

MAXWELL MEARNS CASTLE PARISH CHURCH
STATED ANNUAL MEETING 21st March 2021

The Stated Annual Meeting of the Congregation was held on Zoom on Sunday 21st March 2021. It was chaired by Rev Dr Scott Kirkland who opened the meeting with a prayer.

1. OPENING REMARKS

The Chairman thanked everyone for attending and welcomed them to the meeting. Scott referred to Matthew 16:18 and Jesus' reply "And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it". Here today, we can see a small part of Christ's Church on the screen as we discuss the business matters before us today.

Scott noted that three documents were emailed to the Congregation – key pages from the 2020 accounts, the 2021 budget and the minutes of last year's meeting.

2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Kaye Lipsett

3. MINUTES OF MEETING 15th March 2020

Scott reminded the meeting that the draft minutes had been made available for correction shortly after the 2020 meeting. The minutes were approved and accepted as a true record: Proposer – Calum McPhail; Seconder – Bruce Adkins.

4. FINANCE REPORT FOR 2020 presented by Ian Forgie (Treasurer)

Ian noted that the key pages from the 2020 Annual report and the 2021 budget were shared with the Congregation by email in advance of the meeting and that the full Annual report for 2020 can be found on the Church website. It has been a challenging year for the Congregation and Ian has worked with many behind the scenes on finance matters as well as keeping the Board up to date throughout the last year of lockdown and restrictions.

The outcome for 2020 is better than budget. As noted at last year's Stated Annual Meeting, income levels were significantly lower than budgeted and the plan was to address this through a review of giving which was initiated just prior to lockdown. Many in the Congregation increased their standing orders and some members changed from free will offerings to standing order. Ian also received cash, cheques, and bank transfers during lockdown. One-off gifts were also received. Income includes £10,000 as a one-off grant for the staff who were furloughed. As a result of this, income received into the General Fund was over £190,000 which represents a fantastic result given the circumstances.

Although some staff were furloughed, the work of our Youth Worker and Children & Families Worker continued and they both adapted well to the challenges. Employment costs also include those of the Church Officer prior to the difficult decision to end this role whilst wishing Stewart, Claire and the boys well for the future. The General Fund donated approx. £10,000 to missions in 2020 as budgeted. Property costs were slightly higher than expected as they included higher electricity costs and some unexpected essential repairs. Additional AV equipment was also required to facilitate online worship, to which Scott transitioned well. The Sanctuary upgrade was completed in early 2020 and a shortfall in funding was met by the General Fund. Total expenditure from the General Fund was therefore approx. £219,000 which is £2,000 higher than budget. Overall, the General Fund result is better than budgeted but there was a deficit of expenditure over income of £27,000. As noted at last year's meeting, this level of deficit cannot continue and this has been factored in to the budget for 2021.

Ian then thanked Elizabeth Smith for all her work as Gift Aid convenor over the years as she has now stepped down and Louise Fisher has taken over. As a Congregation, we were greatly saddened by the death of Stuart Bruce, who was a former Treasurer at Maxwell. Stuart had provided great support to Ian and through his faithful service on the Missionary Fund and in his support to the Playgroup staff.

Scott asked for any questions on the finance report for 2020. In response to a question regarding the uplift in standing order giving, Ian agreed that this was due to the review in giving as this had gradually happened during April/May 2020. It was suggested that the review of giving should be repeated this year and Ian agreed. Ian confirmed that this reinforced his message in respect of the 2021 budget and of the benefits of switching to standing order rather than open plate or envelopes, for those who are willing to do so. Ian also mentioned the potential use of an app going forward for those that it would suit.

5. BUDGET FOR 2021 presented by Ian Forgie (Treasurer)

The aim for 2021 is for a balanced budget for the General Fund but this will be difficult due to the uncertainties around when we will return to our normal Church activities and patterns of hall rental. Off Grid Kids are hoping to restart their activity from our premises in April along with the Playgroup. Ian encouraged everyone to review their giving again this year and switch their method of giving wherever possible.

Scott invited questions on the budget. In response to a question about the comment against heating - "assumes heating under control"- Ian replied that the electricity costs had proved difficult to manage in 2020 as it had been discovered that the meters had not been read for some time and the bills had been based on estimates. A lot of work was done to resolve this and work out how best to manage the operation of the new heating system in the Sanctuary. The Sanctuary is not an easy place to heat and electricity, as a means of heating, is expensive.

Charles Amery-Behr has done lots of work to monitor the energy costs and this will continue to be monitored through 2021. A concern was raised regarding no budgeted distribution to missions for 2021. Ian explained that the budget is for the General Fund only rather than the overall budget. There is the separate Missionary Fund for missionary giving. For the past few years, the General Fund was used for one off mission donations due to the significant legacies received but there is no longer the ability to do this. Should there be a surplus of income in 2021, missionary giving could be made from the General Fund.

Scott thanked Ian for the huge amount of work that he does on finance on behalf of the Board and the efficient manner in which he does it which can be seen from the reports, back up slides and notes that are presented at this and other meetings.

Finally, Scott noted that the 2020 Annual Report and the 2021 Budget were approved at the February meeting of the Congregational Board, as trustees, and are therefore presented here for information.

6. RETIRALS & ELECTION OF NEW MEMBERS

Scott noted that the Congregational Board comprises elders and directly elected members, who usually complete a term of three years. Scott reported that of the six Board members due to retire after three years, three are retiring and three have agreed to be re-appointed. Scott thanked Ann Best, Chisholm MacRae and Priscilla Fisher for their service to the Board as they have all served fully in many different ways and through many different years.

Proposers and seconders were obtained for the continuing members. There were no nominations to join the Board at this stage.

The following, therefore, is a record of the revision of Board members:

| NAME | NEW/CONTINUE | PROPOSER | SECONDER |
|------------------|--------------|--------------------|---------------|
| Ann Best | Retiring | N/A | N/A |
| Chisholm MacRae | Retiring | N/A | N/A |
| Priscilla Fisher | Retiring | N/A | N/A |
| Tom Brown | Continuing | Sue Anderson | Jack Geddes |
| Gloria Leonard | Continuing | Charles Amery-Behr | Andrew Little |
| Andrew Smith | Continuing | Elizabeth Smith | Linda Renn |

Scott commented that the Board does a tremendous job and he expressed his thanks to Jack as Chairman as well as the members for their long hours of contribution.

7. PROPERTY REPORT (including Manse) presented by Brian Waugh (Fabric Convener)

As we are all too aware during the last twelve months, we have all lived with the many restrictions as a result of the COVID 19 pandemic; the Church buildings have sadly largely been unoccupied during this period for worship and also our hall rental partners. Over and above the regular maintenance and safety related works, no major capital expenditure works were carried out during the last year however there were a few planned and unplanned matters that arose incurring costs:

- Just prior to lockdown in March 2020, as planned a new fire exit door was installed, however further expenditure will be required to upgrade the exterior surface area as this has been flagged during our most recent Fire Safety Inspection. Potential costs associated with this could prove high based on initial quotations received;
- The toilet adjacent to the flat was upgraded at a cost of £300 which was much lower than expected. This was to facilitate use by the Off Grid Kids team;
- Cleaning products and equipment had to be purchased to meet the new cleaning regulations ahead of the Church re-opening in the autumn which wasn't planned for, at a cost of £2,500;
- The castle building was finally cleared and sealed at a cost of £1,500;
- The garage door at the manse had to be replaced at a cost of £860;
- An outdoor shelter was erected at a cost of £800 (from the Playgroup budget) with a view to facilitate more outdoor play for the playgroup once restrictions are eased;
- Work was completed to clear a lot of accumulated junk from the halls, basement and garage area of the building which has resulted in a great space for the Blythwood Shoebox teams when restrictions are eased;
- The main garage area (which had formerly been used as a workshop) was cleared and reconfigured to become a store for cleaning products and groceries as part of our support for the East Renfrewshire Good Causes charity and their "Love Your Neighbour" initiative. The garage stores donated items from Coop, RBS and other donors which are then sorted and distributed from the garage by volunteers within our Congregation;
- Heating costs fall under the property budget and, as Ian mentioned, this has been a challenge to manage and strike an optimum balance to have a warm sanctuary for worship and to keep costs low. Charles Amery-Behr has done a fantastic job to create tools to monitor heating and lighting costs and also to program various controls to control expenditure while ensuring the premises are warm and welcoming.

For 2021, over and above the regular maintenance works:

- It is anticipated that some further expenditure on the exterior of the manse will be required as many cracks have been identified which could risk water ingress;
- As previously stated, the exterior area to the new fire exit from the Sanctuary must be completed as soon as possible once restrictions ease and contractors are able to come onsite;
- Upgrade work for the basement would be beneficial to better accommodate the Off Grid Kids team, however currently there is no budget to support this;
- At the time of writing this report, Sanctuary roof repairs had to be carried out due to storm damage in March at a cost of £250;
- The water tank in the attic above the flat (which served a large part of the halls building) was found to be corroded, therefore a flood risk to the building. It was also flagged that the tank was no longer legionella compliant, and therefore work to remedy this was approved by the Board. The tank was drained, and four new smaller plastic tanks were installed at a cost of £3,800, removing the flood risk and we are now legionella compliant again. A further benefit is better water flow from the taps in the mid and lower-level halls;
- We are currently in the process of applying for grant funding to enable the AV team to further enhance the incredible experience they deliver for us for remote worship and to potentially replace some paned windows in the Sanctuary.

Brian asked for any questions on his report. In response to a question as to whether there were any issues with the other narrow fire exit, Brian confirmed that this exit has not been highlighted in the Fire Safety report and the focus is on the safety of the other exit with the new door. Brian also confirmed that regarding the changes made to the garage, the area to the side of the garage is not currently being used but it has been cleared.

Scott thanked Brian for his report and also for picking up the role of Property Convenor with his team.

8. GROUNDS REPORT presented by Bruce Adkins (Grounds Convenor)

We have continued to use Warnock Ground Maintenance to carry out the upkeep of the grounds surrounding the Church. This comprises twice monthly visits to cut the grass between April and October, two visits over the summer to spray weed killer along the paths and around the car park and a single visit to trim the hedges along the road on both sides as well as the short hedge up at the Church entrance. This normal pattern of maintenance was carried out throughout the lockdown period. This year due to the phenomenal growth of the vegetation we had to trim the hedges a second time along the drive including the area around the clothes recycling bin.

The Board also took the decision to ask Warnock Ground Maintenance to plant pyracantha (prickly bushes) behind the castle extending from the side gate towards the caves on the edge of the drop. Dead and fallen branches from the surrounding trees were also added to the slopes by Karen and her team from Warnock Ground Maintenance to deter any access to the caves.

No questions were received in respect of Bruce's report and Scott thanked Bruce for his work as Grounds Convenor.

Scott provided a report on the maintenance of the Broomburn steps on behalf of Stewart Martin:

Many thanks once again to the small but dedicated team of volunteers who keep the steps leading from Broomburn Drive up to the Church swept and kept neat and tidy for worship each Sunday when Covid restrictions allow. We are always looking for additional help since it reduces the burden of the current team, particularly as we are all not getting any younger.

Scott invited questions on the upkeep of Broomburn steps. The Congregation's thanks were noted to Dr Mitchell who undertook drainage work on the pathway leading up to the steps to the Church as this area was regularly flooded.

9. MEARNS CASTLE PROJECT

No report was presented by David Merriman as there was little activity in respect of the Castle (other than the cleaning and sealing noted above). No questions in respect of Mearns Castle were received.

10. VOTE OF THANKS

Concentrating on more specific Board and related activities, on behalf of the Congregation, Scott thanked:

- Jack for his commitment as Chairman and adapting to Zoom meetings to lead the Board in his friendly and efficient manner;
- Lorna Hamilton for her excellent and faithful service as Board Secretary;
- All Board members for their participation at Board plus Door & Offering duties;
- Ian Forgie, for his excellent work as our Treasurer, especially for his tireless work on the 2020 accounts;
- Christina Brown for her excellent work as our bookkeeper;
- Ann Best as Freewill Offering Convenor and for offering to stay on as Convenor in the short term;
- Elizabeth Smith for her work with Gift Aid and Louise Fisher offering to take over this role;
- Brian Waugh hit the ground running and is doing an excellent job with his extended property team;
- It is hard to believe that the Sanctuary refurbishment was just completed last year but thanks to the committee who designed the renovation to the Sanctuary and Stephen Pryce for helping make it happen so efficiently with his team;
- Bruce Adkins for his work as our Grounds Convenor;

- Stewart Martin and helpers for their work on the Broomburn steps;
- For our AV team each Sunday – over seen and organised by Eilidh Hamilton;
- Sheila Reid, Seona Edgar and Sue Anderson as our Safeguarding team;
- Sue Amery-Behr, our Church secretary and Halls Convenor;
- Graeme Lipsett as our Eco coordinator;
- Margo McNicol in overseeing the team that partners with East Renfrewshire Good Causes in the Maxwell Mearns Christian Support Fund and recently distributing food; and
- Many others, unnamed, but who are involved in our congregational life.

11. MINISTER’S REPORT presented by Rev Dr Scott Kirkland

The accounts have a fairly full account of congregational life last year, but I want to mention one or two things not appropriate for the published accounts:

- It has been a tough year for most of us: one we could never have imagined we would have encountered. Thanks to Andrew Little and Session for their pulling together to come through this and their prayerfulness in supporting one another. We are not through it yet, but let’s continue to support one another and pray for one another. Let’s look to see how we can love our neighbour;
- Thank you for all of you who became so prayerfully and pastorally involved with the Congregation and community during these difficult months. I especially want to thank our elders on your behalf, and Phyl Campbell and her pastoral team who have been tirelessly concerned for many this year, trying to find creative ways of support when physical contact has not been permitted;
- Thank you to those of you who continued to send in offerings by cheque or have been accumulating the offerings which you would have put in the plate week by week. Thank you to those of you who made special one-off gifts knowing the financial challenge we would face. This has enabled a far healthier financial position than first envisaged;
- I want to thank Colin Forster for the hours he spent on the phone with me in March 2020 helping me understand how I could create a live stream from the Sanctuary in these early days of lockdown. Then thanks to those with technical skills who over time helped us develop that livestream to what we have now. We had our glitches but the Lord has blessed us with gifted people who have done an amazing job to facilitate worship for those unable to be present. Many thanks to all involved in that;
- I want to thank Martin Boyd for the amazing work he did in pioneering our online Church magazine and then keeping it going now for over 40 weeks. Martin has also been invaluable in helping display what we see each Sunday morning in worship. He has been tireless in all of this;
- I want to thank Sue Amery-Behr as she had a tough job as COVID struck trying to help work out what rental of the premises was permitted and communicating with all accordingly;
- Thank you to those who led our prayer meeting on Zoom through 2020. Thanks to those who continued to lead home groups as Zoom groups, neither of which have been easy;
- Thanks you to all who continued to participate in this alien manner which few of us enjoy but know we need to persevere through. So thank you to all who continued to serve the Lord in worship and praise;
- A huge indebtedness to Daniel and Pauline who continued to minister to our young people in most creative ways outside/inside/and on-line. They have been truly invaluable to us and we thank God for both of them. Thank God for their gifts but also the manner in which they served us;
- I want on your behalf to thank all the staff who we placed on furlough last year for their understanding. The playgroup staff (Fiona, Heather and June), Sue Amery-Behr from the Office, and of course Stewart Falconer, our Church Officer. It was a hard decision but after much prayer we believed it right to end the role of Church Officer. We want only the best now for Stewart, Claire and the boys in this new phase of their life;
- Last year was a challenging year for the manse due to my cancer diagnosis and then treatment. However, I cannot tell you how upheld Anita and I were through your words of encouragement and your ceaseless prayers. It is hard for me to express our gratitude. But we thank God for you. My treatment will continue for another 15 months. A review this last week indicated, at this snapshot, the treatment is being effective at this time.

There is much more we could say, but I don’t want to weary you further. Forgive me if I have not mentioned you by name. There are too many contributing into the life of the Church and that is a great problem to have. Thank you for your part in serving and worshipping! Continue to honour and glorify God through 2021.

12. CLOSING BENEDICTION

The meeting was closed with the Benediction.

Chairman.....

Clerk.....