



Daffodils at Malleny Millgate
8th April 2020

April 2021

Radical Action Plan heralds change

In 2019 the General Assembly accepted three reports that between them have the potential to radically reshape the Church of Scotland, at every level, from the local to the national, and the General Assembly itself.

So what gave rise to these initiatives? There has been a rapid decline in Church membership since the mid-1950s, and with an evident dissociation of Scottish society from organised religion, the Church has proved less than well equipped to adapt to changing circumstances.

Since the 1950s, the Church of Scotland has lost c80% of its membership, and it is now half the size it was in 2000. Membership is declining at around 4% per annum. It is clear that in future there will be a smaller church with reduced resources. That means there will be hard decisions about priorities and dispositions.

At least three Reports to the General

Assembly since 2000 made the case for reforms but none secured agreement. The decision for the Radical Action Plan at the 2019 Assembly was therefore a major event.

The Radical Action Plan involves measures designed to;

- focus on engaging with people under 40;
- spend up to £25M on church growth projects;
- reduce the cost of the Church's central administration by 30%;
- reduce the number of Presbyteries from 45 to 12;
- develop new networks of churches;
- encourage Kirk Sessions to 'focus on leadership and strategic decision making';
- improve training and support for all ministry and leadership roles.

So what does this mean for Balerno? Balerno is clustered with Currie and

Juniper Green for this process and is represented by a team of three in the conversations, comprised of the Minister, Marion Milne and Bill Black. They have had three meetings so far which have looked at the use of available buildings, and the potential implications and impact of a future reduction in the number of ministers in the valley.

For the moment, the Water of Leith group will be looking at several common principles that can serve all 3 churches as a proactive way of looking to the future. They are now going on to look at the overall resource requirement for the churches within the cluster group. The cluster group anticipate submitting a report to Presbytery during March.

At this stage therefore there is an information gathering process going on, and we will keep you posted on any developments as they occur.

Easter in the Church Sanctuary

After receiving confirmation of the Scottish Government's decision to allow Places of Worship to reopen for communal worship from Friday 26th March 2021, we plan to hold services on **Good Friday at 7pm** and **Easter Sunday at 10am** in our Sanctuary. If you would like to attend either of these services, please contact the Church Office on 0131 449 7245 or

bpc-admin@balernochurch.org.uk to reserve a place. To ensure everyone's safety, attendance must be on a pre-booked basis. These services will also be available online on our website. Please be reassured that stringent safety and cleaning procedures are in place to ensure your comfort and wellbeing while in Balerno Parish Church.



Andrew Barr with forklift helps get the Cross in place for Easter.
Thanks Andy!

WashBoard King



Britain was once home to 50,000 skiffle bands including early incarnations of The Beatles and The Rolling Stones, and one of those bands rejoiced in the name of 'The Woodpeckers'.

Now all this of course was a few years ago - skiffle was in its heyday in the '50's after all - so let's say 1959, and if you found yourself in Kilmarnock that year and if you happened to be in 22 Howard Street you'd be wherethe YMCA was, back in the day as they say, where the band first formed and where they played for a few years before splitting up as they went different ways to start their careers. Because of course skiffle was part of the youth scene. But skiffle never leaves the blood; some say that skiffle is the music that time forgot; but not so for at least one member of the Woodpeckers.

When exactly in the great scheme of things the Woodpeckers were pounding out the beat is shrouded in mystery, but despite, however unfairly, not making it through to Top of the Pops, or maybe it was Juke Box Jury in those days, one member at least dared to dream that the breakthrough lay just around the corner for the Woodpeckers. So it happened that one day, decades later, a chance encounter with the leader of another skiffle band led to the question, 'what do you play then?' And the answer - 'washboard' meant Allan Woodburn was on the way to (comparative) stardom, because that chance meeting led to Allan signing up with the Soft Shoe Skiffle ensemble, joining Norman (guitar and vocals), Dave (rhythm guitar), Ian (banjo and mandolin) and Hugh (double bass). Soft Shoe Skiffle play gigs at the Edinburgh Fringe and at the Balerno Music Festival, and, especially if it's not raining, also at the Balerno Gala.

Allan is one of that small and distinguished group of music makers who know how to use a washboard properly, and he may share that with you, if you ask nicely. Just don't ask him what Top of the Pops was like. But if you're ever asked 'what's your idea of a skiffle legend! Is it Lonnie Donegan?' you'll know who it really is.

Richard Henderson



From the pews to the "Mews";

a reflection by the Minister.

I love this time of year – the days are getting longer, and the flowers are getting ready to bloom. I cannot help but sense that there is a general feeling of renewed hope and energy despite the Pandemic.

The COVID-19 vaccinations are administered to millions of people as I write this reflection and the scientific evidence is telling us that the vaccinations are working – protecting millions from serious infection, even death, after contracting the virus.

So, whether your glass is full, half empty or empty, at least we have something to be smiling about this Easter, reminding us of the real joy of the Resurrection promise of Jesus, namely that all who have faith in Him shall not die but inherit eternal life. Let us therefore celebrate the joy of the Resurrection of Jesus and be reminded of the words of the Apostle Paul who wrote in 1 Corinthians 15:17: "And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins".

Our faith is not futile because we believe that Jesus was risen for us. May all of us keep on blethering about the real joy of Easter! Jesus is indeed the reason for this SEASON.

© The Minister

Craters on Mars?

Just imagine travelling 293 billion miles just to examine a crater. Sure, it's a terrific achievement, especially to land a vehicle right inside, to complete the exploration. What we don't know is, are they going to fill in the crater? – (boys from the black stuff would have nothing on that). Mind, it's cost an absolute fortune to get there so the results will need to be good. Whilst craters in space will qualify as the oldest known examples, there is even a biblical example in the book of Numbers Chapter 16, where two brothers Dathan and Abiram quarrelled with Moses in the wilderness, with God's punishment for their sedition being to 'open up the earth' and swallow them and their families – now that was some crater!

There has to be a lighter side to this story and it's right here in Balerno – yes, we have our own craters! When did you last drive along Ravelrig Road or Long Dalmahoy Road? – there are craters galore, now lovingly referred to by the Council as 'potholes', and compared to driving over these, the Mars vehicle looks to have a clear road ahead. Those roads are a disgrace and need urgent attention. A depth of 9 inches is the deepest reported so far – unless of course you know different? If you do, please contact the council, not Balerno Blether!

Here's how to do it; EITHER on-line to edinburgh.gov.uk, OR phone 0800232323 or 0131 200 2000. Now go on, just do it! After all, if you don't then who will? Help make life safer for all of our community.

David Booth



Easter for the children of our congregation

43 children will receive Easter bags with a personal card from the Minister. A big thank you to all the volunteers, Carol, Pam, Irene, Maureen, Alan, Marion Milne and Anne Charman for delivering the bags. I am sure the children (and their parents) will feel included in our fellowship.

© written by AJ Groenewald

Poem on Lockdown

'Contained'

What is the strange climate of time, where I'm shut in, locked down and confined?

There walls and windows, rules and laws don't contain me.
No it is all in the mind, that is where I am contained and confined!

I can choose to see these walls are shutting me in, limiting me,
So I can no longer run, walk, touch or embrace.

Or I can choose to see these are just thoughts.
Walls don't actually limit my joy, my love and my peace.
The container is merely that, a defined sense of space.
What I choose to fill it with is up to me.

What *if* it's an empty vessel waiting to be filled with the goodness of God and the overflow of the Holy Spirit?

What *if* these walls do not contain and limit my growth?

What *if* actually there is such an infilling available for me in this moment, here right now, that this container becomes a jar of oil that never stops flowing?

What *if* I've been given the gift of time, rest and space?

These gifts are abundant, given in a measure pressed down and overflowing.

Contained? Yes, my soul you are contained, but not by man-made walls and rules for your safety.

You are contained by the love of God.

Restrained by his infinite goodness and abounding mercy, limited only by the span of your human heart.

But your spirit is free!

Free to fly over land and sea,

Free to dance with joy and wonder.

Free to laugh, to sing, to love.

Free to rest, to walk in peace and hope.

There are no boundaries, no limits to *these* thoughts.

So let us be contained and restrained only by the love of God in these days.

To plumb the depths and scale the heights, to wing on the dawn and settle on the stars.

There is no length, depth, width or height that can contain the love of God.

So let your spirit soar, let the oil of gladness and the garment of praise be your companions in these days.

He is *calling you* into the spacious place of his love within these walls.

Will you come, fly with me there?



Helen Hunter

So, did you know? Balerno is the home of the steel shafted golf club.

John Geddie was a journalist, born in 1848, who wrote several books mainly on the subject of Edinburgh, including in 1896 on the Water of Leith, in which he describes Balerno as 'a little world of interests agricultural, manufacturing and social' before going on to refer to the Inn, at that time Hendersons Inn, 'not to mention other meets of gossip at the Post Office, the smithy door and the Braehead.'

The Post Office which Geddie would have seen was probably what is now Ladycroft Cottage, and Hendersons Inn is now the Grey Horse. Where exactly the smithy was in 1896 is not clear.



The smithy at Glenbrook Road

A smithy was certainly in existence by 1920 at 27 Main Street, at that time probably better known as Hook's Buildings, but we don't know about the period 1896 to 1920.

After 1927, however, Hook's Building hosted a branch of the Commercial Bank of Scotland, until 1838 when, as the Royal Bank of Scotland, it moved to a new building at 4 Main Street, before that became Artis Dental Studio.

The smithy which operated between 1920 and 1927 at 27 Main Street belonged to Thomas Horsburgh who had moved to Balerno in 1880 from Duddingston Mill to open his first smithy at Glenbrook Road, at a property then owned by the Merchant Company Education Board. That property is now 'The Smiddy'.

Thomas Horsburgh became a ken-speckle figure in the Community, being one of the founders of Let it Blaw, as well as being captain of the Bowling Club. He also developed the first steel shafted golf clubs at his Glenbrook Road works in May 1894. Unfortunately his patent lapsed in the 1920's just when golf was taking off. However the original steel shafted clubs are still on display in Baberton Golf Club. Horsburgh Grove, Gardens, Bankare all named after Thomas Horsburgh; and in all probability he was also a member of Balerno Parish Church.

Richard M Henderson

Fair Trade/Fairtrade (FT) in lockdown

You'll know via our Facebook page, BPC's website and other channels that though missing a 2021 FT Fair, and our great FT-supporting BPC Mill Cafe, FT is still thriving - if not diversifying quite as March's 'C&B' implied: FT's not really now supplying 'coca' instead of cocoa, despite the unholy grins of some wistful old Balerno hippies ever since publication.

People are still buying FT options whenever they can. Also going ahead virtually is a lively Harmeny School FT art competition, with pupils picturing people working in practical ways for a fairer, greener world. They're thinking about bikes, growing things, and 're-loving' old treasures. There'll be certificates, and thanks to Scotmid's rock-solid sponsorship, FT chocolate and banana prizes. We hope some of the work may go public later - the 'C&B's' generously offered space, and others will too.

Meanwhile, FT and related agencies ran virtual sessions during FT Fortnight. Members of Balerno FT Group will pool information from those 'attended', including the Scottish Parliament's Cross-party FT Group meeting, and FT/Climate planning work by the Scottish FT Forum and UK FT Foundation, Traidcraft and the Co-op.

And last week I joined a truly inspiring live virtual tour, via Hadeel, of the Atfaluna workshop in Gaza, where workers -



mostly with disabilities, including deafness, blindness and sometimes both - produce, with full FT care and employment protection, beautiful embroidery, carvings, painted goods and more; for sale in Gaza, and online/via the Edinburgh shop. All against a background hard for us to imagine.

Hadeel's tours continue until late June, and if the first is any guide, I can't recommend them too highly. To join a tour, follow instructions kindly included by Martin Petty in BPC's website; or for more information, contact Hadeel direct, on info@Hadeel.org.

Thank you for your continuing support of FT, when it matters more than ever. And please do join us if you can spare the time. 'Real' events,

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For your diary!

Please note that, unless otherwise intimated, all events are via ZOOM until further notice.

Sunday worship is at 10am every week
see facebook or our website balernochurch.org.uk
Please send letters to the Blether Editor by email or post to the Church Office at 2 Main Street, Balerno. EH14 7EH
Edinburgh Balerno Parish Church of Scotland: Scottish Charity No. 018012

A Note from our Flower Fairies

Easter- Spring, the time of renewal. Lambs in the field, buds on the trees and flowers.

However in this spring there are very few flowers in the church and no knowing when they will return.

Once the building is open, even for very reduced numbers, the flower fairies hope that we can introduce a small burst of spring. However the huge undertaking of cheerful floral displays and floral gifts for deserving recipients will be some way off.

Over the years many members of the congregation have been involved in the arranging and distribution of these bouquets- not to mention paying for them! For the meantime we will plan for the future and hope that a less onerous system

can be started so that we both decorate our place of worship and celebrate and/or sympathise with our congregation when life events occur

We hope that you all enjoy the renewal of life this spring, and hopefully the chance to meet up with friends and family as the restrictions lift.

Wendy Williams and the Flower Fairies



Job Opportunity at the Mill



The Mill At St Joseph's is recruiting!

The Mill at St Joseph's is a community café at the heart of Balerno. The Mill has five part time staff and an army of volunteers who provide home-baking, freshly cooked lunches and a place of welcome, care and hospitality for all. It is a non-profit venture run by Balerno Parish Church.

Now that our current bookkeeper is moving on to pastures new, we are looking for someone to join our team. Although a small role, it would be ideally suited for someone looking to use their skills within the community and be an integral part of a team. The position is on a freelance basis although the number of normal hours is reasonably predictable.

All applications for the role should be sent care of Balerno Parish Church marked for the attention of Ishbel Smith, Mill Convenor. If people wish to find out more about the role, they are welcome to contact her or the Mill Manager Lynsey Inglis.

Applications should be in the form of a short covering letter explaining why you would like to join our team accompanied by a CV setting out your relevant experience. The closing date for applications is 19 April 2021 but we reserve the right to offer the position to the right person if they come along earlier.

For more information and a detailed job description, go to our website page [Job Opportunity with the Mill Cafe – Balerno Parish Church \(balernochurch.org.uk\)](http://balernochurch.org.uk/job-opportunity-with-the-mill-cafe)

We look forward to hearing from you.

Balerno Parish Church is looking for a new Treasurer

We are currently looking to appoint a replacement for our Treasurer, Jim Todd, who is retiring in August.

Traditionally this rôle has been served by a member of our congregation on a voluntary basis.

If you are interested in helping with the stewardship of our church finances or indeed, if you know of someone who might be suitable, please contact our Session Clerk, Malcolm Ogilvie, in the first instance to receive a precis of the duties that the rôle covers.

malcolm.ogilvie@hotmail.co.uk (m) 07801 456245



From the Blether Team

Welcome back, and thank you for picking up a copy of this, the second issue of Balerno Blether!

Well, there is light at the end of the lockdown tunnel. A new normality awaits; though not quite yet. There is a lot for us to reflect on and a lot to be thankful for as we emerge from one of the worst peacetime crises of the past century. For many people the past twelve months plus of the pandemic have been more than difficult, and for all of us the process of readjustment is likely also to pose challenges. But whatever our individual experience we will all have stories to tell about lockdown, and if you would like to share some of those we would love to hear from you, so please let us know. There will also no doubt be lots of photos from lockdown walks or the changing view from the window. Tell us your stories, and share your photos, so we can let others know Balerno is OK.

Pastoral Care

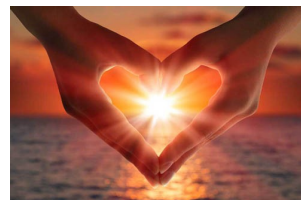
Anyone needing support should contact the Minister, André @ 449 3830 07588845814

bpc-minister@balernochurch.org.uk or your Elder, or Kay Coull, the Pastoral Care Co-ordinator (449 6151).

If you cannot get hold of the minister, please contact the Church Office

449 7245,

bpc-admin@balernochurch.org.uk



Places to see—The Robin Aiken Hide

The Robin Aiken Bird Hide is located in a quiet corner of Bavelaw March beyond Threipmuir Reservoir. This was built in 1997 by the Friends of the Pentlands. It was named in memory of Dr Aiken who founded the Friend of the Pentlands.

From the Hide you can watch many of the birds that frequent the reservoir. Ducks and Swans and many others. One year we observed a group of Hooper swans who had flown in and spent the winter there. By the Hide there are feeders that attract tits, finches and robins, etc.

Access is via a walk from Threipmuir Car Park, over the causeway and along the boardwalk. The boardwalk is to be upgraded to allow room for powered wheelchairs to be turned and parked at the Hyde. The Friends have dedicated funds and obtained grants to allow this work to start next month. The work is to be organised and overseen by Edinburgh Council, who own the land, A contractor has already been appointed.

In normal times, through their Wheelchair Walks Project, the Friends organise special days when trips are arranged. They already have tracks prepared round Harlaw. The route extending from there to the Hide at Threipmuir will create a much longer and exciting trip. It will open up a much larger area to explore.

We have wonderful facilities here in Balerno. We can explore the hills, walk round the Reservoirs, observe wildlife, birds, deer, badgers, hares, etc. And it is all on our doorstep. No wonder there are always lots of cars trying to park in the carparks at Harlaw and Threipmuir.

We have a parking problem. The present carparks are quite inadequate for the numbers visiting these hills. That is another problem still to be tackled. *D McBeth*



Do you have a minute, Lord?



It's about the virus, Lord. I thought that you were supposed to love the world. Why do you let something like this happen? Some of us have been trying to get on top of issues like global warming and world poverty and – it has to be said – we get a pandemic of almost Biblical proportions! It's not helpful. Wouldn't it be more beneficial if there were to be a bit more rain in some parts of the world – not a flood, just more regular precipitation?

Yes, I suppose you could argue that something like a pandemic can help bring out the best in some people and it brings them together to help each other in the face of an increased prospect of death. Some of us can see that, Lord, but some people still seem to be competing with each other to make political points and others are still focussed on the business opportunities which they can exploit.

It can all get a bit depressing – and it has been going on for a while now and I have to tell you I'm running out of patience; I can feel that I am becoming less tolerant and I want to get back to normal. Is that the message, Lord? Did we not appreciate 'normal' enough before? *Contributed*

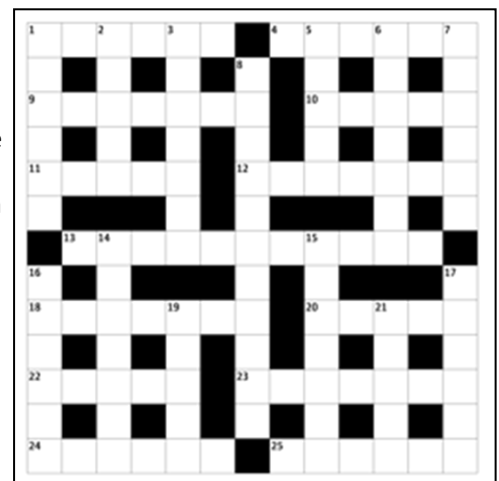
March answer

May Publication Dates

Copy by 16th April
Publication 26th April



Crossword Corner



Down

1 Manoeuvre (6) 2 Wandered from the straight and narrow (5) 3 Place providing car-based entertainment (5,2) 5 Jewish religious leader (5) 6 Former (3,4) 7 Counters (6) 8 By-product of medication (4,7) 14 Italian Renaissance painter d1520 (7) 15 Do up (7) 16 Left unploughed (6) 17 Semi-precious stone (6) 19 Epitome (50) 21 Setting for Hitchcock's Psycho, Bates__ (5)

For Love of Van Man

Have you (pre-Covid of course) been at a wedding celebration when the newly married couple prepare for that opening dance, then step out to the popular strains of "Have I Told You Lately"?

This totemic song was written in 1989 by Van Morrison ("Van the Man" to his

fans) and the opening words capture the essential romanticism: "Have I told you lately that I love you, Have I told you there's no one above you, You fill my heart with gladness, Take away all my sadness, Ease my troubles that's what you do".

A later verse continues, "There's a love that's divine, And it's yours and it's mine like the sun, And at the end of the day, We should give thanks and pray, To the one, the one, ...".

The song, from his album Avalon Sunset, won a Grammy Award and was also released by Rod Stewart (1993). What a lot of folk don't know is that Van Morrison based the lyrics on a prayer (read those lines again) reflecting his relationship with God and religious convictions. A glance at the playlist on Avalon Sunset will confirm other tracks explicitly referring to God. If you don't have Spotify, the You Tube link to "Have I Told You Lately" is <https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=J789Gld1kaY>. Enjoy! NJ



Across

- 1 Voracious (6)
- 4 Come off the booze (3,3)
- 9 007's favourite cocktail (7)
- 10 Fracture (might be lucky?) (5)
- 11 Not belonging to a major recording company (5)
- 12 Version (7)
- 13 Hot dog (11)
- 18 Notify (7)
- 20 Afro-Brazilian dance (5)
- 22 Contract allowing occupation of property (5)
- 23 Dance—wet spot (anag) (3,4)
- 24 In an uncontrolled manner (6)
- 25 One hawking their wares (6)