



Cluny & Monymusk Churches Together Newsletter



August 2021

Letter from the Minister

I don't know about you, but I am fair scunnered with this virus and all the changes that it has made to our lives these past eighteen months. I long for the day when things will just get back to normal. However, it appears that our new normal will be different to that which we have all taken for granted most of our lives. It seems that everything we do has changed in some way over these months from shopping to visits to doctors, from playing sports to attending church. Everything has been impacted by this pandemic.

As I write this I am preparing to go on holiday- you may get this newsletter after I have returned. Going on holiday was usually a necessity for me as it was a break from the parish, but to be honest with you it now seems a bit of a chore. Every week it seems that restrictions change from where we can and can't go and what we should and should not do. It is causing great concern to the travel industry and the hospitality industry though those who manage staycations seem to be having a good year if they can find staff. It is so hard for them to plan and us punters to make decisions. I am blessed to stay where I do for we are surrounded by beautiful countryside and lovely people. We are managing to have a few days in Edinburgh for a break and for that I am grateful.

Everything is in a time of change and challenge and the Church of Scotland is not exempt from change and certainly challenges. In this newsletter we shall be sharing with you some of the changes and the challenges we face both as a national church and as the local congregations of Cluny and Monymusk churches. We shall also share with you some ways in which we

hope to be able to address these challenges but this requires change from us all.

It is still a difficult time, but we need all of us to pull together and to help you understand, both congregations have put this newsletter out now, to share with you where we are and what we are doing as we go forward. We will no doubt have more normal newsletters later on in the year.

I am grateful for the volunteer cleaners who have allowed us to open our properties for worship under strict guidelines and I hope and pray that folk will feel comfortable to come back and worship with us. If this time tells us anything it is the importance of gathering and worshipping together.

My pastoral work over the last eighteen months has been reduced but I am now able to visit people so please if you need a visit or a chat let me know and I will try to catch up with you.

I would be happy to discuss our plans going forward with anyone and if needed we could organise some question and answer session for members so that we could explore together what this means. We can only do that later in the year when it will/might be allowed to hold such meetings.

In the meantime may God bless you and yours and may he give you peace.

Your friend and minister

Euan Glen

Sunday Worship

Since the start of the pandemic back in March 2020 our worship pattern has changed. We were closed for worship for about 6 months of that time. We were not allowed to open. We eventually were able to open with our church buildings and church hall having a weekly stringent cleaning regiment for which we are grateful to our cleaners, and with restricted numbers allowed in the buildings. We have had to complete and update twice a risk assessment document and related papers which have been approved by our local Presbytery which has dealt with how we clean the

building, seating plans, mask wearing, entry and exit of the building and a host of other things. It was not just open the doors to allow folk in.

When we reopened the numbers allowed were just about 20 in each church, initially the galleries were not open. As this newsletter is being prepared the change in social distancing allowances mean that Cluny church can seat 38 downstairs and 26 upstairs for worship. We can seat 30 people in the church hall depending upon the nature of those attending, whether single people or family groups, these all impact on this number. Monymusk church can hold 51 people downstairs and 19 upstairs, again subject to the breakdown of those attending. Hopefully in time numbers will be back to full capacity.

Since we reopened for worship our numbers have been reduced, not by restrictions caused by social distancing but a number of other factors, known mostly by our members themselves. Most Sundays we have had around 12 people in each place of worship.

We are now able to sing in worship, but at the time of preparing this newsletter, we still must wear masks to sit in church and to sing with them on. It may be, given comments made by our Government that this will continue for some time.

With the numbers attending and because of our direction of travel in the regional and national church the Kirk Sessions of both congregations have felt it sensible from September to hold 1 service each Sunday at 10.00am and to have month about in each church. This is what we have done for years during the summer and it was felt this will enhance worship with a few more attending either place of worship. It will also save money with heating costs and cleaning efforts reduced in the buildings not being used.

While we shall worship together there will be special services in both churches, for example for Holy Communion and Remembrance Sunday together with Christmas family services and the like.

We are not naive enough to think that the twelve from each church will automatically visit the other church for worship but we hope you will.

Enclosed with this newsletter is a calendar with dates for worship up to Christmas. We will review how it is going then.

Please give it a chance as we begin this new session in Monymusk Church on Sunday 5th September starting at 10.00am.

Church Finances

We are grateful to Scott Langlands who has been the church treasurer for both congregations. Scott has kept us up to date with our finances and at the end of each month sends an update to the session clerks and minister. The figures below show our income to the end of June compared with the total income in 2020. Our income has reduced in both places of worship, partly because of falling numbers attending worship and partly because of the lack of being able to fundraise at events. We do hope to be able to do something late this year or early next year.

Cluny Report

	2021	2020
Non FWO envelopes	678	630
Gift Aid donations	4262	9322
Ordinary offering (plate)	25	493
Other offerings donations etc	1440	6405

The expenditure has been on par with last year though our ministry costs have been reduced by £2200 but our electrical work getting safety certificates and other minor works increased to £3063

Monymusk Report

	2021	2020
Non FWO envelopes	0	0
Gift Aid donations	3813	6142
Ordinary offering (plate)	607	1016
Other offerings donations etc	2212	2376

The expenditure is on par with 2020 with our ministry costs reduced by £2400 and no unforeseen costs.

In both congregations there are reserve funds we can use to pay our way and we will need to see how things are at the end of this year.

Thank you for all your support and for those who pay by direct debit regularly for this allows us to have a better idea of cashflow.

The National Church Position

The Church of Scotland like all organisations has been hit hard by the pandemic not only financially but in its day to day work with communities it serves. The Church of Scotland established before the pandemic the formation of the Assembly Trustees. They have a serious amount of influence over the direction of travel in the church and what it can and can't afford to do going forward. One of their first tasks was to get control of the finances of the church as for a number of years the Church of Scotland was running in deficit by many millions of pounds. They have gone through all the Councils and committees of the church and now are balancing the books. It has been made more difficult because of reduced incomes caused by the pandemic.

At the General Assembly in May of this year the Assembly Trustees announced how the church going forward could be a sustainable model. As the major cost to the church is its ministers and full time staff, a review was made and it was declared that by 2025 the Church of Scotland could only afford to pay 600 full time equivalent posts. This is compared to the around 900 posts currently employed including ministers, deacons and other full time staff in ministry type work.

There has already been a reduction in the numbers of staff serving our central offices of the church and in the next few years other cuts will have to be made. Some of this, if not most of it will be achieved with the retirement of ministers but not all ministers who reach state age need retire. Our minister under his contract can stay until he is 70 years old because of when he was inducted. (Euan has indicated he will go sooner than that)

At the General Assembly the numbers were given for each Presbytery area and since our last newsletter our area has had an even bigger reduction from 15 parish ministers and 5 other staff down to 16 in total staff. How

this change will impact on us we shall see but what is likely is that our parish group system will still be the way forward. We have until 31st December 2022 to work it all out.

It is clear that the church we grew up in is not going to be the church going forward. As well as losing the number of ministers we are also to lose a number of church properties which will be hard for everyone. The new in phrase is 'Well-equipped Spaces in the Right Places'. A new buildings officer has been employed full time to help Presbyteries work out this in practise.

The Presbytery Position

The Presbytery of Gordon spent two years in discussion with congregations to produce a Presbytery plan for the church in this area going forward. This was approved by all local and national committees in March 2021. Sadly it did not last long for in May 2021 the General Assembly suspended all plans and sent us back to review figures as mentioned before. However, in the original plan the future for the church in our area was to work collaboratively with our neighbours in an area or parish group setting.

Our congregations were placed with Kemnay, Kintore, Echt & Midmar congregations to form a parish grouping. The current 4 ministers would be reduced to 3 by 2025 and two church buildings would be expected to close. After an initial meeting in February 2020 the pandemic hit and future discussions were put on hold. The ministers met each week online and produced shared worship which is ongoing to this day. However as it was clear that the pandemic was not going to go away, local meetings with representatives from each of the congregations were held as together we tried to work out a way forward. These discussions are ongoing. In June of 2021 another local congregation joined the group as we welcomed Blairdaff and Chapel of Garioch into the fold. Blairdaff and Chapel of Garioch is vacant just now and so our ministry team is to share looking after this charge. They will never as things stand get a minister of their own.

The ministers of the local congregations are



Rev Sheila Mitchell from Echt & Midmar Congregation

Sheila has been minister at Echt & Midmar since 2018



The Rev Joshua Mikelson from Kemnay Congregation.

Originally from the United States, Joshua has been minister in Kemnay since 2015.



The Rev Neil Meyer from Kintore Congregation

Originally from South Africa, Neil has been minister at Kintore since 2014

Together with our own minister, they will be a ministry team covering the parish group.

How do we move forward? This is the question that we are working towards now. The Session Clerks have met to discuss a way forward and it would seem likely that the ministers shall share worship across the parish group, that they shall help each other with pastoral work and cover for holidays and care for their own and the other parishes in the group. It is hoped that the skills and gifts in each congregation shall be used to benefit the entire group. The hope is that in time we see each other as part of a larger family of church folk together.

The Session Clerks in the other congregations in the group are

Blairdaff & Chapel of Garioch

Mrs Stella Gauld

Echt & Midmar

Mrs Diane Howie

Kemnay

Dr Sheila Simpson

Kintore

Mr Ian Waldram

A small sub committee made up of members from each congregation is to meet monthly to plan how we move forward and it would be good if you could remember them all in your prayers at this time.

Thoughts and Comments

There is a lot to take in in this newsletter. The minister would be pleased to chat to you at any time to try to expand on what has been said but as things stand there are possibly more questions than answers.

Email Updates

In order to communicate quickly and effectively with our members we ask that you provide us, on a voluntary basis, with a contact email address.

This would be securely held, used to communicate church information only and would mean that you can get any updates or information efficiently. Thank you. Please email gglen@churchofscotland.org.uk

Monymusk and Cluny Churches Together Revised Calendar July – December 2021

Sunday 4 th July	Monymusk Church 10.00am	Joint Service
Sunday 11 th July	Monymusk Church 10.00am	Joint Service
Sunday 18 th July	Monymusk Church 10.00am	Joint Service
Sunday 25 th July	No service in either church	
Sunday 1 st August	No service in either church	
Sunday 8 th August	Cluny Church 10.00am	Joint Service
Sunday 15 th August	Cluny Church 10.00am	Joint Service
Sunday 22 nd August	Cluny Church 10.00am	Joint Service
Sunday 29 th August	Cluny Church 10.00am	Joint Service
Sunday 5 th September	Monymusk 10.00am	Joint Service
Sunday 12 th September	Monymusk 10.00am	Joint Service
Sunday 19 th September	Monymusk 10.00am	Joint Service
Sunday 26 th September	Monymusk 10.00am	Joint Service
Sunday 3 rd October	Cluny 10.00am	Joint Service
Sunday 10 th October	Cluny 10.00am	Joint Service
Sunday 17 th October	Cluny 10.00am	Joint Service
Sunday 24 th October	Cluny 10.00am	Joint Service
Sunday 31 st October	Monymusk 9.30am Cluny 11.00am	Holy Communion Morning Worship
Sunday 7 th November	Monymusk 10.00am	Joint Service

Sunday 14 th November	Monymusk 9.30am Cluny 11.00am	Remembrance Service
Sunday 21 st November	Monymusk 10.00am	Joint Service
Sunday 28 th November	Monymusk 9.30am Cluny 11.00am	Morning Worship Holy Communion
Sunday 5 th December	Cluny 10.00am	Joint Service
Sunday 12 th December	Cluny 10.00am	Joint Service
Sunday 19 th December	Monymusk 9.30am Cluny 11.00am	Christmas Family Service
Friday 24 th December	Christmas Eve	TBA
Saturday 25 th December	Monymusk 10.30am	Christmas Day Service Joint Service
Sunday 26 th December	Cluny 10.00am	Joint Service
Sunday 2 nd January 2022	Monymusk 10.00am	Joint Service TBC

Meetings

Tuesday 7th September – Cluny Board TBC

Tuesday 14th September - Monymusk KS/Committee TBC

Tuesday 12th October – Cluny KS TBC

Tuesday 9th November – Joint Meeting TBC