask, ask, ask and it will be revealed to you. Revealed to you in the most awesome way you could imagine, in a way that only you will comprehend. You and you alone are His favourite friend, His favourite brother or sister and He cannot wait to meet you face to face, but until that time let Him build His Jerusalem with your home ensconced in its midst, with familiar faces and those who are new. He’ll be with you ‘till the end of time and then He’ll be your love divine.

So start today and whisper so soft or shout out loud or think in gentle: where are you my precious friend, show yourself my truth behind the secret, give me a word, a thought, a glimpse. Who are you? Where are you? Why are you? And answers will abound around and around. Pull closer to Him with one word. Just ask and He will lead you by the hand every step of the way until you step through that door triumphant and victorious to take residence in your mansion so glorious.
My wife, Dorothy, has been attending art classes over the winter. The kitchen table is littered with paints, paper and half-finished pictures. When she started, it was all about straight lines, perspectives and vanishing points. By Christmas she produced some lovely watercolours for family Christmases. She talks about layering the paint to create a sense of depth in the colour. Whenever she sees a coloured sky over the water or an evening shadow on the fields, she is asking how she would capture that image. The discipline of painting has sharpened her awareness of what is around her.

Creating a new church is like learning to paint. The blank canvass is daunting. It is about learning as we go, and building up the layers of colour. Some of us met and painted a few brush strokes of some values that will shape our little church – welcoming, accepting, Bible-based, relationships, authenticity, community-focused, creativity. A work in progress. More layers to be added.

But then we are not the artists. God is the Artist. We are the colours and brushes in his hand. The canvass has only a few daubs of paint on it. I wonder what He has in mind?

Peter Neilson

Local Leadership Team

Since our new church of St Columba came into existence its leadership has been the overall responsibility of a group of people called the New Charge Commission. This is group of people comprising three Ministers and Four Elders was appointed in part by our Presbytery and in part by the Committee of the Church of Scotland’s office in Edinburgh. As well as finding a Minister, one of the keys tasks of the New Charge Commission is to see a local leadership team established. The function of a Local Leadership Team is the taking of day to day decisions, the leadership and development of our congregation, whilst the New Charge Commission will still have over-all responsibility. Over time, it is anticipated that the Leadership Team will take on more and more of the tasks and responsibility of the New Charge Commission until the point is reached that as a congregation we are ready to “move out from under the wing” of being a New Charge and change to status to being a congregation having “Full Status.” At that point the New Charge Commission will disappear and leadership will be taken on by a Kirk Session, hopefully by then with a Minister being part of it. The “guidelines” for New Charge Commissions provide that a full status usually takes between 5 to 11 years. From all the indications I can pick up we might be at the 5 year end of the spectrum.

At its meeting on 19 May the New Charge Commission readily recognised that it is now the right time to look for a local Leadership Team. So, what sort of leadership team is sought? Like any team, it will function best if it comprises different personalities with different gifts and abilities. For example, some might be more drawn to initiating pioneering ideas, some might have a desire to serve in pastoring people, whilst others might have a gift in administration. The team will comprise 7 people. Those who will be the Leadership team are being asked to serve for a year, at which point there will be a review. There are no “essential criteria,” apart from having a genuine desire to see God’s “Kingdom come here on earth as it is in heaven.” You don’t have to be an ordained Elder already, or even a Member or Adherent of our congregation.

How are those on the Leadership Team to be chosen? A list of names will be arrived at by a secret ballot of those attending a meeting of the congregation after our gathering for worship on 19 June. Those present on 19 June will be given a piece of paper and invited to list, in order of priority, up to seven names of people they would like to see serve on a Leadership Team. These names shall be collated and then passed to the New Charge Commission at its next meeting on 23 June, who shall appoint the Leadership Team. Anyone at that stage suggested but not willing to serve will have the opportunity to decline. The appointment process could, if we let it, conceivably become an exercise more complicated than the Election to the European Parliament, but we are not in the business of canvassing, or block votes. This is about the identification, as best we are all able, of the people in our midst whom God is calling to lead our congregation.

“A now you are the body of Christ and each one of you is a part of it.” 1 Corinthians 12. 27

R Murray McCheyne,