



A FOND FAREWELL



For eighteen years I have had the privilege of being the minister of this parish: firstly as minister of Sherbrooke-St Gilbert's, then, after the union, Sherbrooke Mosspark. It has been a joy to me to share in the life of this wonderful congregation as we have developed ministry within the kirk and in the parish. On the night I came to speak to the then Vacancy Committee I was shown the kirk sanctuary by Keir Fisher and Brian Lockhart. I can honestly say that they moved me with their love for this place and its community and in both I found true friendship which, over the years, sustained me in my ministry. There has been many highlights over my years with you, and if you will forgive me, I would like to indulge myself in thinking about some of these.

One of the early ones was recognising in John Gormley a talent that is rare in the average parish church. With John's expertise, we went about changing the Order of Service to reflect the Order given by John Knox and the old tradition of the kirk (sometimes called the traditional order). Since the re-union of the kirks in 1929 this Order has always been the first printed in the Book of Common Order of the Kirk. We wanted to enhance what the choir contributed to worship and you all now see the results- it is superb. At the same time I applied for Associate Membership of the Royal School of Church Music, the foremost authority on music in the church in these islands and so we are one of the very few parish churches in Scotland holding any membership of the Royal School.



In thinking of the John and the choir, one of the other highlights in this area has been the establishment of the annual Ecumenical Carol Service. When this was first mooted people were anxious about the idea of candles in the kirk, not only because of the history of this place, but because the idea of candles in a Presbyterian Kirk frightened some. Look at it now. The last Service took place in 2019 (there was no service in 2020) and at that Service approximately 400 people from St Albert's, St Ninian's and ourselves shared in the wonderful Service of 9 Lessons and Carols, followed by mulled wine and mince pies in the hall. To celebrate the Nativity with our fellow Christians in this district was a real landmark and to do so, so well, is a mark of the dedication of John and our choir. I want to thank John for all his work during my time here. Trust me, John Gormley understands the liturgy and practice of the Church of Scotland considerably better than others who would think otherwise. Music means a great deal to me and I will struggle, in my retirement, to find a kirk where the music is of such a high standard.

The next one must be the social life of this kirk. I got a chance to influence how we did this kind of thing in 2005 with the retirement of Brian Lockhart as Session Clerk. Brian had asked we just quietly let him retire, and that



would be the end of the matter. That a man who had given over 23 years service as clerk should be allowed to quietly retire was never going to happen. With a wee bit of persuading we had a canapés and wine event after Morning Service, with Andrew Normand and John Duthie as our wine servers and the young people carrying enormous platters of canapés around the hall. None of the usual 'kirky' thing of queueing up for a cup of tea

and a cake. After that the social life took off. At the annual Plant Sale we moved from nice biscuits to enormous scones filled with cream and jam and lots of laughter, courtesy originally of Neil McGovern succeeded by Jan Bostock. The Christmas Lunch followed, then the Easter Breakfast, followed by the celebrations for Pentecost. Refreshments, at all sorts of events, from Special Services to the concerts, and the wonderful Art Exhibitions came next. This proved we are a very sociable congregation. In the early days

Morven and the tea committee stalwarts , who until Covid were still serving us every Sunday (Jan, Mags, Netta, Ralice and others) were joined by Neil and Liz McGovern who made an enormous impact on how we celebrated events. The Social Committee have ensured this work continues and no doubt will resume after the Covid emergency has ceased. Before moving on I think it only appropriate to mention the hard work in the kitchen before the Christmas Lunch and the Easter breakfast. Jan and Marie Baird did an amazing job ensuring these events were catered for, and thanks to their efforts, we have had some memorable parties. They did have help in the kitchen so thanks also to all the helpers.

Other aspects of the social life came into being over the years: Grace came up with the very successful and enormously popular 'soup n' chat', we have the 'Broken Biscuits Club' with its little outings to various places around the city and the hugely popular 'AM Chorus' with Avril initially as the organiser. These, and many other social events, have made this kirk the kind of place that makes folk feel welcome.

It would be remiss of me, thinking of social aspects of the life of this kirk, to forget the events around the Commonwealth games in Glasgow in 2014. What a time we had, what a wonderful advert for a vibrant church that became for us. I can remember the day the 'Games Torch' came through the parish as the Sikh drummers, and ourselves, put on this big noisy colourful celebration in the street right outside the church. Gazebos were up in the grounds, chairs out and endless tea, coffee and soft drinks for everyone. The image of Morven and Ralice dancing in the middle of the road surrounded by policemen, who were having a great time, will never leave me, nor will the joy and vibrancy of many of you sharing that party that day. There were many, many of you in the grounds and on the street sharing with our community our pleasure at being the host city for the Commonwealth Games. On the Opening Night around 150 crammed into the hall to witness the Opening Ceremony on the big screen (thanks to Andy Wynd)



and we had a ball. It was fantastic. Joan Morrison certainly had a touch of class at her table with her pinny on serving wine chilled at just the right temperature. You, as kirk folk, turned out to party and celebrate life and you all did it with style - a great night and a great event in our church. I must, before I conclude, mention Mags Cargey: she drove a lot of the excitement and participation for the Games in this kirk and with her enthusiasm we showed the community the church is about a joyous celebration of all life. That is outreach, that is mission.

One of the things I take great pleasure in is the re-ordering of the east transept in which we created our little chapel. That area of the kirk was a



kind of dead area where no one sat, and nothing happened, but as 2014 was nearing and the country was preparing to mark the years of the 1st World I wanted to give the War Memorial, that had been fixed at the back of the kirk, after the restoration in 1997, a new home. We got agreement to remove it from that wall underneath the Memorial Window and

place it in the transept. The Memorial was placed on the wall, the Scouts Colours (flags) were sited permanently on either side of the Memorial and the chairs rearranged. We found the "Roll of Honour" for the original St Gilbert's kirk in a cupboard and had that encased and mounted on the back wall. There followed a very moving Dedication Service as we dedicated the area as our "War Memorial" Chapel, referred to by myself often as St Gilbert's Chapel. A fitting tribute to the lives laid down for our country. Rob Abbott designed the layout of the chapel and to him I am extremely thankful. In 2018 it gave me enormous satisfaction to have the War Memorial from the Mosspark building mounted on the wall of the chapel in a very prominent position with the Colours from the Boy's Brigade and Guides that had once been so strong in the community. That War Memorial was the focus of our Remembrance Service in 2020.

The Union of the two kirks was a fantastic event. Glasgow Presbytery, realising it had too many buildings and not enough people or ministers

sought to rationalise the sites on which there would be a parish church. This rationalisation is still on-going. Union between the two churches, Sherbrooke-St Gilbert's and Mosspark was mooted. After a great deal of deliberation on our part, and an equal amount of inaction by both the Presbytery and 121, the union came to fruition. To say it has been a very happy union would be an understatement: it has been a phenomenally successful union- not that common in kirk circles. Both congregations committed to making this work and the end result is we are all the stronger. It was unquestionably a union, not a takeover, with office-bearers from both kirks taking on roles in the new congregation and members joining in everything together. The office-bearers who made this union possible and worked to give it a firm foundation are to be congratulated and thanked, for without their hard work it would not have been possible. I particularly want to thank Iain Webster, Garry Borland, Marie Baird, Christine Higgison, Susan Ross, Andrew Normand, Marjorie McGhie, Andy Hadden, Cameron and others, who I have failed to mention, not deliberately, but because of old age and memory loss, for they put in so much effort to achieve it - well done to them. Our new glass doors entering into the sanctuary are a tribute to the event of union and one which still gives me a great deal of pleasure.



I can think of many times we have enjoyed worship and fellowship in this kirk, too many to enumerate but please, if you can, think of all the gorgeous Harvest Services and Remembrance Services we have had thanks to the Flower Committee or their enthusiasm for a real tree which has now become an

established fixture every Christmas. Hazel, and Seona, beforehand, along with their brilliant and talented group, made this church look sumptuous for the great festivals.



Think of the outdoor Pentecost parties with the bouncy castle for the youngsters which was a great big bit of nonsense but

marvellous fun and colourful to boot. Who can forget our magnificent Easter Morning Services with the church jammed with families back to celebrate the major festivals? Do you remember Bruce and Elizabeth Fraser filling three rows with all their children at Easter or the many youngsters (your children) who would appear at Christmas or Easter from their university cities? Think of all the kids our kids helped with their sponsored cycles around Maxwell Park which, on occasion, became real family events with grandparents watching on and parents cycling to support their kids. The splendid and sometimes hilarious Christmas Nativities with dressing gowns and tea towels, and Mary and Joseph ready for divorce, rather than a loving young couple, would fill the kirk and then the Gift Service when you all brought presents for people you would never know - it was graciousness at its best.

We have had many good times, where worship, laughter and love have been truly celebrated. Then there are the saints - the good people who gave of their talents and time to make this place work Bob Gemmill with his financial prowess, Keir Fisher with his gracious charm, Phil Spence who offered quiet wisdom, Jimmy Smith with his impeccable courtesy and old world manners. They were great men and there were more - men and women who took vows to faithfully follow Christ all their days and who now know the blessedness of the presence of God. Many faithful servants of God and this kirk blessed us with their presence and their talents.



I felt at times Jimmy and Hazel Smith had adopted me, such was their concern and interest in all things Pollock and my family. Keir Fisher and Joyce likewise, Morven Findlay and Ranald also: supportive good people who offered friendship and love without measure. When Elaine and myself arrived here, one of the first families to extend friendship toward us was John and Brenda Duthie. We will never be able to repay the kindness of John and Brenda over the years. Let me tell you a little secret. When Mairi

went off to university, she went with a little envelope of "emergency money" in case something should happen - like the cash machine swallowing up her bank card. Brenda Duthie gave her that envelope (we didn't know until years later) because Brenda had the foresight to imagine just such a scenario. Over the years, like many of you, we have been the recipients of Brenda and John's kindness and for that we will be for ever grateful. In George and Margaret Galloway we found true friendship, cemented possibly in the fact the manse was originally their home. George Galloway has been a brilliant Property Convener and a marvellous friend to me over the years. He has listened to me and counselled me when I was about to get it wrong; he has put up with my nonsense and even encouraged some of it because he enjoyed the laugh and both he and Margaret have shared many times with us, either at parties or over a meal.

In all the years I have been here, the many office-bearers who have filled the essential roles that keeps the church going have been kind, gracious and hard-working. Many brought their professional skills and all brought their love for Christ and His church. Without this outstanding bunch of men and women I could never have been the parish minister I have been able to be. Because they took on all the tasks of running the kirk I was able to be your minister, not the administrator. I have been blessed with excellent Session Clerks and Treasurers for which I will be eternally grateful. They have all been wonderful, wise and gracious. I am grateful to them all for their friendship; their vast reservoir of knowledge on everything related to the kirk and their unfailing courtesy in dealing with a sometimes less than useless parish minister. For many years we had Marjorie McGhie as clerk to the Congregational Board. Along with her counter-parts, the Session Clerks, Marjorie brought wisdom, patience and understanding to the task and served this church faithfully, something she continues to do in many other roles. Marjorie, like so many, has given not only her talents to this kirk but her friendship to this minister, for which I will be eternally grateful.

Before departing from the matter of great office-bearers I would like to pay a brief tribute to Marie Baird, who died just very recently. Marie, supported by Robert, was a wonderful asset to the kirk and a more than fine successor to the likes of Brian, Andrew and Andy. She brought her love of the faith

with a rigorous intellect and amazing organisational ability and her premature departure has robbed this kirk of a fine servant.

During my time here I have been privileged to share many wonderful, and some sad moments, with many of you. The calling of a parish minister is to lead the people of God in worship and in care for God's people. I have danced at weddings, eaten cake after baptisms and cried with many at funerals. There was a move in the late 70's and 80's to professionalise the work of ministry in that we were, like all good professionals, to be objective - a little detached maybe, to stand outside of the body. I have never subscribed to that view of ministry for you see I believe ministry to be Incarnational. In Christ humanity is blessed but that blessing took human form not some detached order, so I have been filled with great happiness when you have been happy; I have laughed with you at the good times and I have cried for you in the bad. God gave me a charge to care for you, to worry for you, to pray for you, to lead you in His way. I will answer on the great Day of Judgement for my stewardship of that task and I sincerely hope God will be merciful.

You have been my people, the folk God entrusted to me, I thank him for that trust, and you for your kindness and love.

May God bless you all as I take my leave at the end of April but be assured as much as we, the Pollocks, are moving to another part of the city, you will always be in our hearts and prayers.

May almighty God bless you and keep you, may He make his face to shine upon you and be gracious to you, may He lift up his countenance upon you and give you all peace.

Tom