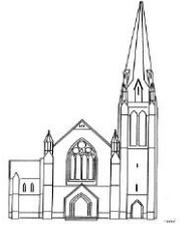




THE CHURCH OF SCOTLAND
NORTH PARISH CHURCH, GIRVAN Ayrshire.



EASTER NEWSLETTER

Easter Newsletter for Girvan North.

"*Good Friday*" by Christine Rossetti was published in her 1866 collection "*The Prince's Progress and Other Poems*". Let me share her words with you.

Am I a stone and not a sheep,
That I can stand, O Christ, beneath thy cross,
To number drop by drop Thy blood's slow loss,
And yet not weep?
Not so those women loved
Who with exceeding grief lamented Thee?
Not so fallen Peter, weeping bitterly.
Not so the thief was moved.
Not so the Sun and Moon
Which hid their faces in a starless sky.
A horror of great darkness at broad noon –
I, only I.
Yet give not o'er,
But seek Thy sheep, true shepherd of the flock.
Greater than Moses, turn and look once more
And smite a rock.

What does this poem say about Christine Rossetti's faith with regard to Jesus Christ, and what does it say about our own faith? She regrets that she does not weep as Jesus Christ is crucified, and His blood is shed. She seems to behave more like a "stone" rather than a "sheep". This contrasts with the women who mourned their Saviour's death, or the leading disciple, Peter, who wept bitterly. Even one of the two thieves was reduced to tears as he recognised the sacrifice that Jesus Christ had made for the world. Do we recognise that sacrifice, or are we as unmoved as Rossetti was?

Even the sun and moon have been changed by the Crucifixion since they both vanish from sight as if they have been moved by their grief. Despite it being noon the sky turns black. It is only Rossetti who is not moved by this appalling spectacle. She so wishes that she were moved. She still wants to be connected to the power of Jesus' sacrifice. She is the lost sheep and Christ is the shepherd. Just as Moses struck a rock and water flowed from it, if Christ performed a similar miracle, a person who was greater than Moses, then Rossetti would believe.

Even though Rossetti understands what Christianity means, she fails to recognise its power. Although she has seen Jesus' crucifixion many times visually represented in paintings and read about it throughout the Gospel narrative, this still has not caused her to weep. The question then would be: what would cause her to weep? She struggles to let her emotions flow. I am sure we have all wept during the course of 2020, as the pandemic struck us with such ferocity, but this emotion has not stopped us from responding responsibly and practically to combat it.

Rossetti begins her poem and says she is not willing to be moved – like a stone – and unlike a sheep who would be prepared to follow wherever its shepherd went. This image of a stone is again reconsidered when we think of Peter, Jesus Christ's "rock" where Jesus built His church. The image of the rock persists: If Jesus produces water from such a rock this is what would convert Rossetti to Christianity. Are we, like Rossetti, similarly wanting more and more amazing miracles from Jesus to convince us He is indeed the Messiah? Are the miracles contained in the Bible not enough, never mind the remarkable event of the Resurrection? As stunning a writer as Rossetti was, she lacks the faith which others profess to have. Yes, we can admire her honesty, but she still wants to have that faith. Are we, like Rossetti, lacking in our own faith and unmoved by the events which Christ experienced on the Cross? It is not about intellectualising Christ's Crucifixion, and His Resurrection, but having the faith to believe this event actually did happen. Millions of Christians know this to be true, but faith is so much more of a personal experience. Hopefully, reading the deliberations which Rossetti has gone through in her poetry to know where she was with her faith, inspires us, through all the doubts that we might have, to understand where our own faith is. In this way, we are hopefully moved by Jesus' sacrifice on the Cross but comforted that, through all the tears, we can wake up to a beautiful new dawn on Easter Sunday. Jesus Christ has overcome death to experience new life. We too can experience our own resurrection if we believe, to enjoy eternal life. Hopefully, we believe. As churches have been permitted to open their doors again, to congregations for public Worship, let us be immensely grateful for the supreme sacrifice which Jesus made for us all. Let me end with these stirring words from Galatians 2:20 – "I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me". Christ lives in every believer's heart.

Best wishes, Glenn.

The good news! The Church is opening again on Sunday 28th March, but with just 50 members. The Kirk Session continues to meet every month with Zoom. The South Carrick Mission Group are discussing the way forward, but nothing will happen until after the General Assembly in May.

Thanks to Glenn for all his online services during the lockdown and even when the Church was open for the few months last year – it is much appreciated.

Milestone are having an online Service on Good Friday and Glenn is happy to be involved. Rev. E Ogston is hoping to have some online services during Holy Week.

Hope you are all keeping well. Stay safe – God Bless. Ian Fitzsimmons Session Team.

Treasurer's Report:

The Receipts and Payments Accounts for 2020 have been finalised, examined by an Independent Examiner, approved by the Kirk Session and signed copies sent to Ayr Presbytery and to Church of Scotland in Edinburgh. When approved by Ayr Presbytery, a signed copy will be sent to OSCR (Office of Scottish Charity Regulator) to be examined. I have attached a summary of our income and expenditure in 2020. If you would like a full copy of the accounts, please get in touch by phone 713059 or by e mail MargaretWB43@gmail.com and I will be happy to send you a full copy.

2020 was a very difficult year for everyone because of the pandemic. Our church was closed for 27 weeks with no income from hall lets, fundraising, open plate or funerals. The attached sheet will show the effect this had on our income for 2020.

However I am pleased to report that even when the church was closed, many faithful members sent their offerings to me by Bank Standing Order, cheques or cash in FWO envelopes and I thank them most sincerely for that. As you will see in the attached sheet, we were able to keep our expenditure considerably down compared to 2019. As a result our assets in 2020 were reduced by just over £4000 which, under the circumstances, was considered by the Kirk Session to be an achievement.

However it takes an average of over £5000 per month to cover ongoing costs. Our church has already been closed for 12 weeks in 2021 with income much reduced. I would encourage members to continue to give as generously as they did last year to try to make up the loss of income from fundraising, hall lets etc. Your generous offerings are very much appreciated by the Kirk Session.

I am delighted that Girvan North is going to open again on 28th March with maximum of 50 people. I am hoping it won't be much longer after that until we are able to open fully, with hymn singing and fellowship. These are things we have all been missing and are looking forward to.

In the mean time you can send your offering to me at 1 Rodney Drive, KA26 9DZ or pay it directly into the bank or set up a Bank Standing Order. (Contact me for details)

With the help of the lockdown and the vaccines I hope 2021 is going to be a better, happier healthier year for us all. Your support to Girvan North through these challenging times is very much appreciated.

I wish you all a Happy Easter, hopefully the start of brighter, safer times.

God Bless.

Girvan North Parish Church Accounts 2020

<u>Income</u>	<u>2020</u>	<u>2019</u>
FWO	16,729	26,275
Gift Aid Donations	29,330	21,026
Other donations	4,700	4785
Tax Reclaimed	8836	9673
Open Plate	1587	4521
Fundraising	340	4371
Hall Rent	562	4214
Wednesday Break	148	767
Church Newsletters	183	740
Funerals	985	1695
Special Collections	645	2240
Bank Interest	282	399
Club Income	447	767
Refunds	682	1498
Other		863
Total Income 2020	65456	Total Income 2019 83834

<u>Expenditure</u>	<u>2020</u>	<u>2019</u>
Ministries and Missions	32,570	19,165
Presbytery Dues	0	1446
Locum Travel	939	4661
Pulpit Supply	74	308
Salaries	15,403	18,783
Fabric Repairs & Maintenance	2012	5376
Council Tax	637	1337
Insurance	4836	5319
Heat & Light (church & manse)	6922	6395
BT, & Office Expenses	990	1310
Organ	619	9613
Printing and Stationary	1849	1917
FWO envelopes	341	341
Miscellaneous	2470	5734
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Total Expenditure 2020	69,662	Total Expenditure 2019
		81705

Topics for Prayer

1 The Leprosy Mission – Mozambique

A violent insurgency has displaced hundreds of thousands of people including many affected by leprosy. Pray that God would bring about peace and transformation and that the local church would rise up and shine as they reach out to refugees and people in need.

2 Mission Aviation Fellowship

Pray for a place MAF serves where home is a place of violence and danger rather than a haven of safety and peace. In the Democratic Republic of Congo we recently flew women who had been victims of violence and attacks from the local militia. Pray that an increasing number of vulnerable people will be helped as MAF enables its partners to reach isolated and neglected areas.

3 Open Doors – Syria

It is 10 years since the start of Syria's devastating civil war which has killed half a million people and displaced over 12 million. Ask God to bring this terrible war to an end and that His name would be exalted in Syria and across the whole world.

4 At this time of so many conflicting issues and problems let us be still before God and drink in the beauty and glory of Spring and new life and give thanks to the God of creation.

Pray for those needing strength - the N.H.S. staff, carers, parents home schooling children while holding down a job and keeping the household going, paramedics

and delivery drivers working long hours, and those recovering from serious illness. Ask for comfort for all who have been bereaved and those who suffer from depression. Ask for wisdom for all our leaders in government. Give thanks and pray for those who through online services have heard and embraced the Gospel.

Pray for our pastors and presbyteries as they seek the way forward for today's Church. Remember our local church situation and ask God to grant a solution soon.

As Easter services take place, pray that the Holy Spirit will breathe new life into our worship and that we will humbly give thanks for our Lord's loving sacrifice at Calgary for each one of us and then we can meet the Risen Lord with great joy on Easter Day and give praise to His holy name.

Annual Stated Business Meeting – In normal times the Annual Stated Business Meeting is held in church every March when reports are given by the Minister or Interim Moderator, the Session Clerk and the Treasurer. Last March this meeting had to be cancelled because of the onset of Coronavirus. This year, again because of restrictions, we have been unable to hold this congregational meeting. We may be able to hold it later in the year.

“The flowers appear on the earth; the time of the singing of birds is come, and the voice of the turtle is heard in our land” Song of Solomon 2:12

The Flowers Appear on the Earth

Now the winter cold is past
And blithe March winds are blowing
In sheltered nooks we find at last
Bright flowers of Spring are growing.

Along the hedgerow's mossy bank
Where ivy green is creeping
We see through weeds and nettles rank
The dark-blue violet peeping.

And in the sunny garden beds
Gay aconites are showing
And snowdrops bend their graceful heads
And crocuses are glowing

God makes the buds and leaves unfold,
All flowers are of His giving:
He guards them through the winter cold
He cares for all things living