



**Abbey Church
and
Dirleton Kirk News
August/September 2021**

**Minister:
Rev. Dr David J Graham, BSc,**

**Sunday Morning Worship
at**

**9.30 am (until 10.20)
Dirleton Kirk**

**10.30am (Until 11.30)
Abbey Church**

Come along. All welcome.

Pre booking still required

Wednesdays 10am

Half Hour Prayer Service



Dear Dirleton & Abbey Friends,

The Draft Presbytery Plan

On June 7th, representatives of Presbytery met with our joint Kirk Sessions to advise us of the proposed Presbytery Plan. The Presbytery itself met on 24th June and the draft plan was tabled for future discussion and agreement.

The plan is a result of the General Assembly's national plan, and is based on allocating a certain number of Ministry posts to each Presbytery (25 for ours). It takes no account of local missional needs, nor of the pastoral needs and demands in any parish, nor it seems of the strength- in worship, mission or giving- of individual congregations.

I have copied the details of the plan, so far as they affect our congregations, after this letter, below. As your Minister, I have several major concerns about it.

Staffing.

Given that there is going to be such a shortage of ministers, why are decisions being made which will force the hand of many ministers to either move or retire? Ministers are either needed or they are not; the plan is not clear about that. And where are all these part-time, unpaid people going to be found to fill in the gaps? I have serious reservations about the availability of people for this, as well as the quality of their training and experience.

Buildings.

There seems to be a quite arbitrary decision to get rid of our buildings which are all well maintained and essential to our worship and mission. Presbytery has not

even done an assessment of them. The General Assembly's mantra is '*well-equipped spaces in the right places*', and that's precisely what we have in Dirleton and Abbey, thanks to our faithful property committees and your generous giving over the years. So why dispose of them?

Pastoral Care.

This is perhaps my most serious concern of all. In my years as Minister here, I have conducted more than 900 funerals, over 200 weddings, and over 200 baptisms. I wonder what 'superman/woman' will be able to continue this on a 0.25 (25%) contract? They will either do nothing else, or - as I fear - sink under the pastoral demands, and the pastoral care of our congregations will just disappear. That would be tragic.

Although it has already been a long time in discussion, the details of it came as a bolt from the blue on June 7th. The details of it had not been revealed previously, and the goalposts had been moved considerably since I had a discussion with other local parties on April 22nd. It is not just the content of the plan which leaves a lot to be desired, but also the way in which it has been communicated to us.

With our Session Clerks, I am currently preparing a response to the Presbytery. We will of course keep you as fully informed as possible.

If you have views on this, please make them known, either to ourselves, or directly to the Presbytery.

Yours prayerfully, Your Minister,
David (with the full support of Robert Burgon and Keith Stewart, Session Clerks)

Lothian Presbytery Plan, June 2021

(communicated to our Kirk Sessions on 7th June 2021)

North Berwick & Dirleton, Aberlady & Gullane:

Local discussions need held to determine whether there should be a union in North Berwick or whether Abbey should enter into Guardianship of Presbytery with a Lay Pastor or Ordained local Minister. It is envisaged that Gullane and Aberlady would also enter into the Guardianship of presbytery with a Lay Pastor or Ordained local Minister, and the development of a parish grouping in the area needs explored.

If a union in North Berwick is agreed an alternative option would be to appoint a part-time minister (0.5FTE) in the grouping to work alongside a full time parish minister.

Ministry: A full time parish minister in North Berwick and either two OLM/Lay Pastors or a part-time ministry position (0.5 FTE.) * see footnote below*

Buildings: St Andrew Blackadder buildings to be retained. Abbey retained if decision is made to continue with two churches in North Berwick. Aberlady hall and stables, Gullane Church & hall to be retained. Dirleton church but not hall to be retained. Manse of Abbey to be sold or both Gullane and Abbey manses sold if not required.

Timing of changes: The ministers at St Andrews (!) Blackadder and Abbey are both on unrestricted tenure so changes cannot be made without their agreement or until they leave. It is hoped that discussions about this might be started and moves made towards this while they remain in post.

**the 0.5 would be shared equally between Abbey & Dirleton, and Aberlady & Gullane, so our share would be 0.25 ie a quarter of a ministry post.*

A recent letter in a well-known national newspaper

It was written in response to an editorial entitled 'Out-of-touch bishops are destroying an important element of village life'. Although it comes from a different church context to ours, it applies equally well here.

'Sir - Villagers want parish church to be there for them - not just for christenings, weddings and funerals. Some who rarely attend a service contribute to church funds . . . and enjoy attending church events.

We, in turn, encourage people when they move to the village or when, for example, they are bereaved and need solace, to come to our church.

Our rector retires shortly and is not to be replaced.

We will be left with two part-time clergy in the benefice on whom will be put a totally unreasonable workload.

The Church [of England] must reduce bureaucracy and administrative costs, concentrate on funding rural as well as urban clergy, encourage diversity of worship and build on what exists.

We volunteers, who keep churches going from day to day, are not being listened to by people in ivory towers with little experience of our world.'

Another interesting and provocative response comes from Giles Fraser, a broadcaster and Vicar in London:

[https://unherd.com/2021/07/the-church-is-abandoning-its-flock/?](https://unherd.com/2021/07/the-church-is-abandoning-its-flock/?fbclid=IwAROV9CSaRDIk4K1JTFucsrX9slbvzmLDvFb0xSOoJhkgwGeOVu3FhRmCn0o)

[fbclid=IwAROV9CSaRDIk4K1JTFucsrX9slbvzmLDvFb0xSOoJhkgwGeOVu3FhRmCn0o](https://unherd.com/2021/07/the-church-is-abandoning-its-flock/?fbclid=IwAROV9CSaRDIk4K1JTFucsrX9slbvzmLDvFb0xSOoJhkgwGeOVu3FhRmCn0o)

ABBHEY CHURCH
KIRK SESSION
ROBERT BURGON

As you will all understand from David Graham's opening article in this Newsletter, the meeting of the Kirk Session which took place on 7 June 2021 was an uncomfortable experience. Representatives of the Presbytery's Strategic Planning and Mission Committee attended to share their proposals which would have serious implications for the future of Abbey and Dirleton as congregations. In response to an earlier proposal, the Abbey Kirk Session had made a detailed submission to Presbytery (in June 2020) demonstrating why we felt that we met the criteria for vibrant, worshipping congregations which Presbytery had laid down. We received no response to that submission and no explanation as to why our future is now under threat. As David has indicated, we plan to challenge the detail of what is being proposed. Discussion on this issue- and our response- will form a major part of the agenda for the next Kirk Session meeting on 9 August 2021.

On a more positive note, we have much to give thanks for in our congregational life. Numbers attending Sunday services have continued to be good and the return of congregational singing (even behind masks) has been warmly welcomed. It is really encouraging to see more folk back in church- some of whom haven't felt able to attend since March 2020. Having said that, we still

have space and anticipate that we will be able to accommodate far more if the current 2-metre distancing rule is reduced to 1-metre (as anticipated). We have created a safe environment in which people can come together in fellowship and worship and we pray that many more will take that first step back over the doorstep in the coming weeks.

In more "normal" times, our premises were well-used (sometimes 7 days of the week) by both congregational and community organisations. Over the last few months, we have been pleased to see the return of several of the external groups who have used our halls. Our Super Sunday Club has had several Sunday morning meetings and arranged a very happy church picnic in the Lodge Grounds. The Thursday morning Little Nippers recommenced and regularly filled all the places which were available for pre-school children and their parents/carers. Plans are now in hand for several of our other congregational groups to recommence their activities in the autumn. One of these will be the new Tuesday Afternoon Group (TAG) which was formerly known as The Guild, and you can read about their plans elsewhere in this Newsletter. We give thanks for the enthusiastic way in which the TAG Support Group have made plans for the year ahead.

We are sorry to lose the services of one of our younger elders, Gregor Penman, who has recently moved from North Berwick to Edinburgh. Gregor has been involved in many aspects of the life of the congregation, including his role as Co-Convenor of the Outreach

Committee, member of the Choir, a regular member of the projection rota and our key person for publicity. Although we are sorry to lose him, we are very pleased that Gregor has agreed to continue to lead our weekly Zoom prayer sessions on a Sunday evening. We are grateful for all that Gregor has done for Abbey Church over the years. We wish him well in his future and pray that another congregation will soon be enriched by his skills, enthusiasm and witness.

World Church Committee

Thank you to everyone who contributed to our creative fundraising ideas for Christian Aid this year. The planning for this starts many months in advance and with the uncertainty of which level of Covid restrictions we would be working within, we needed some alternative ideas to our usual menu of events. Abbey and Dirleton World Church Committee came up with a Bake sale held in Abbey grounds, a photography competition, and a market stall at Dirleton Green. We also offered an all churches sponsored 300000 steps event but that one proved a bit too ambitious for the times!

These events raised over £3000 for Christian Aid, a princely sum when you pause to think how far that money can reach to help those most in need around the world.

We couldn't have done it without our wonderful and willing volunteers. Grateful thanks to you all.

Yolanda Strachan



North Berwick
and District
Christian Aid



Junior winner:
Rosie Buchanan



Adult winner:
Stephen Droop

To see all the entries, visit our Facebook page:
www.facebook.com/christianaidnorthberwick

Adult runner-up:
Ellen Donachie



Junior runner-up:
Emma Forsyth



Life and Music

The first in an occasional series in which people reflect on music which has been, and is, important to them.

Jim Dickson, organist, Dirleton

*The Lord's my Shepherd, I'll not want
In pastures green He leadeth me*

Jim writes:-

Music has always played a major role in my life, and, especially, in the leading of worship from the organ in the nine churches I have had the pleasure of working in.

One of the big moments came when I was invited to play for the Edinburgh Society of Organists at St. Paul's and St. George's, Edinburgh.

I had just gained the Licentiate'ship of Trinity College, London, in Organ Performance, and in my most recent repertoire were Bach's Organ Sonata No. 6, <https://youtu.be/r9QP4Xxh3nY> and Mendelssohn's Organ Sonata No. 1 <https://youtu.be/OM4MMW-eVx4> based on the Chorale- 'What e'er God Wills is Best Always'.

Around this time I was suffering (for over a year) with a slipped disc. I had decided to go into full time School music teaching, having resigned after 19 years as a design draughtsman on heavy power transformers, in the Leith firm of Parsons Peebles.

A successful operation after hospitalisation resulted

in an appointment to a post at Portobello High School, and, soon after, promotion to Principal Teacher of Music at Ross High School, Tranent.

There followed performing musicals with orchestras; Haydn 'The Creation' <https://youtu.be/I07oRR4u-rk> , Rossini 'Stabat Mater' <https://youtu.be/lx79MjEGteo> , as well as numerous Messiahs and Faure's Requiems <https://youtu.be/UnilUPXmipM> ; after I had been building up various Chorale Societies during my organ appointments.

As a church organist at Polwarth Church, my first service back after my operation was a wedding, and I recall, while playing 'The Lord's my Shepherd', <https://youtu.be/uUh5bjQj3VE> that I couldn't keep back tears of gratitude, resulting from the words of the third verse, *and me to walk doth make.*

I had been suffering for over a year, and had gone through the treatments of lying on flat boards, bed rest, manipulations: and the prospect of limited movement was on the horizon (this was fifty years ago)-but, miraculously, I was cured through the skill of the surgeons- truly a miracle.

Albert Schweitzer has written *-Music is not a mere pastime, but a message of hope from God.* Over the past 71 years, as an organist, I have tried to keep this foremost in my playing, and hopefully reinforced the faith of the worshippers.

Having recently been involved with the restoration of the Dirleton organ, the music I have acquired through performances of the past is again at my fingertips,

with the new Trumpet, Diapason, Principal and Celeste Stops.

The Bach Toccata and Fugue in D Minor <https://youtu.be/Nnuq9PXbywA> , Widor Toccata <https://youtu.be/9EARLp9YXJg> ; numerous trumpet tunes; and the music of Elgar, Vaughan Williams and the like; and of course the more recent music from films, Ennio Morricone included, are all my favourites.

*Goodness and mercy all my life
Shall surely follow me,
And in God's house for evermore
My dwelling place shall be.*

Jim.



DIRLETON KIRK
KIRK SESSION
KEITH STEWART

The Minister sets out much of the detail of the Presbytery Plan elsewhere in this Newsletter. Thanks to all who attended and participated in the meeting with the representatives of Presbytery which discussed this. I doubt whether anyone found the meeting anything other than dispiriting.

The impression conveyed was that the priority was implementation of the plan, rather than identifying the strengths of individual congregations like ours and our twin at Abbey, and using these as the foundation upon which to build the church around. There is also considerably vagueness about how new worshipping communities will come to be established. There is a fair amount of detail offered in relation to the way in which existing, successful, churches like ourselves and Abbey are to have fewer resources; about the new worshipping communities which are supposed to come into being elsewhere, there are little more than aspirational remarks.

I know that many of us have profound concerns about the plan and its implications. For example, people have expressed anxiety about what is to happen to what might loosely be termed the 'estate' at Dirleton: the church, the hall, and the Session House. No doubt many of those concerns derived directly from the remarks in the plan about the intention that the church

should be retained, and the church hall sold. These remarks seem to underline the provisional nature of the plan at this stage. No explanation is given to whether or not this is feasible, let alone desirable; no appreciation is given as to the impact which the removal of the only such 'public' building in the village available for use by groups and societies would have, not only on us, as a congregation, but upon the wider community in the village and the parish.

So it is important to emphasise that it we will be making representations, to identify the flaws in the plan, and thus to demonstrate that however laudable may be its objectives, in relation to Dirleton and Abbey, what it proposes is wrong. Our arguments are already in preparation.

In this short note I have referred so far only to the 'estate': the plan has grave implications for the pastoral workloads of dedicated, busy clergy, such as serve us in Dirleton. The troubling aspects of that, for the conduct of Christian mission here, and throughout the country, are touched upon elsewhere. Again, we will be arguing that the approach which Presbytery currently proposes is flawed.

It is a matter of regret that, at our meeting, there was no acknowledgment or engagement by Presbytery with the thorough and well-developed written submissions which were put forward by Abbey and Dirleton for consideration, to which Robert refers in his note in this newsletter. Those arguments have not been addressed- they have not been refuted- they have

not gone away. We will engage prayerfully with the proposals now presented by Presbytery, and make them anew.

oOo

The country at large continues to emerge, slowly and cautiously, from the restrictions imposed by coronavirus. At our Kirk Session meeting on 9th June, we noted that an Open Doors event is to take place on 25th and 26th September, on which buildings will be opened to visitors. We have for so long been used to having the Kirk open during the day for private prayer and for visitors, that we have to be reminded that this was stopped with the arrival of the public health restrictions. Hopefully we will soon be able to revert to having the church open during the day as before. We are also looking at how best to welcome visitors during Open Doors.

Our thanks are due to the Fabric Committee which has begun the process of engaging with architects, structural engineers and quantity surveyors, in order to take some necessary steps to securing the structure of the church, ensuring that it is in good shape to serve the community for the next four hundred years, and beyond, as it has served over the last four hundred years. Proposals for carrying the work forward will be discussed at the next Kirk Session.

Thanks in particular to Neil Walkingshaw, who is stepping down from the committee after giving much of his time and skill to its work. Neil's practical skills have of course helped us in all sorts of ways, from the

installation of the Christmas tree to the construction of a framed house for the Sunday School to erect as part of one of our charitable campaigns a few years ago, entitled 'Let us Build a House'. It has of course proved sturdy enough to withstand regular re-use, serving variously as caves in which Biblical characters shelter and the Stable in which the Nativity takes place!

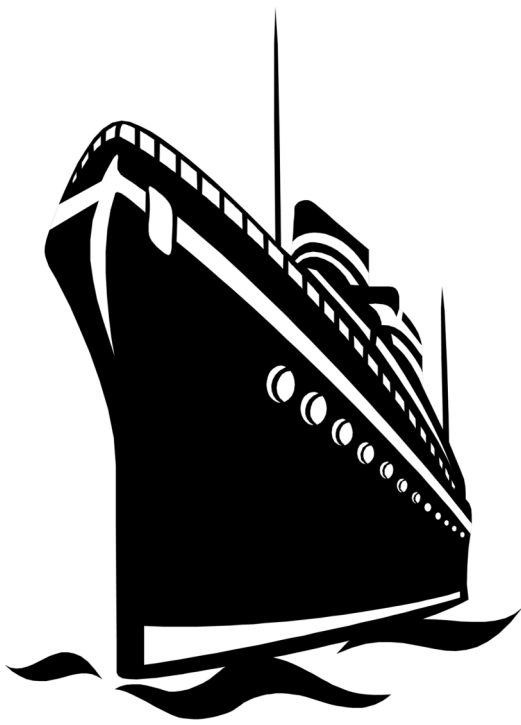
Thanks also to Ian Lennox who is coming onto the Fabric Committee: and to all who give freely of their energy and talents to help in our work.

Peter Kimber is one such, who has not stinted in serving in all sorts of ways, a source of encouragement and support, a leader in worship as well as in other parts of the life of our church. He has decided to step aside from preaching, which he has done so well for us, as well as in other churches- just a small part of his service to God here, and elsewhere. So his valedictory sermon at Dirleton on 27th June was an occasion for mixed feelings, of regret, but most of all gratitude.

In the same way, Patsy Pitkeathly's decision to step back from the pastoral requirements of the eldership, recorded at the Kirk Session, is an occasion for us to give thanks for all her service and encouragement, for her involvement in many aspects of church life, especially in the wider community.

Good News!
REGAL will re-launch soon
Speakers and dates are being confirmed as we go to
press.
See you there!
As aye
Bob

SET SAIL WITH REGAL



Every month
In Abbey Hall
At 12 midday

SOUP AND SANDWICH LUNCH

ALL WELCOME

Re-launches October

DON'T MISS THE BOAT!

TAG - Tuesday Afternoon Group

This group aims to bring a new approach to what used to be called the Guild in Abbey Church. The meetings will be more informal with a mix of speakers and social get togethers.

The group will still be affiliated to The Church of Scotland Guild and will support their three - year project plan. The project supported by Abbey this year is entitled "Home for Good".

All being well, our first meeting of **TAG** will be on **Tuesday 28th September** at **12:30** in the church hall and it will take the form of a bring your own picnic lunch. Coffee and tea will be provided. This is a good opportunity to catch up with each other after so many months apart.

Our meetings will then be on a fortnightly basis starting at 2:00 and finishing by 3:30 to allow folk to keep within the street's parking restrictions.

The annual subscription will be £15 for those who wish to be regular attenders. £12 will go to the Church of Scotland Guild and £3 to our own funds. But it goes without saying that folk are welcome to join us occasionally without having to pay a subscription.

Diary Dates

28th September "Good to See You Again" 12:30 -
Picnic lunch

12th October - Rev. Dr. David Graham

26th October - "Plants of the Bible" - Dr. Libby
Morris

So please, come and invite a friend. Tag along and
give this group a try!

TAG Support Group

WALT (Women Are Learning Together)

If there is still interest in this study group then it is
hoped to hold it again on the first Monday of every
month, starting in October. It will be held in Abbey
Hall from 2:00 to 3:00.

If you would like to join this group of women who are
interested in looking at women in the Bible in a relaxed
atmosphere then please come along.

Monday 4th October - Study on the Old Testament
book of Ruth.

Sheila Burgon

Church Services (nearly) Back To Normal

With the move of the whole of Scotland to Level 0 of the Coronavirus restrictions on 19 July 2021, Sunday services in both Dirleton Kirk and Abbey Church have moved a considerable step closer to the format to that which we enjoyed before March 2020.

Social distancing in church has now moved from 2 metres to 1 metre which allows us to welcome many more people than has been the case since churches were first permitted to reopen. In fact, our capacity is now much closer to the size of congregation which we used to see before the first lockdown.

We have been permitted to sing since early June and this change has made a considerable difference to the whole experience of worship (even although we still have to sing with our masks on).

While we have been pleased to see many folk in church Sunday by Sunday, we are aware that there are still quite a few who have not yet felt able to come to a service. We hope that the changes which have been permitted in recent weeks might attract more members of our congregations (and indeed visitors) to come along and join in our weekly act of worship and fellowship.

Booking through the church office is still available, although is not compulsory. We are required to keep details of those who attend our services and pre-booking simply avoids unnecessary queues at the church doors while contact details are recorded. If you wake up on Sunday morning and haven't booked to attend that day, do not let this keep you back. We have space and you will be made most welcome.

Harvest Offerings To Support Bees Abroad

Harvest Thanksgiving this year will be celebrated in our churches on Sunday 26 September, and it has been decided that our offerings for harvest will support the charity Bees Abroad (which has the aim of reducing poverty through beekeeping).

We have agreed with the charity that our offerings will support a project in Uganda called Rwenzori Rural Talent which is located in the far west of the country in the foothills of the Rwenzori mountains which form the border with the Democratic Republic of Congo. The area is equatorial and well suited to beekeeping. The project will provide members of the community with beekeeping equipment, training and support and it is hoped that this will lead to:

- increased household income
- children studying in good schools
- better health
- the construction of good houses.

As in previous years, members of both congregations will be encouraged to save their loose change during the month of September (appropriate collection jars will be available in church from the end of August) and bring their jars to church on Harvest Thanksgiving Sunday. Notes and cheques will also be welcomed!

Last year the coronavirus restrictions prevented us from arranging our usual harvest offerings and we trust that in 2021 we will be able to provide much needed support to this project.



Bees Abroad

Relieving Poverty through Beekeeping

Please have a look at our website

<https://www.abbeychurch.org.uk/>

To get information of all the events organised by
Abbey Church and Dirleton Kirk.

Sunday Services, prayer meetings, bible classes, TAG
REGAL, WALT, Alpha, Little Nippers, The Voice Pro-
ject, to mention but a few.

We have many other groups using our church halls,
Physiotherapy Plus,
pilates classes, Jo Jingles, fitness classes, The Drama
Mill, The Brownies, Dunedin Dance

**Hall Hire is limited in line with current government
Covid-19 restrictions**

If you are interested in hiring our halls on a regular
basis or for a 'one off' event please get in touch with
Abbey Church office on 01620 892800 or
abbeychurch@abbeychurch.co.uk



Church Register

Weddings

5.6.21 Benjamin Williams and Vanessa Brownlie
19.6.21 Douglas Walker and Ashley-Jane Kitchen
26.6.21 Andrew Han and Diana Keeling

Funerals

5.6.21 Andrew Brown

Pastoral Visits

The Minister and Pastoral Assistant are happy to make contact with church members who are ill, either at home or in hospital. This information should be given to the Minister (890800) or via the Church Office (892800). Thank you.

For pastoral visiting, it would also be helpful to have a **mobile number**, the number of a next of kin, and your 'Sunday' name- hospitals use your official name, as it can be confusing when making contact if you're known by something different! And the ward number too, please.

Abbey Church,
116 High Street, (at Church Road)
North Berwick

Church Office: 01620 892800

abbeychurch@abbeychurch.co.uk

*Office open Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday and Friday
10am until 1pm*

Newsletters

The next newsletter will cover October/November 2021. The deadline for submitting articles is Tuesday 14th September 2021. Please send to Abbey Church Office.

Abbeychurch.org.uk

Like us on Facebook: Abbey Church, North Berwick & Dirleton Kirk



Abbey Church, North Berwick (Church of Scotland)

Scottish Charity No. SCO 04761—CCL51436