

THE MUSTARD SEED

MAGAZINE

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EASTER 2021

FROM THE MANSE

I wonder how we became so separated.

How is it that humanity, which was created to live in relationship, became so separate from not only each other but from God and themselves?

The ancient Hebrews wrestled with this question throughout Genesis. Whether it was Adam and Eve, Cain and Able, Noah, or the Tower of Babel; the struggle for unity was central to the human story. Jesus grappled with this question himself when he prayed that we would be one and Paul spoke about this when he used the metaphor of us being the Body of Christ.

It seems that unity is something humanity has struggled with from the beginning. We have evolved a suspicion/lack of trust of someone else, which has led to us focusing on our differences rather than what makes us one.

I wonder how the Church of Scotland congregations became so divided. We all worship the same God, we belong to the same denomination, but yet working together seemed more plausible outside the Church than in it?

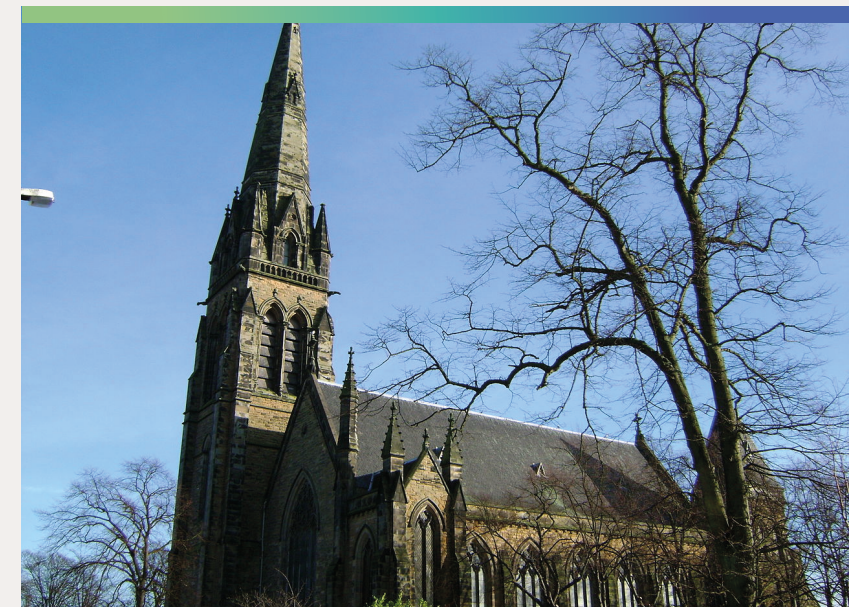
This newsletter marks our first steps towards reclaiming our unity. Abbotshall and St Bryce are working closer together and, in the future, we will be uniting with Bennoch and Linktown as we move a unified church from our separate parts. It is exciting and there is so much possibility, and vision of what could be done in our community, especially being part of a church

in a post-covid world. I personally am eager to see how God is going to use us in the future.

However, we need to remember that unity is an ideal not always a reality. We need to work hard not to be defensive or tribal because it is easy to fall into the old patterns we know. We now need to be open enough to celebrate one another's traditions and years of service whilst having the strength to build something new. If this is going to work, it will take people coming together and breaking down barriers. We need people praying for unity, working for unity, and encouraging unity. Yes, there will be clashes of personalities, we will disagree on many things but if we can look beyond this, we all want the same thing, a church that meets our needs whilst meeting the needs of others in the community.

I am convinced we can do this (I wouldn't be here if I didn't), we can build a community that can adapt to the changing context, thrive in our local area, work with our community, and bring the Kingdom of God amongst us here and now. But it will only work if we do this together, united, and giving of ourselves to build this Body of Christ.

Have a blessed Easter



LOT 95: THE SCOTTISH VIOLIN

*FROM MORAG MICHAEL
SESSION CLERK AT ABBOTSHALL*

A while back I had a text from my son asking: "Who was the string instrument maker in the family?" I replied that it was my great-grandfather, Dugald McColl, father of my paternal "wee" Granny of whom I have previously written. When I asked my son why he wanted to know, it turned out that he had been looking at a sale of string instruments at a London auction house and had noticed that Lot 95 was a Scottish Violin made by one, Dugald McCallum, in Jamestown in 1891. Now, my great-grandfather Dugald McColl lived all his adult life in Jamestown, one of the five villages that make up the Vale of Leven near Loch Lomond, and was active in violin making from about 1880 through to 1910. In fact, one of his later violins, Number 29, made in 1908, had come down to our family and is now played by one of my daughters. My son and I reckoned that Dugald McCallum was, in fact, Dugald McColl and that the label inside the violin had been mis-read, as it didn't seem possible that two Dugald McC's were active at the same time in such a small place.

We decided to bid online for the violin but I was warned to keep quiet and let my son do the bidding and that it would be at the very last minute! If I were to show any interest then the price would go up so, for once, I did as I was told and kept silent, biting my nails as the clock ticked down. When it reached 48 seconds, our bid went in and, happily, we secured the violin.

My son has collected it and when we can eventually meet I will be able to have it restored, and my daughter is delighted that her violin will have a sibling.

All this made me think about the life that Dugald McColl had and why he had the ability to make so many violins. I already knew quite a lot about him, having been researching my family tree for many years, that he was born in the village of Drymen in 1856 and that his mother died two days later. From the census of 1861 I knew that he and his father were living with his paternal grandmother, still in Drymen but, by 1871 his father had remarried, (eventually going on to have another nine sons and a daughter) and Dugald, aged 14 was a grocer's apprentice living as a boarder in Govan in Glasgow. In another ten years Dugald had moved to Jamestown in the Parish of Bonhill, was living with an uncle and working in the Turkey Red Dye Factory in Alexandria that brought so many people to the Vale from all over rural areas of the west of Scotland. Happily, by the next census, I saw that he had registered his occupation as "Insurance Agent and Music Teacher", was married with two children and had his own house, in which he lived for the rest of his life, dying in 1914 at the age of 57.



But where had the craftsman's ability come from? Although Dugald's father was an agricultural labourer, all the rest of his male forebears were artisans including a tailor, a blacksmith, a shoemaker, all in Drymen and a hatter in Glasgow in the 1700's. No doubt the female forebears were skilled as well, though census reports don't acknowledge any of these until the late nineteenth century. Dugald's daughter Mary, my granny, who was a seamstress, had all that from her father but also, from her mother's side, there was a tailor, a gardener, a joiner and a dyke builder from Knapdale.

As well as being a musician, my father, Duncan Macintyre, was very gifted at making things, a skill which has passed down in particular to my younger daughter who shows a flair that her forebears would have been proud of. As for myself, I love mending and repairing things so perhaps I have inherited some of the craft genes too.



COACHING

FOR LIFE IN LOCKDOWN

**RAE
WALKER**

What's helped you get through this crazy and unprecedented time?

For me the answer is several coaching strategies, such as, writing 6 things I'm grateful for each day, reducing how much news I watch or read to limit negativity, daily exercise, speaking to friends, daily meditation, looking for the good news stories, oops sorry - I'm getting ahead of myself, let me explain.

I first encountered coaching in 2001 when I embarked on a Life Coaching training course that I believed at the time would be a career change for me. I guess that wasn't in the bigger plan, as just before completing it, I secured the Headship at Fair Isle Primary School, so, the coaching went on hold, for a bit.

However, coaching was introduced into education and once again I was able to embrace the process that I knew had helped me grow both personally and professionally, and over time I introduced our Leadership Team to coaching.

We had monthly sessions with an outside organisation, which enabled us to “dig deep” and find ways to resolve situations that were challenging for us, personal or professional. The answers are within us, although our life experience and unresolved negative emotions, can layer things up so we can’t see the way forward clearly. The coaching process, through effective questioning, helps us strip away the layers, find our answers and set some tasks and goals to move forward.

I completed the Coaching in Leadership qualification through Fife Council and had the pleasure and privilege of coaching other Headteachers, which benefitted me too, as I learned so much from them, a Win-Win situation.

Fast forward to 2019 and I finally attained a coaching qualification based on the work of Louise Hay and have enjoyed working with a variety of people, supporting them in their journey of self- discovery and self- development.

This last year has been tough for everyone in so many different ways, and on so many levels. We have been asked to live in a way that is completely unnatural and alien to us, to limit who we see, in terms of family and close friends, keep away

from people, no hugs and no travelling, really tough if you have family members further afield. We are naturally sociable creatures and to go into a “lockdown” and “socially distance” from people, is taking away who we are. It’s not surprising our mental health has suffered as a result of this.



I have had to “walk my coaching talk” this past year and work hard to keep myself on track, and on some days not successfully. I delved into the “toolkit” of resources I received on my training, to help keep me calmer, more focussed and reduce my anxiety. In addition to those I mentioned early on, I embraced Zoom, well, that’s stretching it a bit, but I realise its value in keeping people connected and have used it, a lot!! I subscribed to positive, uplifting websites, rediscovered my love of jigsaws and reading and one of the most important tasks, has

been journaling, to really explore how I have been feeling. Ongoing self- reflection is a big part of coaching, and I have had a few coaching sessions myself, which has allowed me to share what has come up, and find ways to deal with it and grow.

I can honestly say without the coaching tools, I’m not sure how I would have coped. Despite these, I’ve still had some down days, but working through them has given me a deeper understanding of myself and others.

I was delighted to respond to Isobel Greenaway’s (co-editor) request to write something about coaching and share it’s benefits. I pray that the light at the end of the tunnel is coming ever closer and we can meet, talk and HUG soon.

Rae Walker

LOCKDOWN LEARNING



The phrase “Every day’s a learning day” has come to mean so much more to me over this past year. As a primary school teacher (and parent), online learning has taken on a whole new meaning and has now become the new norm! Who could have predicted that our everyday vocabulary would expand to include phrases such as: “I have a Teams meeting at 9am”, or “Can you Zoom later?”, and not forgetting of course, “You’re on mute”!

This time last year, things took a new and unusual turn when our learning went online and became a whole new experience; one which we didn’t really have time to prepare for. Teachers, pupils and parents alike were suddenly faced with new challenges and a steep learning curve, one which I think we faced head-on and tackled with determination.

Like so many other teachers I know, I missed being in the classroom and interacting with the children. However, I quickly saw that our children were showing such resilience and adaptability and were in fact embracing this new way of learning! I knew I had to look for new and innovative ways to keep them engaged and involved in their learning, which in turn kept me motivated and engaged!

I have felt encouraged and supported by colleagues who have gone out of their way to meet the challenges we have encountered in a positive way. As professionals we have learned to work with genuine care and concern for each others’ well-being while also supporting our pupils to the best of our abilities. Working online has not made me feel isolated: indeed it has shown me how important the support of family, friends and colleagues is and I am so thankful for that.

BY
MAURA
LEE

LOCKDOWN LEARNING



Teaching has never been easy but all that changed last year March when a lockdown was announced and schools closed for the majority of pupils. Of course this meant parents (myself a parent of two boys – Keir age 6 and Jamie age 9) also changed as I had to work at home and home-school too.

I was the person in school who was clearly in denial about any sort of lockdown happening. A snow day is a rare happening so when a lockdown was announced I fully expected it to last 3 weeks maximum. I'd never heard of the term 'key-worker' and was secretly quite pleased I was part of this chosen group along with supermarket workers, hospital staff, etc. All teaching went online overnight although we were told we would also have to work in our local hub school too, teaching the key-worker's children at certain times.

BY
**SHIRLEY
McARTHUR**

I think we started out okay last March, all the staff at school were very supportive of each other and we gave each other great ideas and there was lots of collaboration about tasks to send out. We also had the Easter Holidays to break it up a little. By May we were in the swing of things and enjoyed a few days in school away from home to break up the days. We sent out 16 tasks per week and very much worked together to do this. Then the children/parents sent it back for marking and feedback.



January this year arrived, perhaps it was the darker days and I was again taken by surprise about schools closing, but it felt like a real blow to be again working online. This time we would work at home for one week then be in school with the keyworker's children the following week. But we still had to do all of the online learning too. It was a

stressful few weeks and the days were very long. Teachers also made recorded lessons this time so the workload was very much increased. We sent out work daily and received it daily too. I longed to be back at school, no matter the risk, as

I did find the workload overwhelming for a while.

My own children in the previous lockdown had their dad at home too. This time around he was at work daily (he works at Rosyth Dockyard) and is also classed as a key-worker. So I did the home-schooling and the online teaching alone! It was hectic. There were definitely times when my own children didn't like their teacher (me) very much!

I did eventually settle into work this time around and Jamie and Keir did too. They both attended school when I did so there was that worry that one of us might catch Covid as it seemed much more of a threat this time too. We had a daily routine too and although my days were really long theirs were not and they enjoyed nice activities in the afternoons. They have both become brilliant at drawing and all that Christmas Lego was built and rebuilt in no time!

I began enjoying making the teaching videos for my class and I relaxed into chatting with them daily in a morning message about the snow or the weather. It was great seeing them send me back videos and photos of their learning and how they were really thriving at home. There were only 3-4 pieces of work sent out daily but I have a class of 25 five year olds. So they returned 100+ things in a day which needed looked at and feedback on. It was really hard work.

We have now been back in school for three weeks. Jamie is in Primary 5 and starting back as normal now. He's been in the key-worker's bubble while Keir and I have been in our regular classes. We are all hoping this is it and no more lockdowns as it's been very hard in lots of ways on us all.

We've certainly grown as a family and what has been asked of us over the past year. There have been some really tough days when no one wanted to do anything but we've also had some really great times together. We are very mindful it's not over yet however and who knows what could happen in the future.

PASTORAL CARE

SPRING IS HERE

Winter seemed so long as we waited for restrictions to be relaxed and some kind of release from the strange world that we all had found ourselves in. A little of that has happened but nothing is "as it used to be"

How different to that was the fact that Spring arrived at the normal time - just as it always does! It was exciting to see the first snowdrops appear fresh and brilliant white and such a contrast to the colour of the drab earth and to the dispirited feelings that were around.

I learned a couple of weeks ago that the French word for Snowdrops is "perce-neige" which translates as "pierce- the - snow" which they certainly did this year! The world we live in IS still the same and unbelievably wonderful.

Unfortunately, Pastoral Care cannot be back to normal at the moment. We are trying to keep contact and do a few things in different ways keeping, of course, within the COVID restrictions. Our main message has to be that we are at the end of a phone and would be pleased to be contacted if we can be of any help at all - however big or small the issue.

So Spring IS here and God speaks to us through the vulnerability and resilience of the snowdrop. It's now Palm Sunday and Easter Sunday is on the horizon with all the the hope of the Risen Jesus and the promise of new beginnings.

Dorothy Murray
Convener for St Bryce Kirk