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The Link

The Magazine of Haggs Parish Church

Linked with Denny Old Parish Church

Autumn 2021

Autumn Magazine 2021

Answers to quiz.

1. Midwife
2. Priest
3. Magician.
4. Nurse
5. Secretary
6. Soldier

If you got them all well done.

Deaths

'Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord'

Omitted from previous magazines the following:

October 2020 – D. Malloy – Haggis

January 2021 – B. Crosbie – Longcroft

“COMPASSION”

When Jesus landed and saw a large crowd, he had compassion on them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd. (Mark 6:34)

Friends, world can be a difficult, dangerous and lonely place. It is comforting to believe in a God in Heaven who loves us and cares about us and has a plan for our lives.

When Jesus looked at the crowd who followed him and gathered around him, he weighed them his own. Jesus in his earthly ministry saw hunger in people's eyes. They were pitiful as a flock without a shepherd. He saw hunger in their eyes. Not a hunger for food, but a hunger for companionship, a hunger for community, a hunger for love, a hunger for God.

When he saw that hunger ***“he had compassion for them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd.”***

Folks, compassion literally means “to feel with.” Jesus felt compassion for them because he had felt what they were feeling.

Compassion on people is the most important thing we can say about Jesus, and about God.

Dear brothers and sister, we live today in a world full of fear and war. We are afraid of Coronavirus, although government is scrapping much of the restriction, but still we have fear in our minds and hearts. We are afraid of our economy, we are afraid of our climate crisis, we are afraid of not getting job, we are afraid of rising utility bills prices, we are afraid of failing health care systems, we are afraid of immigration and disease and forest fires and drought and drugs and, and, and.....

It has been a long time since I have seen this country and indeed the world, so depressed and sad and frightened and on edge about the future.

And into this bog of sadness and sorrow, we the church are called to imitate our Lord and find ways to break into the cycle of fear and violence

with words and acts of hope and assurance, words and acts of compassion and healing.

So, today I would like to say to you folks, that we are called to have compassion, to preach compassion, to teach compassion, and to live compassion.

In this chaotic and fearful world we are called to break whatever rules and taboos and culture barriers necessary to let the world know God is not harsh, that God is not punishing them for their sins. He is love. He is steadfast, everlasting, never-ending love and he has compassion for us and has brought us to the other end of this pandemic's tunnel and will lead us ahead. He reaches out to us in the midst of our fear of death with an offer of life - of life eternal.

He is opening up His arm to embrace you, to protect you and love you as He is a God of compassion. Just let God love you. And, then, open up your arms and show God's love to the world.
May God bless you all. Amen.

Rev. Raheel Ari

Sunday Club.

It is hoped that we can resume the Sunday club soon. If there are any parents or carers with youngsters in our congregation who would like to come along, please get in touch with me, Moira Martin.

I hope you have all had a great time off school. The weather has been great to get outdoors and see Gods wonderful world.

Let me know what you did over the holidays, perhaps swimming, cycling or building a sandcastle.

Moira Martin

A wee quiz. (You will need your bibles).

What occupations are mentioned in these verses.

1. Genesis 35 v.17
2. Genesis 14 v.18
3. Daniel 2.v10
4. Genesis 35.v8
5. 2nd Samuel 8 v 17
6. Isaiah 31 v 1

CHURCH OF SCOTLAND NATIONAL GIVING DAY

Congregations have been encouraged by the General Assembly to participate in a church-wide National Giving Day this autumn. This will provide people of all ages to reflect on God's presence with us through these challenging times and to offer gifts of thanksgiving back to God.

At Hags we will celebrate **National Giving Day on Sunday 26th September** combining it with our annual **Harvest Festival**. Gifts of tinned or dried food can be donated to Falkirk Food bank and a retiral offering will be taken for **Strathcarron Hospice**.

1st Hags Girls' Brigade

Pandemic. The continued screening of these services has been a welcome addition to worship for the housebound or isolating members. The work of John Fenney organizing the on-screen music and order of service, has also been vital to enable live worship to resume.

Now as we see our lives returning to 'normal' it is time to reflect and see what lessons we can learn from our personal experiences, good and bad, and how we can move forward in our lives and the life of Hags church. Covid has become the great unfreezing of our generation, and this is our chance to make changes that can endure.

Most people have realized that contact with our families, friends and community is the most important aspect of our lives. Our isolation from others was the most difficult thing to bear; yet for many in our community this is their 'norm'. Covid has presented us with opportunities to make changes and to connect with people outside the usual congregation. Small acts of kindness, a phone call or setting up virtual or personal connections have offered friendship and shared worship with others in our community who crave to belong.

Change is not comfortable or easy; we fear the unknown, but now could be the time for a Godly transformation. What kind of Church do we want? Are we willing to trust in the Lord to move us forward?

God bless you all,

Sue Storrar
(Session Clerk)

It was with sadness that Shona Laird, the Captain of 1st Hags Girls' Brigade, has decided not to restart the Girl's Brigade at Hags when the church hall reopens in the autumn.

There are insufficient adult leaders to operate the Brigade at the present time. Grateful thanks goes to Shona and the Officers for their years of work with the girls.

If any girls would like to join or to continue with GB activities, then they will be made most welcome at Denny Old Girls' Brigade who meet on Monday evening in Denny Old Church hall.

Please contact their GB Captain, Marion Reid, on 01324- 812115 for more details.

1st Hags Boys' Brigade

Good News we are starting back in September, still to confirm what date, we are having an Officers meeting to decide. Anchor Boys (Primary 1 – Primary 3) Tuesday between 6.15pm – 7.45pm Junior Section (Primary 4 – Primary 6) & Company Section (Primary 7 – Secondary 6) Friday 6.30pm – 8.30pm.

All at Bankier Primary School. If you have a boy who would like to come to the Boys Brigade and would like more information, please contact myself Phone (01786) 470817 or 07799145121 or Email john.fenney72@outlook.com.

Falkirk Foodbank

Emergency Food for People in Crisis

The congregation of Hags Church has been generously supporting the Falkirk Foodbank for a number of years now but recently, in some part due to the Covid pandemic, donations have tailed off. This is a pity as the good work of the Foodbank is even more important as more people struggle to feed their families due to the end of the furlough scheme and to increased unemployment.

The Falkirk Foodbank exists to provide emergency food to individuals and families who, quite simply, have nothing. They rely on the support of the general public, churches, groups and businesses in our community to donate foodstuffs. With these donations, boxes or packs are made up designed to feed people for about three days.

The Foodbank was formed by a group of churches as a Christian response to what was seen as a growing need in our community. It has brought together a range of churches but also groups and individuals of faith or no faith to help others in a very clear and practical way.

If you feel you can help with the valuable work of the Foodbank please bring your donation of food on any Sunday. This will be handled under Covid guidelines before being taken, by our volunteers, George and Isobel Hoggan to the Foodbank for distribution to local people in need.

Suggested items: Milk (*UHT or powdered*), Sugar (*500g*), Fruit Juice (*carton or diluting*), Pasta sauces, tinned Vegetables, Fruit, Meat and Fish Jam, Chocolate – *small bar*.

Carol Richmond

Crossreach Christmas Catalogue

Hi folks. The Crossreach Catalogue will be available at the end of August. Please give it your usual support, which will be much appreciated.

Thank you

Maisie Mortimer

MOVING FORWARD

August 2021

After three months absence, following the Second Lockdown, we finally managed to get back into the church building on Easter Sunday to physically worship together again. There were still many restrictions – 2m distancing, no physical contact, sanitizing of hands, no singing, no hymn books, no flowers, wearing of face coverings, no live music – but it was still a joyful occasion for all those who managed to attend in person, acknowledging ‘The Lord had Risen’.

Slowly, as restrictions eased, we have been able to reopen worship to limited numbers of worshippers. To enable this to happen it has taken an extraordinary amount of work behind the scenes from a team of dedicated folk. We give thanks to all those who have worked so hard to keep us safe, with a special mention for Jack Dunn, our Covid Coordinator, Ernie Martin, our Property Convenor, the teams of cleaners who have regularly helped each week and the phone operators who have taken the bookings every Friday for Track and Trace.

I would also like to thank Raheel and his family for keeping regular worship alive on the weekly on-line Facebook services throughout the

Thoughts from Elma Findlay

The lockdown came upon us so quickly we had no time to prepare. There were a lot of ups and downs for everyone.

One of the good things that happened for me was my brother in Canada making a video call and now every Saturday at 1p.m. we call each other, telling all our news.

The telephone was a saviour for many keeping in touch with friends and relatives throughout the months of lockdown. Thank you to all who called me.

Reopening of Haggs Church Hall

As Covid restrictions are eased we plan to reopen Haggs Church Hall in the autumn.

Pilates, Zumba and Yoga sessions will resume, with strict cleaning and hygiene rules being observed.

Please look at the church website for contact numbers and details of classes.

The opportunity to socialize after services with a tea or coffee will also restart as soon as safe operating procedures can be put into place.

Haggs Parish Church Communion

There will be a **Communion Service in Haggs Church on Sunday 5th September at 11.15 a.m.**

Please bring your own elements as has been the custom during the pandemic.

HAGGS CHURCH AND COVID-19

In March of last year life in Haggs Church was moving along as normal. We were fund raising to help pay the cost of the repair to the Church ceiling and were looking forward to a concert in the Hall from the Falkirk Bohemians. Services were taking place and organisations were meeting.

We were aware of this thing called Covid-19 but did not think that it would have much impact on us. How wrong we were. By the end of the month we had cancelled the concert and the Scottish Government placed the whole country in total lockdown in an attempt to control the spread of the virus. This meant the closure of both the Church and the Hall. It remained this way until September.

However, during this time we were not idle. Raheel saw to our spiritual needs through his weekly service streamed from the manse. Gardens were tended, grass was cut, property was maintained, forms were filled, risk assessments were completed (buildings fire & covid), weekly inspections were carried out, procedures were written (for cleaning and sanitising the Church, for entering and leaving the Church and for dealing with anyone who has Covid-19 or its symptoms), all to ensure that we would be ready to re-open when restrictions were finally lifted.

Permission to re-open finally came in September. We decided to re-open the Church only and leave the Hall to a later date. Social distancing was set to 2 metres, meaning that the Church, which normally could seat approximately 150 downstairs, was limited to 40 people. In addition, we had to phone on a Friday to reserve a seat and the Church had to be cleaned and sanitised between services. We extend our thanks to those who performed these important tasks.

At least we were back in Church and looking forward to Christmas. Unfortunately, things took a turn for the worst and tightened restrictions

meant that we were once again forced to close, putting us in a care and maintenance mode once again.

It stayed this way until March of this year when, after updating our procedures and risk assessments, we were once again allowed to reopen. We also re-introduced flowers to the Church, were allowed to use hymn books again and sing in the Church (as long as we wore our face protection).

At the time of writing this article, social distancing has been reduced to 1 metre, meaning that we can now seat 63 people and no longer need to phone on a Friday for a seat. Our hopes are that we can soon move to no distance restrictions, allowing us to move back to our full capacity. We are also planning to re-open the Hall for Teas and Coffees and organisation use.

Life has been difficult for us all since last March. We have all been touched by Covid-19 in different ways. Some have lost loved ones, some have caught the virus, some have been in shielding, some have been in self-isolation. We have been deprived the opportunity to say farewell to our friends and loved ones who succumbed to the virus and been unable to visit those who were in hospital or a Care Home.

Through all of this our faith has sustained us and we give thanks to God for the strength that we derive from Him, through that faith. We also give thanks to everyone who helped us, in many different ways, through this particularly difficult and challenging time in our Church life.

Haggs Church has survived and we look to the future with renewed strength and dedication.

Jack Dunn: Co-vid co-ordinator.

My Lockdown Psalm

(Written during my recent stay in the Iona Community and read out during a service in the Abbey that was dedicated to voicing our feelings about the Covid Pandemic.)

Look to the heavens from where God is and will give me strength in tough times.

Oh Lord! How difficult it has been to keep positive when restrictions close possibilities.

Coping with changes in relationships, routines and certainties has been challenging.

Keeping positive when negativity surrounds me – trusting that with God's help life will improve.

Doing things differently – embracing new technology, not going further than 5 miles – Lord how I want to be free!

On and on goes the bad news – increasing Covid numbers – but hope is on the horizon with the vaccination programme.

Wanting to worship with my church family, trying to meet all the requirements for allowing churches to reopen – close – then reopen again.

Nature has sustained me Lord – let people appreciate the natural world that you have gifted to us and help us to care for the wonderful world that you have made.

AMEN

*Sue Storrar
(June 2021)*

Maisie was ordained as an elder in 1980 and during her 41 years of service she has been a faithful Hags Guild Member, with many years as Chairwoman organizing events; with fund-raising for charities a priority. Coffee mornings, concerts, raffles or Beetle drives have always relied on Maisie to provide her legendary baking and fund-raising skills to generate funds for a variety of causes; local or world-wide.

These three Elders were presented with Long-Service certificates from the Church of Scotland in gratitude for all the tremendous work they have done at Hags Church.

On Sunday 15th August, I was presented with a Church of Scotland Long Service Certificate along with Susan Swan and Maisie Mortimer. I would like to thank the Kirk Session for their kindness in giving me this recognition.

I was ordained as an Elder in Blantyre Old in 1973 and joined Hags Kirk Session in 1978. During my time with Hags I have met and worked with many people in Falkirk Presbytery, Hags Kirk Session and Congregational Board and in the Congregation at large. These people have helped, supported, advised and encouraged me in whatever role I was fulfilling. To them I say thank-you, without you I would not have achieved or completed the things that I did. I would also like to thank the members in the Districts that I have visited over the years, your friendship and chat has been much appreciated.

It has been a privilege, honour and pleasure to have served as a member of Hags Kirk Session. Thank-you everyone for your help and support.

Jack Dunn

Conducting worship during Covid restrictions

We in Hags and in Denny Old churches have been blessed in our being able to access Raheel's Sunday morning worship on-line during Covid 19 restrictions . During lockdown when churches were closed, we shared morning worship from the manse with Raheel, Humaira and Roshan for which we are most grateful. Back in church, having the words and, in Hags, the music of the hymns on screens is a boon, especially now that we can sing aloud, albeit with masks. The ability to request a hymnbook is positive too.

I am privileged to provide pulpit supply for Raheel but my experiences from taking services in another five churches during the Covid restrictions are varied. Initially, I found conducting a church service over the telephone rather strange, speaking into a void with no interaction. However, I came to enjoy telephone worship and visualised the congregation sitting in their church building.

Since church buildings have reopened, I have found Covid protection protocols to be well implemented in each of the four church buildings where I took services. Each congregation's experience differed though: only one congregation displayed the words of hymns, the others had to rely on their memories. One church relied on pre-recorded music but had no words. Three congregations had the benefit of an organist, but no words.

These experiences showed me that, despite adverse circumstances, Christian folk will continue to gather to worship God. I found that very humbling. God bless ministers and kirk sessions as they strive to make worship available to their congregations.

Lorna Duncan

Lockdown 2020-2021

I have never been in jail, nor do I wish to but for the past 18 months to many people it has felt like it. We are fortunate in this country that we have the freedom to move about and go almost anywhere we like. The pandemic has curtailed many activities and to some the technology of today has kept us in touch with the people who would normally visit. A phone call has been a lifeline to many who are living alone.

Over the months that long awaited clear out of our garage was attempted having put it off for so long. Engineers having to navigate the mountains of rubbish to get near the boiler. Taking the rubbish to the tip was another outing as the council workers now know my car and I am on nodding terms with most of them. The weather has been great, so it is fortunate we have a wee garden to sit in. I have enjoyed the peace and quiet and having nothing to do.

Moira Martin

PRESENTATION OF LONG-SERVICE AWARDS

SUNDAY 15th AUGUST 2021

At the service on August 15th two new Elders; Alan Hobbs and Lynne Wilcox were ordained into the Hags Kirk Session.

The long-service of three of our senior elders – Jack Dunn, Susan Swan and Maisie Mortimer – who have each served as active members of our session for over 40 years, was also recognized.

They have set an inspiring example to us all – attending worship regularly and willingly giving of their time, talents and money during those years to serve the Lord, working tirelessly for Hags congregation, the local community and the wider world.

Jack was ordained as an elder at High Blantyre Church in 1973 and was admitted to Hags Session in 1978. During his 43 years of dedicated service at Hags he has held many offices; including Session Clerk, Property convenor, Health & Safety Officer and recently, as our Covid Coordinator, he has guided us through the maze of legal requirements that have enabled us to reopen the church safely.

Susan was also ordained as an elder in 1978, becoming the first female member of Hags Kirk Session. She has dedicated her 43 years of service to inspiring young people in the church and local youth groups to reach their potential and become better citizens through her leadership of the Duke of Edinburgh award scheme, Scouts and St. Andrew's Brigade.