

## **Netherlee and Stamperland Church Newsletter June 2022**

We have had to consider the viability of maintaining two buildings for our united church community and sadly, and with regret, we came to realise that one would have to be given up. That building is Stamperland church. From the end of June, the congregation will worship and meet in the Netherlee building.

There is no doubt that this leaves us with a great feeling of sadness and grief. Within its walls we have seen decades of worship, nurture and service. It is full of memories. It has been a place where life events were marked and celebrated. Many met life partners there and for all of us the experiences of being part of that community have led to the development of our own faith.

Now the united congregation of Netherlee and Stamperland will move to the Netherlee building and although that is a change, we still have a common desire to grow our faith in God, to follow the Gospel and to bring that faith to the wider community in service.

We have considered how to ensure the legacy of Stamperland church continues. The christening font at Stamperland will be brought to the Netherlee building and will continue to be used at baptisms. The communion table in the St John Chapel at Stamperland will find its new place in the Lesser Sanctuary at Netherlee and the Communion Silverware from Stamperland will continue to be used and will alternate with the Communion Silverware at Netherlee.

We are blessed with a congregation that has many gifts and those, together with the grace of God, will allow us to continue our ministry and enable us to be a Christian focal point in our area.

The sadness that we are all feeling now will take time to heal, but we can be assured that God is with us. It has been the hardest of times for us all and whilst we recognise that some have been hurt and upset as we progress on our journey of union, we ask that God forgives us if we inadvertently hurt others.

The story of Netherlee and Stamperland will continue and with God's grace let us go forward with hope.

Rev Scott Blythe and Stuart Buchanan (Session Clerk)

### **Worship Sunday 26 June and thereafter**

Our final service at Stamperland sanctuary takes place on Sunday 26 June at 10 am. The service will be led by the Rev Roy Henderson.

Our summer services will continue in the Netherlee sanctuary thereafter at the later time of 10.30am.

## **Alistair Cherry's sermon**

Alistair Cherry preached at Netherlee and Stamperland Church on 12 June to mark his 40<sup>th</sup> year of ordination. He chose to preach in Stamperland Church.

There have been requests to have a copy of his sermon. He is delighted to share it with us in the Newsletter.

### **If you had one sermon to preach....?**

I remember as a probationer minister in 1981 the year before I sought a charge of my own... I attended a conference run by the then Board of Ministry. One of the speakers at the conference asked us:-

*If you had one sermon to preach... what would the subject be?*

All of us were assistant ministers then, tied to a congregation that was not our own. Most of us were guided by our 'bishops' as we called our supervisor ministers as to what we would preach on, such that it wasn't often we got to choosing a subject for ourselves.

Most of us took the opportunity to study the pattern on the carpet. Suddenly, the speaker said

*'Well Alastair, what do you think you would choose?'*

I gasped and muttered that I thought I would probably preach on loving one another.

As I sat to write this sermon, I felt a bit like that; the last opportunity to preach in this building that was my faith home for some 16 years, I believe the longest any minister served this congregation; and now two services away before the building closes for the last time.

The 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of my ordination to the ministry was on Friday past. The 10 June 1982 was when I was ordained and inducted into the congregation of Scoonie Kirk, Leven in the Presbytery of Kirkcaldy, a church which could trace its roots back to pre-reformation time when Scoonie was a hamlet outside the tiny fishing village of Leven in Fife on the road to St Andrews.

I served there for some 5 years before coming here. I ministered alongside my neighbour in St Andrew's Church Leven, Rev Archie Chisholm who was prior to coming there, minister at this church.

The day after I intimated that I was leaving to come here I met one of the worthies of St Andrew's Church in the town's high street who greeted me with

*I hear yer aff tae Stamperland in Glesca?* She said with a certain relish to which I replied in the affirmative.

*Ah weel,* she went on... *aw I can say is that Erchie was guy gled tae leave Stamperland and come here.*

And with that she left me standing.

I somehow must have known I was coming back for when I came to preach as sole nominee Bob Liddell, the session clerk, presented me with a bible I had left in the pulpit when I had taken summer pulpit supply as a student around 10 years before when the then student Effie Campbell couldn't manage to be here.

There is a great temptation to rehearse events from the past and folk that I knew and loved down these 16 years. Well, you'll be glad to know as well as my failing body of my 78+ years my memory is also failing as later on you'll discover at the door when I can remember the face, but the name escapes me.

I believe there can be none alive now who worshipped in the shop back in 1940 that acted as the church. I remember meeting a couple who were married in the hall when it was the sanctuary as well as the hall. Some may remember the erection of this building in 1964 but for most of us, the church and halls will have changed little in some 60 years.

Some memories come flooding back like the time I moved the pulpit. When I arrived here it was a central pulpit. It meant, when you had a wedding you had to push the communion table up against it and even then, there wasn't much room for bride and groom never mind me too.

With help we moved it, rolling it along drainpipes to where it is now. The Kirk Session was meeting that night and I invited the elders into the sanctuary to see what I had done, without telling them what. They all looked around them and then one elder suggested I had painted the back wall. No-one could think of anything else and when I told them, only then did they realise what had happened.

Pantomimes, Fairs, Anniversary parades, the Dedication of the Jubilee Chapel of St John; a congregational trip to Iona, Sunday School trips, early morning Easter services at Overlee Park. Blessed baptisms, fantastic weddings, heart-breaking funerals. Some events that will never leave the memory.

Folk whose names are etched on the memory, Bob and Florence Liddell, Sam and Grace Esler, Jack and Jenny Fraser, John and Agnes Buchanan, Colin and Edna Campbell ; my men Ian Murray, Duncan Shaw, Stuart Bruce, Jimmy Mathieson. Lots of names, too many to mention, many still with us, who made up the life and work of this congregation. We may bemoan the fact we cannot live in the past, but the memories of the past can sustain us in the present and in the future too.

The present is a sad time for our denomination. The number of Church of Scotland buildings exceed what can financially be supported by Kirk funds. Surplus buildings are not new to our denomination and sadly my generation did little to address the problem and we are now facing a painful time for the parishes of Scotland. We are also short of ministers where a dearth of funds means a cutback in the number of ministries the church can support. So, what the former congregation of Stamperland has faced with linkage and then full union with Netherlee, is one that faces a great many congregations the length and breadth of the country in the very near future.

The congregation where I am now a member is in a grouping of some 8 congregations and it is yet to be decided who many of these buildings will exist in a few years.

One thing is certain and that is that there certainly won't be 8 ministers to serve us, with congregations linking and/or uniting and only having the services of a minister on a Sunday in a rotation basis. And this is not just greater Glasgow, but throughout the denomination.

The OT reading I chose this morning was from the book of Jeremiah. Jeremiah was a prophet who I have turned to time and again throughout my ministry.

Why? Because his ministry as a prophet so often mirrored my own ministry. He would come and tell the people what he believed God wanted for his people.

The people would sometimes accept his word but many times they would ignore him or just do the exact opposite of what Jeremiah had told them God wanted. The Israelites are captured and uprooted from their surroundings and taken to Babylon. The false prophets, the social media of the day, told the people that it was only a matter of time till the folk went back home. Jeremiah, however, says otherwise as we read at Chapter 29

*This is what the Lord Almighty, the God of Israel says.... Build houses and settle down; plant gardens and eat what they produce. Marry and have sons and daughters....*

They are to do the best they can in the situation they find themselves in. There's no point wishing for what you can't have. If this is true for our church life it is also true for our day-to-day living. Yes, you must have ambition and drive in your life, but you also have to have realism, there no point in wishing for what you can't have, nor can you live in the past.

Jeremiah goes on to tell the folk of God's promise for the future...God says

*For I know the plans I have for you, plans to prosper you and not harm you, plans to give you a hope and a future....*

COVID has changed much in our lives these past two years. It has changed the church too.

- Folk have got out of the way of attending church;
- uniformed organisations and Sunday schools have been decimated.
- After a general malaise of people joining clubs and organisations so church membership is suffering from that disease too.
- People in future I believe will change church more than ever before. The need to join a church won't be the same and folk will attend as and when and even where they like.

And I think the future Church of Scotland is going to have to think of new ways to attract people into membership now – to realise at last that having church services at 11 and 6.30 to suit farmer's milking times are no longer suitable to 21<sup>st</sup> century society.

- Worship may need to happen on days different from Sunday;
- large Sunday services may become a thing of the past.
- Worship may be more become more intimate.
- New ways of doing thing may require to be sought out.
- Buildings would perhaps need be smaller and more multipurpose.

Organisations may need changing. Society is more relaxed and as wearing uniforms becomes more relaxed, it raises questions about uniformed organisations and their relevance today.

I believe as a church we have to ask 'WHY' of everything we do in the church and the old argument of its 'Aye been' will not do for those outside the church's membership in 2022 and beyond.

But how will we carry this out?

No longer have we the number of loyal members we had acting out all the things we did in the past? You know many of the names of the folk in the past, and even recently, who did the numerous tasks that make the congregation tick over. So, what will happen now?

The passage we read from the book of Hebrews may have an answer for us. The writer to Hebrews in chapter 11 says

‘... faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.’

I suppose that says while we cannot see things far ahead, we should have faith so that we can have the hope that God will bring about what he desires for us. In other words, no matter how hard it may be for some that this building to close in a few weeks, God’s purpose will still go forward. For many the loss of the building is beyond any of our future imaginings. To see beyond the loss may seem impossible at first.

When we lose our job, or lose our loved one, when we suffer any loss, we cannot imagine how life will go on, what we now see can’t possibly be any encouragement to us. Yet we all know, those of us who come through grief, that there is a light at the end of the tunnel, there is life beyond what now traumatises us, only none of us can see it yet...But new visions, new opportunities, new horizons await us.

Through the rest of that chapter of Hebrews the author lists the names of the great and the good and what they had done in the past for the Jewish nation. I already listed some of the names of those who worked hard whilst I was here to bring about an active congregation. You no doubt, can add lots of other names, who helped you in your faith journey in this place or elsewhere.

And others will come forward just as ministers followed me in Scoonie Kirk and St Andrew Penilee and here and have taken these congregations forward in the faith.

In the next chapter of Hebrews the author goes on to say that since we are surrounded by such a cloud of names of folk that have mattered to these new Christians, so we now, like them, should now press on in perseverance to following the footsteps of folk from the past to make sure the work of the kingdom goes on.

This we must do, running the race of faith.

With all these folk who mattered to us from the past, who are cheering us on, looking to Jesus who began and finished this race that we are now in. And if we do this, who knows our names may be written in the book many years from now as folk remember us for our perseverance in the faith, for our care in helping those who need assistance ,for our faithfulness in seeking God’s will for his people.

We must trust the Jeremiah’s of this world, who tell us to settle down, seek the welfare of the city, pray to the Lord so that things may prosper, remembering Christ promised to be with us all of the way. God promises us that he has a future mapped out for us if we will but wait for him to reveal it to us.

The purposes of God I have found in my 40 years in the ministry, are often. – perhaps mostly – hidden, but when they are mostly hidden, God himself is most ready to be revealed. If we draw near to God the more contented we will be as we put our trust in the future into his hands ,knowing that he has our best interests for us.

I am grateful today; for this place; for all of you and the many, many others who worked with me to make this the great congregation of Stamperland Parish Church certainly was. And which with God’s help and joined with Netherlee can be a great new congregation too.

All depends on our trust of God to work out his plan for the future of his people in this part of his vineyard.  
AMEN

## **Memories of Stamperland Church**

We received this email from a former member of Stamperland Church remembering the happy times and influence the church brought to her life.



### **GREETINGS FROM AUCKLAND, NEW ZEALAND**

"To everything there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heavens -  
Ecclesiastes 3"

This verse came to mind when my sister Margaret Hislop told me that Stamperland Church would be closing at the end of June. Being one of the far away ex-members, I thought I would take a trip down memory lane and let you know what growing up in Stamperland Church meant not only to myself, but the Hislop family.

Stamperland was a new estate when our parents bought 37 Stamperland Hill in 1939. I was born in 1941 and on one of my visits home, Margaret who showed me my name on the cradle roll scrolls hanging at the back of the church - I think I may have been second on the roll - March 1942. I still have my cradle roll certificate - 80 years old now!

I was the eldest of the three Hislop girls, (myself, Margaret and Elspeth) and our lives revolved around all the activities held in and outside the church. Only a Hall then meant lots of moving chairs facing the stage during the week and facing the pulpit, communion table and font on a Sunday. During those early years the "Building Fund" featured highly to enable us to have a "real" church, however at age 21, I was married in the "Hall" which will forever be "my church", and as my husband was in the Army, I left Scotland for pastures new in England and overseas, and I was not present when the "real" Stamperland Church was completed and opened. Elspeth had the pleasure of being married in the Church.

Our Dad being a Boys Brigade man started the Life Boys- (Junior Section today). Nicol Morton was Captain of the Boys Brigade and, as the two families were very close, he became Uncle Nicol to us girls. We grew up listening to all things Boys Brigade. Meetings held in our home with the wonderful Mary Neil, Betty McLean and Jean Scott meant lots of laughter was heard from our living room as they planned yearly activities and the summer trip. Dad had a cine camera and Margaret managed to get all the old film on video and then CD. It is amazing to watch all the familiar faces now and the fun times we had all those years ago.

We joined Brownies and our Brown Owl - Miss Annie Robertson was also one of my teachers at Netherlee School. Brownies followed by Guides with my lifelong friend the late Fay Fraser. Fay and I kept in touch all over the years and it was wonderful to have her come and stay with us in New Zealand for a holiday.

As we grew up Dad and Mum encouraged us to become Life Boy Leaders and Sunday School teachers. Mr Christensen was the Sunday School Superintendent and Mary Neil was the Sunday School leader. When it was only the Hall some classes met in the Shoe Shop across the road and in Mr Bertram's garage show room. The demographic in Stamperland then was mainly young families which meant all the organisations were packed. Sunday School parties after the war meant Mums went all out saving ration coupons to give us an amazing Christmas party tea. We were always looking forward to all kinds of activities to help the Building

Fund. Morning teas, cake stalls, Fairs in summer and a host of evening events our parents went to. Maybe at those the "Guild China" would be used. I never did get to drink a cup of tea out of it, but woe betide anyone without permission who had a key to that sacred cupboard! We had a great Drama Club and enjoyed many an evening at a play.

The 231 Boys Brigade had a wonderful pipe band who turned out for all parades. We assembled outside the Morton house in Randolph Drive and all the organisations marched behind the band down to the church. I remember one harvest when Dad had grown enormous leeks, and of course you had your harvest parcel with you to lay at the front of the Hall. I was so embarrassed by their size (almost as tall as me) that I thought about feigning a sore tummy so that I didn't have to go! I am sure someone had a great pot of soup the week after.

I was a member of the Bible class and there was also a group of teenagers who started a Youth Group. One of those members, Tom Sinclair, went on to be minister, and it was lovely to catch up with Anne Morton and Grace Scott when I was home in 2017. There was so much going on that our social life revolved around the Church. Sunday morning was not a time for a long lie as Margaret and I were part of a group who went up to Mearns Kirk Hospital held short services in the geriatric wards before our own morning service. This was started by a lovely couple and their commitment to this outreach went on for many years.

Our family moved house to 26 Stamperland Hill just as I started secondary school (Eastwood). We now walked down the hill to church instead of uphill.

When I left Scotland to join George in England, I asked the minister for a reference. I had worked in the Head Office of British Petroleum in Glasgow after leaving school and they did not take back married women in those days, nor did they give references. I thought a character reference from the minister would be a good thing to have and the Reverend Goudie agreed. It is the only reference I have ever had and when my two sons were at school in NZ I decided to take a part-time job. The Stamperland Church reference was pulled out and I got the job as Secretary to an IT Director. Later it was pulled out again when I started my career in Publishing in New Zealand.

I believe that growing up in Stamperland Church and being surrounded by all the hardworking folks that gave their time and talents provided not only a springboard for our future life as young people, but also the ability to take the principles and ethos gained by our background into our adult life.

Here in Auckland churches are facing the same problems as Scotland, falling congregations mean amalgamation and in some cases closure. "Zoom" and "You Tube" gives you the opportunity to join your church service at home on your Smart phone, I-pad or Laptop if you are unable to attend. Ideal during the pandemic, but it has caught on and will continue being used.

As the 26<sup>th</sup> June draws near and being the bibliophile that I am, I have a quote from a little book which is always on my bedside table - The Prophet by Kahlil Gibran -

"What was given here, we shall keep"

Stamperland Church gave us a spiritual home, lots of wonderful friendships, plenty ups and downs, but most of all great memories of all whom we met within its walls.

Katherine Downie (nee Hislop), 8<sup>th</sup> June 2022,  
Auckland, New Zealand