



The Brig



A Word From the Minister...

The Sun Also Rises

This is the title from one of my favourite novels by Ernest Hemmingway. He takes the title from a verse in Ecclesiastes, which considers the seemingly endless cycle of sunrise and sunset, pondering what it all means. Are we here to simply exist under the cycle of days, or can we do something during that time that has lasting meaning?

We rightly adore the glory seen in a spectacular sunrise or sunset. In Christianity we connect it to the goodness, beauty and wisdom of our creator. And, in some ways, I think this practice can help us to take a thankful approach for the lives of people who turn out to be such a gift to our souls.

This week I am mourning the loss of two such lives. On one weekend in May, two great men of faith went home to be with the Lord. One was Dr Tim Keller, the former pastor of Redeemer Presbyterian Church in New York. If you spend much time listening to me preach you'll know I'm fond of quoting him, or alluding to his thoughts. Dr Keller for me helped bridge the world of the Bible and theology to the challenges and opportunities of today's culture. He was a preacher who thought like a philosopher, always shaping his preaching to deal with the big questions people have today. That approach has been a huge influence on me, as I do my best to learn from such a wise man.

That same weekend we learned that Professor Donald Macleod, formerly of the Free Church college had died. Professor Macleod, or 'Donnie Foot' as he was better known in Scotland, was an



eminently gifted theologian, preacher, and writer who shaped an entire generation of Scottish preachers. He carried an ability to be at once profound and simple in his communication. He was quite possibly the most accomplished theologian Lewis has produced. The lasting impression he has left on me was his recent book 'Compel Them To Come In', which urges preachers to be bold and clear as they share the good news of Christ with sinners.

I never actually met either men, though I felt I knew them because of the hours I spent in their work, and being shaped by their thinking. I'm thankful to God for the media and technology that has made this possible. But I will admit, as with any death, I'm left thinking our world has lost some of its goodness, how will that be replenished? I think this is a natural void we all feel when faced with death.

As I reflect on this, I am reminded that the gospel contains an aspect of re-birth as well as death. We feel excited and overjoyed by birth, but it can be hard to find positive emotions at death. And yet, the sun setting can be just as beautiful as the sun rising. We can give thanks for the rays of light which the life we knew gave, the energy and radiance emitted during their 'few short days' as the book of Ecclesiastes says. For those who die in the Lord we can be comforted knowing they behold 'The Son' in a way we can only imagine. And in real sense, their work, fruitfulness and love can continue, and be renewed as it impacts new hearts and lives. The sun setting on a good life is a time to feel loss, but also give thanks, and place our hope in the God of resurrection for : 'The Sun also rises...' Ecc 1:5



An Update from the Kirk Session...

As we head towards the summer break, and think of the longer days and improving weather, it is important that we also remember that not everyone will be in a better place. Although the higher temperatures will mean that the heating can be turned down, we are still seeing increasing prices, especially for food. Not everyone is in a position to manage such changing times, either financially or mentally.

We all should be thankful for all that we have but remember that we are a community of grace, that helps each other through faith and love for our neighbours. Those who heard the recent sermon by the Rev Philip Paterson from Veterans Chaplaincy Scotland, will remember that the basis for recovery from mental health issues, lies within a caring community. From 1st Kings, chapter 19 we read recovery starts with Normality/Routine (vs 5), Safety (vs 9), Story (vs 10 & 14), Peace (vs 12), Purpose/Salvation (vs 16-17), Community (vs18) and Support (vs 19-21). For those who didn't hear this sermon, you can find it on our YouTube channel.

The Listening Service, is a good first step if you need someone to talk to about the issues we face in the world today. The service can help you look at ways to access help, to understand what is happening and, importantly, to listen.

As I get older, I understand more and more the importance of having someone to talk to and who will listen to what is said, even if it's just a quick chat.



We are social creatures; we need to have contact with others and to feel part of a community. As a church, we have that community through the Holy Spirit and we can all play our part in looking after those valuable. A smile, a hello, a quick chat or even a long one over a cuppa, it all can help.

We are blessed to have the Listening Service housed in the church and to have members who are willing to help and listen. Please remember those delivering the service throughout the country and in our church in particular and those who need to be listened to. Details of the service can be found on the notice boards in the Hub and the Hall of Fellowship.

May I wish you all a peaceful summer, where we can recover our strength and be ready to return to a new season in faith and love for each other.

Willie McGregor
Session Clerk



WHAT'S ON

April

In April, we relaunched the Mile of Pennies. The aim of the Mile of Pennies was to raise money to update our projectors, as well as to improve the appearance of the Church building, and to enhance our online presence. We have already had a photographer come in and capture some photographs of daily Church life, thanks to donations from the congregation.

In April, the Church received a generous donation of £3000 from the Hub. We are always grateful for our Hub volunteers, and everyone who supports the Hub to make these donations possible.



May

On the 7th of May we held a lunch to celebrate the coronation of King Charles III. We thank all the volunteers who made this lunch possible, everyone who donated cakes, and everyone who bought cakes at the lunch, raising £85 and allowing us to offset some of the costs associated with the lunch.

We would also like to thank the 1st C Brownies for their generous donation of £100 to the Church.





The Hub Listening Service

Sometimes it can be hard to find someone to talk to, someone who will really listen.

Maybe you have an issue or a concern and don't want to bother family and friends with it. Perhaps you think they are too busy or have their own problems to deal with.

Talking it over with a trained listener in a safe and confidential setting can often bring some clarity and may help you to find a way forward.

The Hub café at Erskine Parish Church has recently launched a new service which can offer just that. Working in partnership with the charity Listen Well Scotland, the service provides Listening Time For You (LT4U) a free, confidential, one-to-one service, offering people the opportunity to meet and talk over anything that is on their mind with one of our trained listeners.

Two local volunteers, Morag Moffat and Aileen Robb have completed

advanced training with Listen Well Scotland and are available to provide Listening Time For You by appointment during Hub opening hours.

There is no charge for the service which takes place in a private room and is totally confidential.

We cannot offer counselling or advice but we believe that good quality listening enables others to tell their story and find their own solutions.

If you feel that you, or someone you know, may benefit from listening time, you can phone Morag or Aileen on 07778 719735 or email them on erskinehublistening@gmail.com. They will get back to you as soon as possible to arrange a time to talk.

If you would like to know more about Listen Well Scotland, you can go to their website at www.listenwellscotland.org, or pick up a leaflet in the Hub café or church foyer, from EBI Unites Community Pantry or Erskine Library.

If you would like to talk, we have time to listen well.



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Any submissions for the next issue should be sent to Aimee at
epcnotices@gmail.com by the 20th of August 2023