

# Soundings

Portobello & Joppa Parish  
Church Magazine

May 2016



## *Portobello and Joppa Parish Church*

**Worship takes place each Sunday at Portobello and Joppa Parish Church with two services – one at 9.30am and one at 11am (10.30am in July and August).**

## ***From the editor***



While working on the magazine this month, I clicked idly on Facebook as a procrastination exercise and came on one of those featured adverts, which had the headline: *Six easy tricks to make your house look more organised and tidy*. I wouldn't like you to think that our house normally looks *disorganised* and *untidy*, but, tempted, I scrolled down to find these magical ideas to simplify my life.

The first suggestion was: *Make your bed*. I was somewhat unimpressed: we always do make our bed, thank you very much! I read on, however: *When you've finished with your hairdryer and styling wand, replace them in the bathroom cabinet*. Alas, a quick glance at me would tell you that I'm a stranger to both of these aids to elegance (what *is* a styling wand??). However, I persisted: *Dust while you're on the phone*. Really? I don't think I have enough hands for that. So – hardly the radical solutions that I was hoping for.

In this edition of “Soundings”, Stewart reminds us of various more serious problems that PJPC is facing these days – none of which can be easily solved – but you're urged to give them serious consideration. It would be good if he were not having to work those 11-hour days.

Perhaps you could help with the Christian Aid collection? If so, there are contact details on page 12. You can read about our dramatic productions: “Oklahoma” (past) and “Robin and the Sherwood Hoodies” (future). And many congratulations to the 116<sup>th</sup> Brownies in their excellent fundraising for the Edinburgh Cat and Dog Home.

Remember that the next edition of “Soundings” will cover June, July and August.

**P Donaldson**

## ***From the minister***

Dear Friends and Neighbours,

'Mud splattered minister'. 'Wheezing Weaver'. 'A line of lemons round Loch Leven'.

I was just imagining some of the headlines as I joined about 50 other people—many dressed in fluorescent yellow-- from local Presbyteries cycling round Loch Leven on the 16 April.



Volunteers were sought as part of the Moderator's Challenge. The current Moderator was organising a cycle ride round Loch Leven to raise funds for the St. Andrew's Refugee Services based in Cairo. He had visited it earlier in the year and was inspired and humbled by the work done for approximately 4,000 refugees per year (see <http://stars-egypt.org/>).

Since I cycle round Edinburgh and since I have worked with refugees in a previous incarnation, I thought this was the time to put my hand in the air and help out. I would have preferred to spend a Saturday at home but I am fortunate to be in relatively good shape, I cycle and I have seen firsthand the challenges and traumas faced by refugees. Cycling round Loch Leven on a gorgeous Scottish morning was the very least I could do.

15 May is the beginning of Christian Aid Week and we are fortunate that we will have another gathering with the Feast of Life Choir, which includes people from many of our local churches. People using their gifts to enjoy themselves, enrich others' lives and help an excellent cause. How fortunate we are.

At our latest ASM I offered some thoughts on our church (see further in this magazine). I suggested that, given the pressures on membership and finances, we needed to be radical. One member mentioned to me that 1 out of 4 children

in the UK live below the poverty line. Perhaps we need to hear more about these issues?

The word 'radical' is based on the Latin word *radix*, which means root.

There are many ways to be radical. In our politics: why is there such income and wealth disparity in our world and what can we do about it? In our hospitality: how can we welcome people truly different from ourselves? In our church: is there really no other way to be a church, to worship, to serve?

The discernment team have suggested that perhaps we as a congregation can and should pause, put down roots and ground ourselves in our faith.

Out of the grounding in God, I believe, there can be a radicalism of love. For have we not been so graciously blessed by God, through Christ and with the Holy Spirit? Have we not received so much in and through our faith?

When we are radical in love, the roots are deep and the fruit is manifold and beautiful and delicious.

Let us, then, be radical. Let us put down roots in God—is that not radical in our day and age?—and then watch where we are led by the one who promises us that that tree in the New Jerusalem will provide healing to all the nations.

**Stewart**

## ***Holiday club: P1-7 children***

There will be a Bank Holiday activity day from 9 am to 12 noon in our church building. Our Holiday Club takes place from 25-29 July from 9 am to 12.45 pm and we're looking for volunteers to help with arts and crafts, games and catering. For further information, please contact Michelle.



## ***Ministerial Thoughts from the ASM***

On 10 April after the two services, I presented a few thoughts and ideas regarding the status of the church.

Because a number of people were still off on holiday and didn't hear some of my musings, a brief synopsis for the magazine was suggested.

### *Property*

There is much ongoing work. Basic maintenance has been carried out, the toilets are getting sorted and the manse is getting windows and roof refurbished. Soon there will be some work on the hall as well, as well as the Centenary Hall. All of this to ensure that the properties we retain are kept safe and wind/water tight. Many thanks to Gordon, Ian, Jamie, Pat, Ella, Lilian and others on the Property Team! BUT:

**We still need a Property Convener!!! The right person need not be a property professional! Helping to coordinate the excellent team and ensuring the paperwork is done are the two primary tasks!!! If interested, speak to Stewart. If Stewart approaches you, you will need to run very, very fast indeed!**

### *Ministerial Hours*

Because we are looking not just for a Property Convener but other volunteers (Session Clerk, Halls and General Purpose and we will now start thinking about Social and Pastoral Conveners), I thought it only appropriate to look at my own hours. If I ask others to contribute their time and talents, I should have a sense of my own contributions.

So, I kept a careful record of my hours from 25 January for 28 days.

Rather interesting results.

Here is a breakdown of the number of hours in particular categories and the percentage of time spent in these areas. As a corollary, I should mention that,

since the ASM, I have looked closely at the 'Admin' section. It is a catchall phrase and a bit of it is related to the other 4 categories, though some is outwith what many might think are my main tasks.

Admin:	88.5 (40%)
Worship:	58.5 (25%)
Outreach:	43 (19%)
Pastoral:	25 (11%)
121/Pres.:	10.5 (5%)

Using the numbers, I did a bit more crunching and got some more interesting results.

28 Days:  
225.5 hours worked  
1 Full day off  
56 hrs/week  
(5 day week: 11.2 hrs./day)

These are rather fascinating figures and there obviously are a few choices to be made. But, meantime, I would urge you to remember that, if a task is left undone by me, it is not through lack of overall effort. Also, if I ask for people to help, *I really do need the help.*

Lastly, I am only one of many, many who make the church go. If I or another ask for volunteers, please do what you can.

### *Demographics*

The Presbytery will soon be coming to visit us as part of their Local Church Review, when they see where we are, what we do and what we would like to do.

In light of the upcoming visit, I looked at some of the *numbers on the roll*.

Here is my guesstimation of the **age profile of the congregation**:

16-24 yrs. of age:	0%
25-44:	6%
45-64:	14%
<b>65+:</b>	<b>80%</b>

To suggest that demographics are against us is an understatement.

I examined the *combined rolls* of the three congregations that formed PJPC and got these numbers:

2005-2015: 5% decline per year average

2013-2015: 8% decline per year average

If we do some projections, then:

2020: Membership = 693 if we assume 5%/year decline.

2020: Membership = 591 if we assume 8%/year decline.

Combine that with our expenditure and we have some challenges ahead.

Lastly, we did a count of those **attending worship** on Sunday 10 April (and we will do a count for three other Sundays). While the numbers are not quite so worrying, we did note that approximately 60% of our attendees on that Sunday are 65+. More numbers will be gathered.

*Hearing over doing*

What to do? Wrong question.

A Forsyth, who is at the University of Edinburgh, suggests that churches should be asking a different question:

## How is Christ speaking to us now?

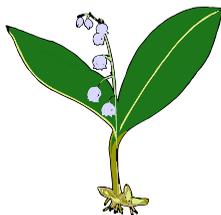
We do a lot at the church (thanks to all who help!!) but perhaps a different or complementary tack is required.

We set up a Discernment Team last year precisely because we believed that we did need to listen to God and what we are being called to do and be as a congregation. The Discernment Team have recognised that we can do a great deal but, if we do not know how to share our faith, then it is too difficult to draw people into the sphere of God's love and grace. They have thus suggested that we focus on our faith, we encourage smaller groups where faith can be shared and deepened, that we pursue hospitality and that we pause and put down roots in order to draw from the riches of our faith and Christ's love.

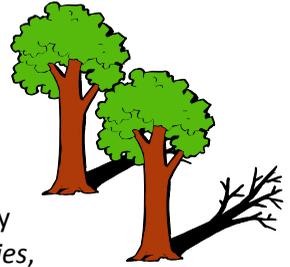
### *Conclusion*

I do not pretend that I *know* what to *do*. But I *believe* that we are faithfully attempting to heed God's call and that reflection, prayer and meeting with each other is something we can *do* that will point the way forward.

I do not know what the future of our church or the Church will be. But we are a church that believes in transformation, we are a church that believes in resurrection, we are a church that believes in the boundlessness of God's love. There will be a future full of joy and healing and faith. What form it takes I do not know. It may be time to be radical: dig down to the roots and find the basis of new life.



## ***Junior Drama Group***



The members of the Junior Drama Group have been busily rehearsing for their show, *Robin and The Sherwood Hoodies*, which they will perform on Thursday 26 and Friday 27 May. They all seem happy with their parts and are getting into character and learning their lines – also their dances and songs. Extra Sunday rehearsals will give them more time to run through their scenes. They’ve been having fun, enjoying the scripts and laughing at the jokes.

So – what is the show about? Well, Maid Marion and the villagers are pestered by King John, the Sheriff and his dopey guard to pay more taxes. Maid Marion decides that they need help, and writes a letter to Robin Hood and his Merry Men – she saw their advert in the local paper. Nursie, Marion’s daft nurse, sends for her two Skunk Scouts to take the letter to Robin and his Merry Men. What Marion doesn’t realise is that Robin and his Men are an entertainment group and love nothing more than singing and dancing. They agree to come to Sherwood Forest, thinking that they are to perform a concert in front of people – normally they perform for the forest animals, so this is their first real gig. Of course, King John and his dopy men think that Robin is the real deal, and chaos soon begins.

With great songs, dancing and singing and plenty of jokes, this is a show not to be missed. Show nights are Thursday 26 and Friday 27 May and tickets will be on sale at the beginning of May.

We look forward to seeing you there.

**J Clabby**



## 'OKLAHOMA!'

On Friday I attended the Portobello and Joppa Parish Church Drama Group's presentation of 'OKLAHOMA!' What a memorable evening – a crowded hall, watching a group of talented and enthusiastic actors. The obvious enjoyment of the company spread over the footlights to envelop the audience, who went home humming the songs after an evening of top-notch entertainment. There are too many to single out, so I'll say heartiest congratulations to all – the performers, the dancers, the band, the stage designer and constructor, lighting and sound crews, the choreographers and the front of house staff with those hats!

Sincere congratulations must go to young Charlotte, the director, who filled the action with charm, pathos and much humour and to Nancy, who again coached the cast and led the band with her usual aplomb!

When watching previous presentations of this show, I have been bored and confused by Scenes 2 and 3 of Act One; but not now! A wonderful revelation! Congratulations to Jud and Curly (in Scene 2) for making sense of their scene and song 'Pore Jud is Dead'. The Dream Sequence (Scene 3) performed by the whole company, also came to life; I was moved, impressed and entranced. Full marks, everyone!

I must mention three comedy moments I particularly enjoyed, out of many – a well deserved round of applause for Aunt Eller when she superbly covered the slightly mis-timed gun-shot! Also the antics and accent of Ali Hakem and his 'Persian Farewell' and the wonderful cackles of Gertie! How did she manage the chortles without hurting her throat! Finally many congratulations for the confident dancing and moving round the stage of the chorus, especially those on the extensions of the stage on either side of the band.

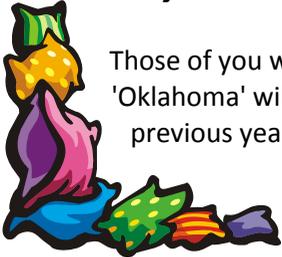
A wonderful evening from a strong and talented company!

**D. N. C.** [B.E.M.] (for services to Drama)

19<sup>th</sup> March 2016

*Unfortunately, Millie was ill and unable to attend a performance and to write her usual review. We wish her a speedy recovery.*

## ***Are you sitting comfortably?***



Those of you who attended the Drama Group's recent production of 'Oklahoma' will have appreciated a more comfortable seat than in previous years!

The Drama Group has purchased seat pads for general use with the hall chairs. We are very happy for organisations, or groups who meet in the halls, to make use of these for any special occasions etc. Please contact me if you would like to make use of them.

**S Hay**



## ***Christian Aid Week 2016 15th to 21st May***

House-to-house collection was how Christian Aid Week began and this still raises an incredible £6.5 million across Britain and Ireland every year. Local efforts here help to transform the lives of our global neighbours. We have many dedicated collectors in our area but more are always needed so that we can collect from more of the streets in our parish. Every little really does help and we can match volunteers to streets of a size and location to suit them. If you feel that you could help during the week of the 15th - 21st May we would be delighted to hear from you. Please speak to Stewart, Lourens or any member of the Outreach Group. Last year our district raised an amazing £5,700, house-to-house.

(The Christian Aid website, [www.caweek.org](http://www.caweek.org) has lots of further information, including materials for hosting a "Big Brekkie")

## **116<sup>th</sup> Brownie coffee morning**



On Saturday 13<sup>th</sup> February, the 116<sup>th</sup> Brownies (based in Bellfield Street) held a coffee morning to raise funds for the Edinburgh Dog & Cat Home. At the coffee morning, the girls did their Hostess badge and served everyone with great enthusiasm. As the date of the coffee morning was at the start of the mid-term holiday, not all Brownies could attend but not to be outdone, these girls who couldn't were keen to be involved and held two separate little coffee mornings to raise funds and gain their badge.

The sum total of these coffee mornings is an amazing £418.01.

On Tuesday 12<sup>th</sup> April, Francesca from the Dog & Cat Home came to Brownies to speak to the girls and to receive the cheque. This money will help by sponsoring a kennel, a cat pen and going towards a dog adventure playground !! The girls were also able to tell Francesca about their Friend to Animal badge which we did to complement our work for the Dog & Cat Home.

I would like to thank everyone who helped with and supported this great fundraising effort

**H McDaid**

Brownie Leader  
116<sup>th</sup> Brownies, based in Bellfield Street





## A call to prayer

### YOUR PLACE

*“There is a place by Me.”*

*(Exodus Ch 33 v 21)*

Can we imagine taking our child to an unknown destination and laying them on an altar as a sacrifice? That’s what was happening in Abraham’s life when we read, “On the third day Abraham looked up and saw the place in the distance” (Genesis Ch 22 v 4 NIV). It’s the last place our flesh wants to go because:

- a) It’s the place where God exposes our true motives and values. God didn’t want to kill Isaac, He just wanted to know, “Abraham, is there anything you value *more* than Me?”
- b) It’s also the place where we discover the supply for our every need. Listen: “Abraham looked up and there in a thicket he saw a ram caught by its horns” (Genesis Ch 22 v 13 NIV). Notice the word “caught.” When we get to where God wants us to be, we’ll find that our provision is *already in place*. We can’t lose it and nobody can take it from us.

Now, if we think *getting* to this place is tough, try *living* there. When Paul writes, “Neither give place to the devil” (Ephesians Ch 4 v 27), he’s talking about the same place. When he tells the Ephesian Christians to put on the whole armour of God, he ends up saying, “Having done all, to stand [in our place]” (Ephesians Ch 6 v 13). We won’t have to go out and fight the devil every day; he’ll bring the battle to us. Why? To get us out of our place.

God told Moses, “There is a place by Me. Come and stand in it, and I’ll cause all My goodness to pass before you” (see Exodus Ch 33 v 22). If we’re serious about enjoying God’s goodness, let us get to our place – and stay there.

**H McNulty,**  
Prayer Promoter



## **Brain-teaser**

This month's puzzle relates to an activity that some of us may be doing this season. As an anagram, it can be written as: RECLINING PANGS. This phrase describes quite well what you may be feeling as you contemplate this task.

The phrase you're looking for has two words - 6 letters followed by 8 letters:

----- / -----

In case you still haven't got it, here are some words that can be made from some of the letters in our phrase. *Some* of them are also quite appropriate to the activity!

Leaping  
Pleasing  
Clearing  
Praising  
Placing  
Cleansing  
Learning  
Easing

And I found another 37 other words as well. How many can you make from the letters of this phrase?

**Alison**



## ***Getting to know you...***

This month's interview is with **Jennifer**. Jennifer has attended St James' and now PJPC all her life. She's been a Board and now a Session member, was Halls Convenor for ten years and was also involved with the Brownies for a long time. She's among those still caring for the Rosefield buildings till they're eventually sold.

**Q. In an alternative life, what job would you have chosen?**

*A. I would still choose the same job – children's nurse.*

**Q. What book would you recommend?**

*A. Anything by Dickens.*

**Q. What's your earliest memory?**



*A. Holidays in a but and ben with an outside toilet in Kinghorn.*

**Q. What would be your ideal holiday?**

*A. Travelling around Britain by train.*

**Q. What is your most prized possession?**

*A. My family.*

**Q. Tell us something that not many people know about you.**

*A. I was a convent girl.*

**Q. What luxury would you take to a desert island?**

*A. My radio.*

**Q. What do you do to cheer yourself up?**

A. *Watch a good black comedy.*

**Q. What is a favourite quotation?**

A. *"There are three signs of old age: loss of memory... I forget the other two." (Red Skelton.)*

**Q. What kind of music do you listen to?**

A. *A mixture, from classical to country and western.*

**Q. What do you miss (or *not* miss) about being a child?**

A. *The chances and freedom we had.*

**Q. What gets you up in the morning?**

A. *The need for a good cup of tea.*

April-May 2016

Tickets  
£6

Available on  
the door or  
from the  
church

# Music for a Summer Evening

Under 16s  
Free



St Mark's Church  
287 Portobello High Street  
[www.stmarksportobello.org](http://www.stmarksportobello.org)



St Marks Portobello

0131 629 1219

Scottish Charity No: 017137

● **Wednesday 27 April: 7pm**

*Spurtle* from Portobello High School

**Philomusica of Edinburgh:** The Four Seasons

with sonnets read by Roger Chalmers-Lang

● **Saturday 30 April: 7pm**

Ciaran + Katy

With special guest, **Brian McGlynn**

Natural singing and delicate guitar - Folk music  
with highlights of country and jazz



**Friday 6 May: 7pm** ●

**Edinburgh Renaissance Band**

Music and instruments of 1300-1650

● **Friday 13 May: 7pm**

**Sally Simpson & Friends**

Fiddle music and much more

**Sunday 8 May: 7pm** ●

Jazz Evensong Concert

with Richard Michael:

As heard on BBC Scotland's

*The Jazz House*

● **Sunday 15 May: 3pm**

Folk Trio **Treble Entendre** and

Singing trio **The Linties**

Come for music and tea

**Wednesday 18 May: 7pm** ●

**Portobello Community Choir**

**The Brogues** folk and ceilidh music



**Friday 20 May: 7.30pm (NB time)** ●

**Dalkeith and Monktonhall Colliery Brass Band**

## ***Life and Work – in the May edition***



**General Assembly 2016** Nine pages of previews, including Assembly reports, timetables, interview with the Moderator-Designate and looking forward to Heart and Soul

**Give, Act and Pray** Marking Christian Aid week, an interview with the new Head of Christian Aid Scotland, the Rev Sally Foster-Fulton

**The Hidden Christians** The author of a new book on Christians who don't go to church tells how it came about

**Circle of Care** How the local community rallied round a terminally-ill minister

**The Changing Seasons** The Rev Alastair Duncan considers the message of Pentecost and the challenges of preaching the Gospel in contemporary Scotland

**Jesus, Makar and Maker** Ron Ferguson reflects on the need for dreamers and poets, as well as practical people, within the Church

**Scotland and the Faithful Few?** Hannah Mary Goodlad argues that there is 'a spiritual hunger' within Scotland

**Little Failings, Big Consequences** The Very Rev Dr James Simpson highlights the dangers of convictions without courtesy

**Plus** news, reviews, letters, registers and crosswords – all for just £2.20

**Online** read daily updates from the General Assembly at [www.lifeandwork.org](http://www.lifeandwork.org), follow us on Facebook or Twitter @cofslifeandwork

## ***MAGAZINE/DIARY DEADLINES***

June/July/August	Sunday 22 <sup>nd</sup> May 2016
September	Sunday 21 <sup>st</sup> August 2016
October	Sunday 18 <sup>th</sup> September 2016

***Scottish Charity Number : SCO11728***

A photograph of a sunset over a large body of water. The sky is a gradient of orange and pink, transitioning to a darker blue at the top. In the distance, a low-lying landmass is visible, featuring two prominent, tall, thin structures that appear to be chimneys or towers. The water in the foreground is dark blue with gentle ripples. On the right side of the water, there are several small, dark, rectangular markers or buoys.

[www.portyjoppachurch.org](http://www.portyjoppachurch.org)

Photography by Kim Kjaerside