

Psalm 138:

*I will praise you with all my whole heart;
Before the gods I will sing praises to You
I will worship toward Your holy temple
And praise Your name
For Your lovingkindness and Your truth;
For You Have magnified Your
Word above all Your name.
In the day that I cried out, You
Answered me,
And made me bold with strength in my soul.*

*All the kings of earth shall
Praise You O Lord
When they hear the words of Your mouth.
Yes they shall sing of the ways of the Lord.
For great is the glory of the Lord.
Though the Lord is on high,
Yes He regards the lowly;
But the proud He knows from afar.*

*Though I walk in the midst of trouble
You will revive me;
You will stretch out Your hand
Against the wrath of my enemies,
The Lord will perfect that which concerns me;
Your mercy O Lord, endures forever
Do not forsake the works of Your hands.*

This is the psalm for Sunday 6th June 2021. A psalm which confirms to us the Lord's concern and care for us, through times of trouble and times of uncertainty. This is great assurance to us as we look back on the difficulties of last year and the continuing uncertainty of how our lives will be lived as the optimism of coming out of lockdown is tempered by growing concern over a "third wave".

In so many ways it would be easier if all could be swept away from the last 14 months and we could just get back to normal. But that will not be – and we mourn with so many people who have lost friends and relatives to this horrible disease, and we reach out in prayer and support to those who have lost jobs, income, financial security and stability because of the restrictions, regulations and changes to society. The Lord's mercy endures, but we often cry out in anguish. He does not forsake us, but we long for better times.

Some miss the regular patterns of Sunday worship and look for its return, to sharing time in our own well known building and pattern of hymns, prayer and sermon. Will that return? I am sure that soon the local building will reopen on Sunday mornings and people will enjoy being back together, but not the same – restrictions will continue, but more basically, the Church of Scotland structures are changing. The parishes of Mid Argyll will have to come together in some new way to share limited resources. Is the future church going to be tied up in buildings and Sunday services?

The General Assembly is planning radical cuts to the numbers of paid staff – ministers, development workers, as well as Presbyteries and parishes.

What is church? Worshipping together, praying for one another, our communities, and the world.

Sharing our faith – growing in understanding of our lives with Jesus Christ as Saviour and Lord, connecting with our communities and neighbours in love and service.

The church will not disappear, but it will be changed radically from what we had become used to – pre pandemic -

But..... Psalm 138 has many words of encouragement: - read it again –

"I will worship towards your Holy Temple,

And praise your name

For your loving kindness and your truth

For you have magnified your word above all your name

In the day when I cried out

You answered me

And made me bold with strength in my soul.

General Assembly 2021.

The headline item for most people from this years assembly is the requirement to cut back on the number of paid staff – ministers, and Ministry Development Staff, available within the Church. This is driven by financial needs and also the changing ways the church interacts with our cultures and communities.

There are currently 700 minister posts (299 are vacant) and 137 Ministry Development posts and the decision is to reduce this to 600 in total by 2025.

At a local level , our own Presbytery of Argyll will probably be reduced to 18 full time paid posts, although this awaits clarification.

There were various other important decisions from the Assembly and the Life and Work magazine have issued a supplement detailing these at

<https://www.lifeandwork.org/resources/general-assembly-2021-special-supplement>

Baron Wallace of Tankerness, Moderator of the General Assembly:

"I stand before you humbled and honoured and with feelings of excitement and trepidation... I am conscious of the trust you have placed in me as an elder of the Kirk to hold this office. I pray that I will be worthy of your trust."

"This week, I believe, the Assembly has demonstrated an awareness of the need for flexibility, a 'can do' rather than an 'it's never been done this way before' attitude which must surely augur well."

The Rev Rosie Frew, Convener of the Faith Nurture Forum

"We know there is no easy or painless way forward. But we can choose our pain: the short, sharp pain of surgery, with the prospect of recovery; or long, debilitating decline with no hope of getting better."

The Very Rev Dr Derek Browning, Convener of the Special Commission on the Effectiveness of Presbyterian Government

"The key thing is not to do with our structures but to do with our attitude. Until we get our culture right and our attitude right at every level, then tinkering with the structures will not affect very much."

The Very Rev Dr Martin Fair, outgoing Moderator of the General Assembly

"Until the last food bank in Scotland is closed... For as long as there are children growing up in Scotland whose life chances are at best 'compromised' and at worse 'ruined' because of their postcode... Until we can find more productive and humane and effective ways of dealing with those who break our laws... For as long as many of our impoverished communities continue to be awash with drugs... For as long as there are despairing people, struggling with poor mental health, having to wait months and years for suitable treatment... for as long as we continue to pollute our rivers, poison our air and fill holes in the ground with our waste - there is work for us to do... "But here's the problem. Unless we get our act together - and rapidly! - there's hardly going to be any church left to do it. "I've heard it so many times that, for the Church, it's not about numbers. It absolutely will be about numbers if the numbers are so low that the Church can no longer run Crossreach or local caring services because the local church isn't there any more."

The Very Rev Dr Susan Brown, Convener of the Faith Impact Forum:-

"I would suggest that it is in engagement in just such Jesus-manifesto issues that discipleship blooms. It is when we get out from behind closed doors, when we are propelled out of what is safe to engage with those who are the same as us but different, and when we face too the challenges the planet faces that we are reinvigorated and discover others wanting to catch that vision."

Mid Argyll Mission Plan.

Discussions on the future shape of the Mid Argyll congregations will obviously be taking into consideration the figures from the Assembly. The Mid Argyll Planning group meet for the third time next week on Thursday evening to share views from the five Mid Argyll parishes. (North Knapdale; Glassary, Kilmartin and Ford; Lochgilphead; Ardrishaig; and South Knapdale) on how we see the church going forward in this area. Discussions are at an early stage but the overall consensus is to form one united parish with a team of staff and volunteers led by an ordained person.

There is still a lot of talking and praying to do - please join us in praying for wisdom and direction as we continue to consider the way ahead.

North Knapdale representatives on the group are: David Logue, Norma Kelly and Catherine Paterson.

Re-opening Tayvallich Church Building

The Kirk session meet again on the 14th June and high on the agenda will be the re-opening Tayvallich Church under the latest restrictions. We are very hopeful that this will be possible soon and I will keep you informed of progress.

We are planning to canvass views from the congregation and community on ideas, formats, times and any other aspects of getting together as a church which you may have thoughts on, so please let me, or other elders know what you are thinking.

House Group:

The House Group continues to meet weekly over "Zoom" software. This Friday 4th June we will be discussing the growing interest in new Celtic Monasticism and Celtic models of mission. We would all be delighted to welcome you to join us - so if you want to find out more give me or Louise a call on 01546 870 647

Prayer Group

On Monday mornings a few people zoom together to pray for local people and situations in and around our parish. It is so encouraging and wonderful to see how our Father responds to our prayers. Time spent together with God in prayer for others is such a blessing for all.

One hour on Mondays from 9.00am is a great way to start the week.

Please talk to Catherine Paterson for details and how to join in. 01546 603672

You can find news on our church website: www.northknapdale.org

And our Face Book page – North Knapdale Church.

Contact David Logue – Tel: 01546 870647

e-mail - sessionclerk@northknapdale.org

Knapdale Church of Scotland - Charity No: SC001002