

# ascend

centre for support & development

quarterly magazine for ministry



## can we reform?



“Keeping the plates spinning is more and more difficult.”

Ministerial Development Conversation is a protected space for intentional conversation to enable real change and growth.

What others have said:

*‘I had a really positive experience. It was so good to say it all out loud. I explored a lot in the time that we had together’*

*‘It was refreshing to be asked some powerful questions’*

*‘I had an epiphany - a moment when I knew what I was going to do’*

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Tel: 0131 225 5722 - ask for Alison Stewart

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**Commissioning Editors:**  
David Plews & Gabby Dench

**Editor:**  
Helen Silvis

**Design:**  
Chris Flexen

**Photography:**  
Comms Team  
Andrew O'Brien  
Neil Wykes

**Senior Reporters:**  
Susan Mansfield & Helen Silvis

**Contributors:**  
Tod Bolsinger  
Sally Bonnar  
Arthur Christie  
Alison Denton  
Neil Glover  
Keith Graham  
Andrew McGowan  
Peggy Mulambya-Kabonde  
Di Murray  
Peter Neilson  
Paul Nimmo  
Marion Stewart  
Margaret Willis

Ascend is a programme of  
Education & Support Committee  
of Ministries Council.

**Council Lead:**  
Rev Eleanor McMahon  
(Vice-Convener)

**Programme Leaders:**  
Gabby Dench & David Plews

**Project Officer:**  
Eileen-Joann McCormick

Church of Scotland  
121 George Street  
Edinburgh EH2 4YN  
Tel: 0131 225 5722

[ascend@churchofscotland.org.uk](mailto:ascend@churchofscotland.org.uk)  
[www.churchofscotland.org.uk/ascend](http://www.churchofscotland.org.uk/ascend)

To send comments to the Editor  
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# HELLO

**Change is all around us. We know this – in fact, at times we are exhausted by the continual reminders. We at Ascend don't want to add to the noise and stress, but we know from conversations with those in ministry that questions of what needs to change, and how we go about managing the transitions, are many and varied.**

Rather than simply rehearse the old arguments and statistics, in this edition of the Ascend Magazine we hear from those in and around the Church of Scotland and beyond about how to prepare ourselves for change, and even succeed!

Ministry has many particularities around it – and achievement and succeeding are not phrases that sit easily. Yet, if we are to live faithful to the mission of God, we need to see greater levels of fruitfulness in how we handle the change that is around us.

In this edition, we hear from Prof Paul Nimmo on the roots of reformation – and the very nature of the Church as a reforming organisation. How we might take this into our present day is explored by Alison Denton who helps us consider moving into the learning zone and possibly venturing into the danger zone.

Dr Sally Bonnar, Convener of the Council of Assembly, talks to us about a very challenging year at the General Assembly. The Stregic Plan was rejectd and calls for more radical proposals.



The transition that the Church finds itself in already makes a demand to have a high level of resilience. This is not easy in our current context. Di Murray explores four postures that equip us for life in ministry.

As we take on change, we need to know what should not change: the fundamentals that define us. A commitment to the gospel and prayer remain constant. Due to the increasing pressure and busyness of church life, we – at times – can see prayer marginalised in our life together. Yet we cannot afford to depart from our foundations.

We hope this edition of Ascend Magazine provides encouragement, information and gentle challenge.

For the full range of services, please visit the re-launched Ascend Online at [www.churchofscotland.org.uk/ascend](http://www.churchofscotland.org.uk/ascend)

**GABBY AND DAVID**  
Ascend Leaders

## BULLETINS

### STAFF UPDATE

There have been a number of staff changes in Ministries Council. Dr Katie Bradley and Ms Clare Milrine are on maternity leave. Rev Dr Matt Ward started on 8 May 18 as the Training Officer (Maternity). Ms Eileen-Joann McCormick joined us in February as Project Officer (Maternity).

As part of the Ministries Council Development Programme we have been joined by Mrs Mairi Thomson as Initial Ministerial Education Operations Manager; Rev Dr Kenneth Fleming as Coordinator for New and Emerging Ministries; and Ms Alison Stewart as Education & Training Administrator.

### ASCEND TALKS

Ascend Talks are now online. Go to Development tab and then click on Talks. Topics range from theology to civil law, gender justice to compassion fatigue. Hear from voices from around the church. Want to contribute a talk? Get in touch!

[www.churchofscotland.org.uk/ascend](http://www.churchofscotland.org.uk/ascend)

### NEW COLLEGE PRINCIPAL

After over a decade as Principal of New College, Rev Prof David Fergusson has passed the mantel to Rev Dr Susan Hardman Moore. We are delighted to welcome Susan to this important role. A great number of ministers will attest to David's warmth and depth of character as leader of New College. He has worked tirelessly to ensure that the partnership between Church and Academy remains strong. The good news is that David will remain on the faculty at New College.

### FIRST FIVE YEARS CMD ALLOWANCE

Ascend is pleased to launch the new First Five Years CMD Allowance. This gives parish ministers in their first five years an allowance of £200 per year for continuing ministerial development. Find out more and apply for funds online. Terms & conditions apply.

[www.churchofscotland.org.uk/ascend](http://www.churchofscotland.org.uk/ascend)

### MINISTERS HANDBOOK

As part of Ministries Council's commitment to supporting all those involved in the ministries of the Church, we are pleased to provide for you the Ministers' Handbook. You will find in this handbook a range of policies and provisions which offer support to you in your role. Contact details are included throughout the handbook so please get in touch if you would like more detailed information or advice.

Download this magazine at Ascend Online under Resources

[www.churchofscotland.org.uk/ascend](http://www.churchofscotland.org.uk/ascend)

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### POSTGRADUATE FUND

The Postgraduate Fund provides monies for part-time postgraduate studies. Following the deliverance at General Assembly in 2016, the Council identified a legacy fund which can now be used to fund postgraduate studies. The fund is valued at £300k and annual awards will be given from the fund gains. This will be managed by Education & Support Committee of Ministries Council and 2018 applications are currently open. All applications must be made via [www.churchofscotland.org.uk/ascend](http://www.churchofscotland.org.uk/ascend).

### UPDATE TO ASCEND ONLINE

Ascend Online has been updated and is now easier to navigate. We will continue to make improvements to help make the best content and services available. Want to see something on Ascend? Get in touch!

[www.churchofscotland.org.uk/ascend](http://www.churchofscotland.org.uk/ascend)

### TRANSFORMING RECRUITMENT AND TRAINING

Ministries Council is making significant changes to how we recruit and train those entering the ministries of the Church. Phase 1 report was presented to the General Assembly in 2017, and this year the Council delivered the Interim Report.

View the report on Ascend Online under Bulletins [ascend.churchofscotland.org.uk/bulletins](http://ascend.churchofscotland.org.uk/bulletins)

The Blueprint report will be presented to the 2019 General Assembly.



# EVENTS

## PREACHING TODAY 2019

We are delighted to announce the 2019 programme! We will be joined by Paula Goder, Sally Brown, John Bell and Sam Wells. Preaching Today in 2019 will be over two days to allow for seminars and workshops. For more information and booking details please visit Ascend Online: [www.churchofscotland.org.uk/ascend](http://www.churchofscotland.org.uk/ascend)

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## FIRST FIVE YEAR RETREAT SERIES

Ascend invites those in the First Five Years of ministry to join them on one of the following retreats;

Retreat B - 9-11 October 2018, The Bield @ Blackruthven.

Retreat C - 16-18 October 2018, The Bield @ Blackruthven.

More information can be found on the Events page at [www.churchofscotland.org.uk/ascend](http://www.churchofscotland.org.uk/ascend)

We have a full list of events on Ascend: [www.churchofscotland.org.uk/ascend](http://www.churchofscotland.org.uk/ascend).

## PROJECT MANAGEMENT TRAINING

11-12 SEPTEMBER IN EDINBURGH

Have you identified a need to increase project management skills and knowledge? Join us on 11-12 September for an industry standard introduction to project management delivered by our partners Elite. The course will cover definitions, business case, stakeholder engagement and project planning. Book your place now at [www.churchofscotland.org.uk/ascend](http://www.churchofscotland.org.uk/ascend)

## NEW: ENABLING CONVERSATIONS

6-7 NOVEMBER IN ABERDEEN

Enabling conversations help others adapt to constant change.

Personality plays a crucial role in the ways people work with each other and DISC can add a vital new dimension to the ways people handle conversations and working relationships. A DISC report tells you everything you need to know about your personality in a clear and accessible way. Understanding more about ourselves can influence how we manage conversations and this can have a huge impact on our relationship with others.

This two-day workshop brings the 'Enabling Conversations' series together and will:

Increase the depth of each participant's resourcefulness and confidence in their own ability to have productive conversations and manage change and

Provide a greater understanding of self.

**Book online:** [www.churchofscotland.org.uk/ascend](http://www.churchofscotland.org.uk/ascend)

## Headlines from *General Assembly*

The Church of Scotland held its annual General Assembly from 19-25 May 2018 at the General Assembly Hall on the Mound in Edinburgh.

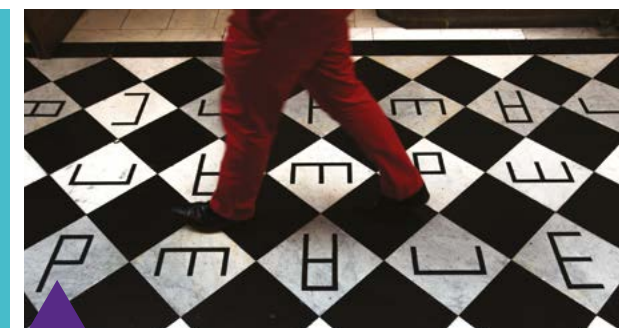


The theme for this year's General Assembly and for the Heart and Soul festival was 'Peace be with you'.



Rev Susan Brown was installed as Moderator for 2018-19 and the General Assembly celebrated the 50th Anniversary of the ordination of women to the ministry of word and sacrament. On the anniversary, a procession of women ministers and supporters stopped traffic as they made their way to New College quad for prayers and celebratory speeches before entering the assembly hall.

Over the course of the week they were joined by more than 150 people from associated partners and other organisations who work with the Church.



Two Nigerian visitors were missing from the Assembly after being refused visas. At the same time Rev Rola Sleiman, who was refused a visa last year, was able to attend this year. The first woman pastor ordained in the Middle-East described her visit as being in "Presbyterian Heaven".

Glasgow minister for the Arts Rev Peter Gardner and his partner Heidi Gardner created an installation in the Black and White corridor so commissioners would see a message of peace as they entered and left the debates.

The General Assembly didn't shy away from controversy. The legal questions committee was instructed to draft legislation that will allow ministers to choose to marry same sex couples - while protecting the rights of those whose conscience directs otherwise.

More than 730 commissioners from congregations across Scotland and beyond came together to take part in the event, a unique mix of debate, tradition and worship.



The Assembly also rejected the Council of Assembly's proposed strategic plan, instructing the council to return in 2019 with "more radical" proposals.

The Guild announced it has added more than 600 new people to its 19,000 strong membership. Over the last three years the Guild has raised £725,000 for six sponsored projects.



# TRANSFORMING RECRUITMENT & TRAINING

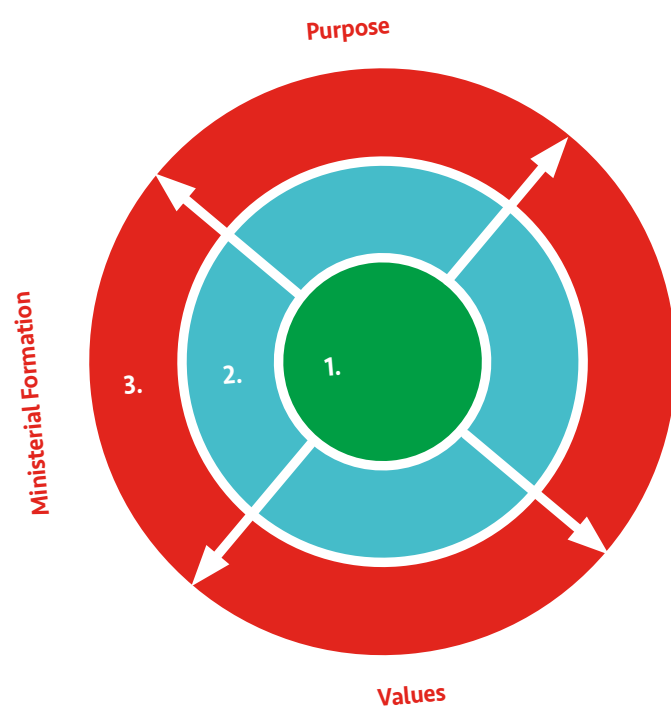
Ministries Council - Interim Report  
General Assembly  
May 2018



Recruitment and Training are changing.  
Read the Interim Report online:  
<https://bit.ly/2xTHBPz>

Or go to Bulletins on Ascend:  
[www.churchofscotland.org.uk/ascend](http://www.churchofscotland.org.uk/ascend)

Ministerial formation for the Mission of God in the Church today.



Called and equipped for the mission of God in the Church of Scotland

1. At the core is personal Christian faith and vocation. These remain at the very heart of our ministerial formation.
2. Gifts, knowledge and understanding, disposition
3. Skills, competency in tasks



*"Now, more people will need to join the conversation on which of the many possible directions radical change should take"*

## Where are we going?

*Following the General Assembly's rejection of the draft strategic plan, Convener of the Council of Assembly, **Sally Bonnar**, tells Helen Silvis about a mandate for more radical change.*

This year the General Assembly was expected to deliver a strategic plan which would chart the Church of Scotland's course for the next 10 years.

Instead, the commissioners voted to reject the proposed plan, choosing to instruct the Council of Assembly to return in 2019 with something more radical.

It was a tough moment for the Council's Convener, Sally Bonnar, who had been tasked with presenting Worshipping God, Inspiring Faith, Connecting People to the Assembly.

Along with other Council members, the Perth elder had hoped the plan would give the Church a foundation to tackle the challenges ahead.

"Of course it is disappointing when a piece of work that's taken two years and a lot of consultation both within and outside the church is not accepted," she says.

"Within the plan there were some quite radical ideas, such as ideas about church-planting and new forms of church. It also looked at changing the way we work across Scotland and moving towards more partnership work. But, with the whole thing thrown out, there was no opportunity to debate those ideas.

"At the same time, what is encouraging is that the mood of the Assembly was for something more radical."

That the Church needs to change is not in doubt. While Christianity has continued to grow worldwide, the UK has become increasingly secular, with fewer people signing up to become church members.

Congregations have grown older and, while many are the lifeblood of their communities, others are burdened with caring for outdated buildings. Church structures that were created when there was a minister for every parish in Scotland



*"It is up to each and every one of us as individuals to decide how we are going to play our parts"*

now struggle to support the many congregations without one.

Yet the legacy of the past is also our core purpose and our shared mission, Sally says. "It's important that we recognise that the Church is not just a group of congregations. The Church is a God-given community of disciples and our job together is to be God's Mission to the World and to enable that for future generations.

"As a Reformed Church, it is important to examine ourselves and ensure we are engaging with that mission. But we are also an organisation which has to be managed and, if we get it right, those structures can free up and support disciples to carry out mission."

As one of the country's largest - not to mention most effective - charities, as well as an employer and steward of resources, the Church has governance responsibilities.

"Whatever happens, we will need a structure of trustees and an organisation to manage finance, payroll, HR, and so on," Sally says. "All of those structures have to be fit for purpose and that includes the council structure - all of the councils, including the Council of Assembly."

"There is a job to do here and the Council of Assembly has been tasked with doing it alongside others within the Church. It is important to recognise, however, that no plan will be perfect.

"We are striving for something that will provide a framework for renewal in the church. Then we must support it with our prayers and it is encouraging that once again the General Assembly has endorsed the national Together We Pray campaign and the day of prayer in November."


She added that, over the last two years, more than 2,000 Church members contributed their thoughts and ideas for the future to the team working on the strategic plan, and this should not be lost.

Now, she believes, more people will need to join the conversation on which of the many possible directions radical change should take.

"Rapid change is not easy and it can be really, really painful," she says. "In any change, we have to leave behind things that are no longer working for us. The quicker it is, the more painful it is, and the more we leave behind.

"It is up to each and every one of us as individuals to decide how we are going to play our parts."

Overall, despite the initial disappointment, Sally is hopeful. "The organization can only facilitate God's Mission through his people in community," she says.

"What the Church will become is not in the gift of the Council of Assembly or of any of us. It's in the hands of God." 



Helen Silvis,  
Editor

Alison Denton,  
Edinburgh Coaching Academy



We hear a lot about how change can be difficult, but it is also a place of growth and discovery, writes **Alison Denton**

# The Opportunities of Change

Much of the literature that has been written on the topic of change is focussed on how difficult the process of change can be. There are numerous articles and books by 'leading thinkers' and 'change experts' telling us not to underestimate how hard it can be to implement change, mainly due to the unwillingness of 'others' to get behind our vision and accept the changes that are needed.

In today's world, change seems constant. It is happening all around us, every day, all of the time. If change is so difficult then why are there many examples of people *choosing* to make dramatic changes in their lives all the time? Changing jobs, getting married, having children, moving house – all incredibly significant life changes, and yet we probably all know someone undertaking one of these changes right now.

After a career spent supporting organisations and their leaders to think positively about change, I have concluded that we vastly underestimate the capability and willingness of people to change. Of course change can be tricky – it requires us to move out of our comfort zone and be willing to try something new, maybe something unknown. But it also presents us with opportunities to grow, learn and develop.

## Danger Zone or Learning Zone?

Generally speaking, humans are creatures of comfort. Our comfort zone is our natural, neutral state – a place where stress and anxiety are minimal, where we know what's coming next and can plan accordingly. Fear of what will happen outside the comfort zone can be the most influential reason we don't want to move out of it.

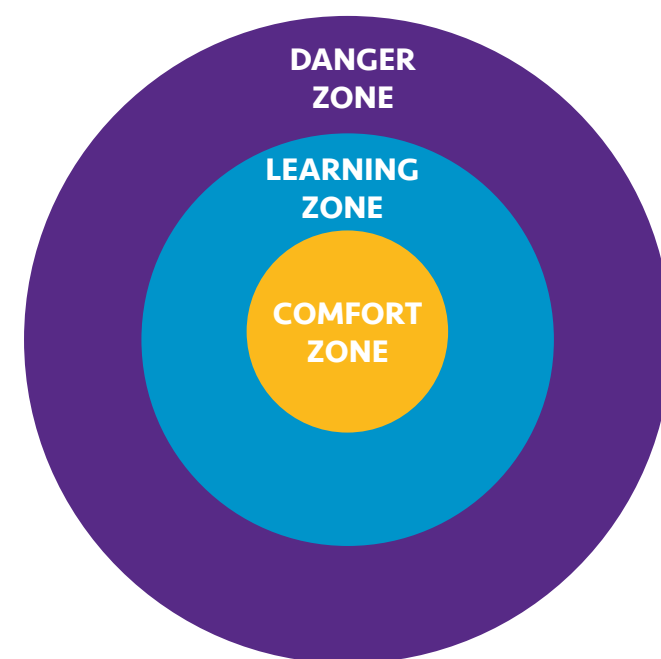
So what do we mean by 'comfort zone'? Answers might include: where you feel comfortable and safe, doing what is easy and familiar or avoiding something new that feels uncomfortable. In our comfort zone, there is a sense of familiarity, security and certainty. We convince ourselves to stay in our comfort zone for many reasons: fear of failure, fear of ridicule, peer pressure or lack of confidence.

*"We vastly underestimate the capability and willingness of people to change"*



In his book *Self-Renewal: The Individual and the Innovative Society*, John Gardner writes: "We pay a heavy price for our fear of failure. It is a powerful obstacle to growth. It assures the progressive narrowing of the personality and prevents exploration and experimentation. There is no learning without some difficulty and fumbling. If you want to keep on learning, you must keep on risking failure – all your life. It's as simple as that."

Naturally we don't want to put ourselves under undue stress or risk of failure, but there is a space we can choose that sits between the comfort zone and the danger zone – it is called the learning zone because it is where personal growth and development occur. Being slightly uncomfortable, whether or not by choice, can push us to achieve goals we never thought we could achieve.



How we interpret challenges and new ways of doing things is a *choice* we make. We don't always realise it is a choice because we all have deeply ingrained habits in the way we think, experience emotions and behave. In other words, we react to the world in a certain way because that's the way we have always reacted.

## “Thinking of change positively gives us the opportunity to embrace new experiences”

The degree to which we are able to make changes in our lives will be determined by the attitudes that we have and the choices we make. If we change how we look at things and change our thought patterns, then we can change our lives or even *transform* our lives. If we see change as a chance to move into the learning zone, we can see it as an opportunity for personal development and a positive experience.

In turn, learning can motivate us and gives us a foundation of experience and understanding that can be applied to the changes we face: a positive cycle of learning, growth, positive experience and self-confidence.

### Embracing new opportunities

Michelangelo said: "The greatest danger for most of us is not that our aim is too high and we miss it, but that it is too low and we reach it."

Thinking of change positively gives us the opportunity to embrace new experiences. New perspectives can open up a world of opportunities providing you are open to them.

When we experience a time of change or transition, there is an opportunity to learn about ourselves, to learn about our limitations, and to unlock gifts and talents we hadn't realised were there.

Without a doubt, seeing change as a positive opportunity makes us more flexible and adaptable. With each change and adaptation, people have degrees of success and, with each experience of coping with change, self-worth and self-esteem develop. In turn, these provide resilience, strength and knowledge to help us deal with further changes when they occur.

When we open ourselves to the continually changing, impermanent, dynamic nature of our own being, and are able to keep our eyes open, our hearts open and our minds open, we begin to think of our lives as offering endless opportunities to start to do things differently. My invitation to you is this: make a positive choice to step out of the comfort zone and into the learning zone and experience the positive opportunities that come with change. 🌟

Alison Denton is director of Edinburgh Coaching Academy and principal partner in the development of Ministerial Development Conversations.

[edinburghcoachingacademy.com](http://edinburghcoachingacademy.com)

# DISRUPT THE NORM

**Ministerial Development Conversation is a protected space for intentional conversation to enable real change and growth.**

**What others have said:**

*‘I had a really positive experience. It was so good to say it all out loud. I explored a lot in the time that we had together’*

*‘It was refreshing to be asked some powerful questions’*

*‘I had an epiphany - a moment when I knew what I was going to do’*

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# Adventure or die

As the Church enters uncharted territory, we need to think in new ways, not simply try harder, argues author and theologian **Tod Bolsinger**

## How do we keep our churches from dying?

The question was asked not once or twice, but in one form or another by over fifty people gathered in the room that day. I had just finished three presentations to a group of Methodist Christian educators and pastors in Portland, Maine. Now I was doing an additional workshop to answer questions and engage in further discussion on my topic. My topic had had nothing to do with church growth or congregational renewal. I was talking about Christian community and spiritual formation, sharing about my doctoral research and the necessity of healthy Christian communities for personal, individual spiritual transformation. The audience comprised Christian educators and ministers who were running Sunday schools, leading adult education classes or offering workshops and retreats for personal spiritual growth.

“When any system is imaginatively gridlocked, it cannot get free simply through more thinking about the problem”

But that’s not what they wanted to talk about.

The statistics of the Western church’s steady decline are well known. But most of us have been unprepared for how accelerated and disorienting that pace has become through the rapid and demonstrable marginalisation of the church in Western society. Most churches (with a few obvious exceptions) are dying. Extracurricular activities from music lessons to sports participation are considered by most parents to be more effective at forming good character in our children (and getting them accepted to good colleges!) than the church. Spirituality has become wildly popular but so deeply individualistic that the fastest-growing “religious affiliations” among those under thirty are “none” and “spiritual-not-religious.” As pastors, we were trained to teach those who come on their own, to care for those who call for help, to lead those who volunteer and to administer the resources of those who willingly give and participate. Now we are called on to minister to a passing parade of people who treat us like we are but one option in their personal salad bar of self-fulfilment. To do so will take a significant shift in thinking about pastoral leadership.

But if we are convinced that a change is necessary, how do we bring it without alienating the whole church? How do we face the losses and fears in our congregations, the opposition and resistance in our leaders, and the anxieties and insecurities in ourselves to truly lead the church through this adventure-or-die moment? How do we develop leaders for mission in this rapidly changing, uncharted-territory world?

If you are like me, indeed, like most people, what you do is default to what you know. *You do again, what you have always done before.*

In the movie *Moneyball*, Brad Pitt plays Billy Beane, the general manager of the Oakland Athletics baseball team. Oakland is a small-market team that doesn’t have the revenue to compete with the major-market teams like New York, Los Angeles and Boston. His best players keep leaving to make more money for those teams. His owner can’t give him any more money, and now he has to replace three star players. He gathers his staff together to explore what they can do about this problem. What does this highly trained, well-paid, experienced group of expert baseball minds do? They use the same thinking, the same approach, the same strategy they always use - which is not working.

Steve Yamaguchi, the dean of students at Fuller Theological Seminary, says that when his spiritual director took a flying lesson, he asked the instructor why they use flight simulators so much. The instructor said, “In the moment of crisis, you will not rise to the occasion; you will default to your training.”

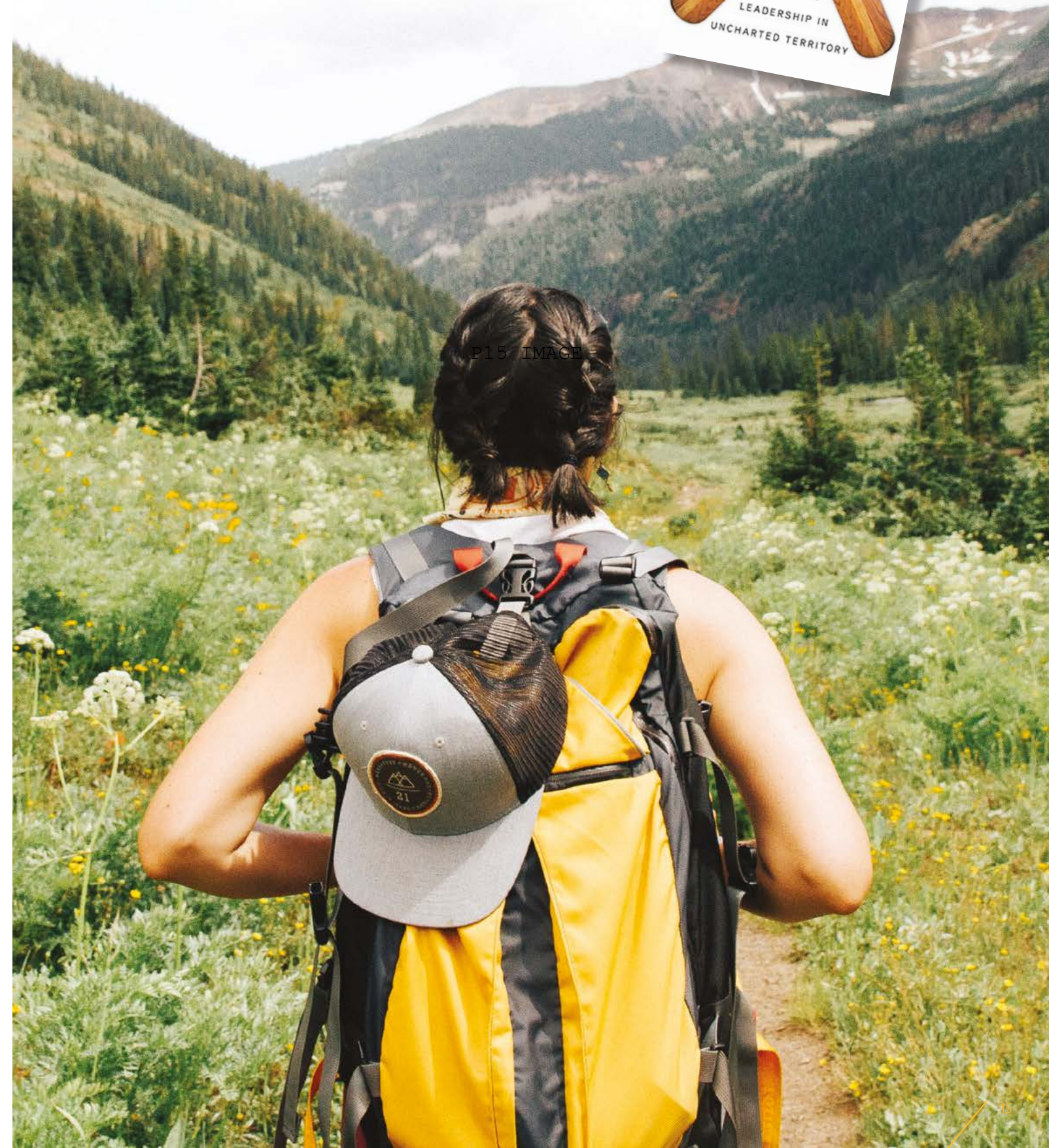
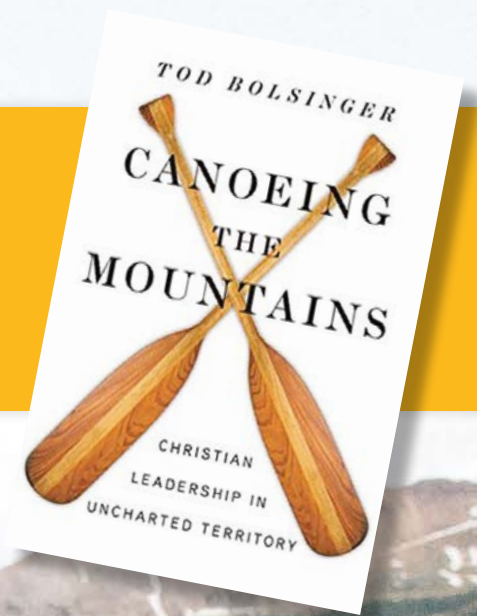
That was the problem of Billy Beane’s scouting staff and of most church leaders today. We pastors are well trained. We have lots of education and experience, and have had generations of success. Indeed, most of our congregations are filled with people who were blessed by what *once* worked. And so, we default back to those things.

For most of us in ministry, our defaults that once worked so well are not working, and we become discouraged. So, what do we do? *We talk longer* - we preach more. *We try harder* - we go into our bag of tricks and bring out our best programmes. *We give a personal touch* - we hope that caring for stakeholders will inspire them to change. But when talking longer or trying harder doesn’t work, what next? Mostly, we turn to tricks and tweaks. We use PowerPoint or Twitter. We add an electric guitar or an accordion. If we have the money, we buy new stuff.

Want a copy of Tod’s book?

Let us know and we can send you a copy using Study Leave or CMD

[ascend@churchofscotland.org.uk](mailto:ascend@churchofscotland.org.uk)







What is needed? “A spirit of adventure” where there are new, unexpected discoveries (serendipities) and ultimately “new perceptions”. To be sure, this is an adapt-or-die moment. This is a moment when most of our backs are against the wall, and we are unsure if the church will survive to the next generation. *The answer is not to try harder but to start a new adventure:* to look over Lemhi Pass and let the assumptions of the past go. To see not the absence of a water route but the discovery of a new, uncharted land beckoning us forward—yes, in the face of the uncertainties, fears and potential losses—to learn and to be transformed.

*What is needed? An adventure that requires adaptive capacity.*

The tests we face are not technical problems that can be solved with current understanding but adaptive challenges that are more systemic in nature. They are part of the very context and culture of the congregation and the changing world around it. They are usually expressed in the conflict of competing values within the church itself.

Adaptive challenges are never solved through a quick fix. If talking, trying or tricks work, they would have worked already. They are only going to be solved through new *insight* into the context, the values and the systemic issues at play in the congregation and within the leaders themselves. In other words, before we can *solve* any problem, we need to learn to see new possibilities. And, ironically, because the solution will be an adaptation of the core values, identity and theology of the congregation itself, seeing those possibilities depends on first seeing ourselves and our congregations as we really are.

Once we understand that, perhaps the most terrifying task of leadership begins. It is an enormous risk that requires the nerve to stand in front of a group of people and say out loud three words: *I don't know*. Literally: “I don't know what to do, and maybe, just maybe, *no one* knows what to do.” We need to clearly see that what we know to do doesn't work. We need to have the clear eyed humility to take an honest assessment and recognize that this challenge is beyond our talking, trying or bag of pastoral tricks.

Eventually we will start a discipline of looking at our problems differently, acknowledging each time anew that this is not a situation that calls for a new tweak or new technique; this is an opportunity for adventure, exploration and transformation. This is a moment when our congregation can take on new life, begin a new season of faithful expression. We can start imagining different possibilities. And we can learn new ways of leading. 🍌

This is an extract from *Canoeing the Mountains* by Tod Bolsinger. Copyright (c) 2015 by Tod Bolsinger. Published by InterVarsity Press, Downers Grove, IL. [www.ivpress.com](http://www.ivpress.com)

Tod Bolsinger is an author, pastor and leader at Fuller Seminary, California, where he is Vice President and Chief of Leadership Formation and Assistant Professor of Practical Theology. He is the author of three books: *It Takes a Church to Raise a Christian: How the Community of God Transforms Lives*, *Show Time: Living Down Hypocrisy by Living Out Faith*, and *Canoeing the Mountains: Christian Leadership in Uncharted Territory*.

Congregational systems guru Ed Friedman writes, “When any... system is imaginatively gridlocked, it cannot get free simply through more thinking about the problem. Conceptually stuck systems *cannot* be unstuck simply by trying harder.” Friedman clarifies the challenge in front of us: We are “imaginatively gridlocked”. We can't see our way to a new way of being, a new response. We are growing more anxious about the decline of the church and the demise of whole religious structures. We don't know what to do. So we keep trying harder; we keep trying our old tricks. But, of course, it doesn't work.

In *Moneyball*, an exasperated Billy Beane looks at his manager and tries to urge him to think differently. “It's adapt or die!” he says.

## Adapt or die

So what do we do to keep our churches from dying? What kind of adaptation is necessary? And how will we find the solutions if we are “imaginatively gridlocked”? Ed Friedman continues: “Conceptually stuck systems cannot become unstuck simply by trying harder. For a fundamental reorientation to occur, that spirit of adventure which optimises serendipity and which enables new perceptions beyond the control of our thinking processes must happen first.”

# WHERE TRANSFORMATION HAPPENS

Rev Neil Glover, Convener of Ministries Council, told Susan Mansfield about the need to encourage and support all those serving in ministry



*“The essence of Ministries Council is to encourage and inspire ministers. Everything we do has to be for the good of our ministers and ministry teams.”*

He said: “We've thought a lot about what ministry is, who ministers are. The term covers people who work in parish ministry, ministries development staff, deacons, chaplains and those deployed through Go For It.

“At the heart of each ministry is some sort of connection between the person who is the minister, the people they are engaging with, the person of God and the story of God which we call the Gospel. When that connection opens, transformation happens in individuals and communities.”

He said he had come to think of the role of the minister in terms of three concentric circles, the innermost being the spiritual life of the minister and his or her relationship with God. “That is where the transformation happens when God's spirit speaks to our spirit.

“The second layer is the layer of understanding. This is where theology comes in, emotional intelligence, resilient leadership and knowing how organisations work.

“The outer circle is to do with practice, how you preach a sermon, lead worship, visit people, handle a Kirk Session, support volunteers. It's only at this point that we get to the things which a lot of people think of first when they think of ministry. All three layers involve reflection and a willingness to learn and to change.”

His own recent experience has reminded him of the vital role that ministers play.

“I've very recently had the experience of moving charge to become the minister of a group of congregations, one of which has been vacant for seven years. When people talk about what it was like during the vacancy, they say things like: ‘The vacancy taught us a lot, we learned to do many things ourselves,’ but they are still extremely glad to have a minister.

“Having a minister creates a different sort of space for them, a different sort of story. It tells people unambiguously that the institution believes there is a future for this congregation. When you do that, you create a different kind of environment for people where you can begin to talk about the potential for new things. You make it easier for people to step out and see the world in new ways.”

He believes Ascend is about trying to do something similar for those working in ministry. “It's about trying to create the right environment for people in all different forms of ministry, making it easier for them to see the world in different ways and take new steps forward.” 🍌

**Being a minister has never been more demanding, and in the light of today's pressures, Ministries Council is reaffirming its role in supporting and encouraging everyone serving in ministry today.**

“Everything we do has to be to that end,” says Rev Neil Glover, Convener of Ministries Council.

“The essence of Ministries Council is to encourage and inspire ministers. Everything we do has to be for the good of our ministers and ministry teams. This was the key emphasis of our report to this year's General Assembly.

“I was thrilled at the number of people who spoke to me at the Assembly, who said they genuinely felt that Ministries Council was ‘with them’. I know there are many areas where we can improve, but there is a definite sense that we are going in the right direction. At the Assembly, we sensed a lot of support for the work of the Council.”

One key element of this effort is the development of Ascend Online, designed to make it easier for ministers to find support and resources, from booking study leave to accessing training or pastoral support.

As a serving minister, Neil Glover says he is all too aware of the pressures ministers are under, dealing with new legal and administrative responsibilities at a time when a nationwide shortage of ministers means many people are also taking on additional duties.

This is one of the reasons why this year's Ministries Council report asked the General Assembly to order a review of the training of ministers, with a view to making it easier for people to come into ministry. They will report back on their findings at next year's General Assembly.

Meanwhile, Neil Glover affirms that the central focus of Ministries Council is to “inspire, support, encourage and train our ministers - to offer them the best of the Church, and the best of the people of the Church.”



When the battery is flat and one becomes bored with the job's demands and routines, it's time for an honest conversation with God, as **Peter Neilson** illustrates

# STAYING FRESH

"Are not zeal for the glory of God, a love for the Lord Jesus Christ and a desire for the salvation of all, as far as you know your own heart, your main motives and chief inducements for entering upon the Holy Ministry?"

Lord, I remember responding to these words at my ordination. I remember the thrill of saying a whole-hearted "yes". I also appreciate the honest phrase: "as far as I know my own heart". Over the years, that has become more of a mystery as my declared motives and my psychological drivers become more difficult to unscramble.

Lord, can I be really honest for a moment? The spark has gone. The battery is flat. And I miss that deep stirring in my soul.

I recall a writer complaining that "my soul and my role were eating one another alive". That's it, Lord. A weariness and a staleness has drained my enthusiasm. I am bored with the relentless demands and the repetitious routines. The joy has gone.

"Zeal... love... desire..." are not part of my vocabulary these days.

Maybe I need a good rest, Lord, just like Elijah sleeping and eating before complaining to You on the mountain. I could add my litany of complaint to his. You know what - and who - I mean! I have been hurt too often and I feel the resentments forming a crust of cynical barnacles on my soul.

Elijah needed space and time out to hear Your "still small voice" again. From that came the challenge to raise up new leaders around him.

Forgive me, Lord, if I have been carrying the ministry of God's people as a solo enterprise. You spent three years going deep with the few, and then trusted Your Father to go wide with the many. Have I been going wide with the many and expecting You to go deep with the few? Maybe I have it all upside-down.

Time to ask: who am I mentoring and who is mentoring me? Lord, I would like to have a few friends who would meet with me regularly to share and pray and laugh and encourage one another. Was that not the original intention of presbyteries, Lord? What happened to that relational, pastoral and missional heartbeat? Strip us of Saul's armour and give us back our sling and stone.

**"I have become the professional wordsmith who crafts prayers for others, but I have forgotten how to commune with you"**



# IN MINISTRY

Lord, here I am laying bare my frustrations. When did I last pray like this? I have become the professional wordsmith who crafts prayers for others, but I have forgotten how to commune with You on the hoof and in the quiet space where fancy words are irrelevant.

I need to follow You to the quiet place and live in the "unforced rhythms of grace", attentive in the morning, pausing at noon and laying things down in Your hands at night. I seem to remember those days. Prayer time was never lost time. Prayer transforms time.

Lord, I really admire friends who have stayed long and stayed fresh in ministry. They speak of having a series of ministries within the one ministry. They seem to have found ways to clear away the clutter of "the job" and stay in touch with their core calling. From that centre, they are able to branch out in new directions, sometimes changing church and sometimes making changes in themselves. There are times when external change can be a way of avoiding inner transitions.

I have watched some taking long sabbaticals every 7-10 years to refocus and re-covenant. I have watched some find a mix of ministry "home and away", local and national or international.

I have observed that they often have a passionate interest beyond the Church: music, art, sport, academic pursuits, gardening, walking or sailing. They seem to have avoided letting life narrow its horizons to the Church, which can be a very cramped space.

Lord, has my world become too small? Is my God too small - shrunk to fit into the Church? Enlarge my vision of You. Enlarge my heart. Enlarge my life.

Lord, I am aware that I am not getting any younger. I seem to have reached a place where old words and familiar ways are not doing it for me anymore. (Maybe that's a good thing. The

old ways are not doing it for lots of people anymore! Maybe this boredom is a wee insight into how most people view Church. That's a new thought, Lord. Nothing is wasted in Your economy of grace.)

Anyway, Lord, before I started rambling I wanted to say that I am aware of an urge to try and turn the clock back to better days, to put the foot down on the accelerator in the hope of more gas to press onwards and upwards, doing what I have always done. But I wonder if that just leads to burnout or more frustration.

I sense another option, Lord: an invitation to go deeper with You, and with myself, a dialogue between the mystery of God and the mystery of me (and us!) - "as far as I know my own heart". Now, *that* is interesting!

## A Prayer for Renewal

"Create in me a pure heart O God,  
And renew a steadfast spirit within me;  
Do not cast me from Your presence  
Or take Your Holy Spirit from me.  
Restore to me the joy of Your salvation  
And grant me a willing spirit to sustain me."  
(Psalm 51:10-12)

**Which phrase lingers longer in your heart?**  
*How might you use this prayer to renew your "zeal... love...and desire"?*



Few would deny that the Church today faces significant challenges. But how do we begin to address them? Bearing in mind that there are many perspectives, and no easy answers, Ascend put this question to three people serving in ministry

# How I See it...

How does the church need to change?

## Rev Arthur Christie

Overcoming the survival mentality



When I was a minister in Prestwick, the then Moderator visited Ayr Presbytery. He asked: "How many Church of Scotlands are there in Prestwick?" and a minister colleague of mine said: "One".

The question was quickly rephrased: "How many

congregations...?" but, for me, that summed up the difficulties facing the Church over the last 40 years. Individual congregations are doing their own thing, concentrating on survival and focussing all their energy on their buildings, with a great reluctance to change and look outwards. We have slowly lost our sense of a Church with a coherent identity and a sense of mission.

I worked as an Human Resources manager in business before I came into the Church, so I was used to working as part of a team with common goals. As a new minister, I remember being aware of a tangible reluctance (on the part of ministers) to meet together to support one another in any real sense.

In St Andrews Presbytery, I wanted us to work together as a group of churches serving the whole area, each with different gifts. Rather than duplicating the same model in each church, we supported one another with our different gifts, which allowed ministers to play to their strengths. We all have to be adaptable, but there is more strength going through a process of change and transformation if you are together in a group supporting one another.

*"The Church was never meant to be for those of us who are part of it, it was meant to be for people beyond the walls"*

I think we need a new model of Church to go into the future. If you concentrate on having a minister of Word and Sacrament in every parish, you're repeating a Victorian model, but in many ways it's firefighting, there's no time for creativity and development. I believe the model of minister of Word and Sacrament in every congregation cannot be sustained and is wrong for the times we're living in.

It doesn't have to be all down to ministers. Other people are perfectly capable of ministering within the Church. They need to be released to be the Church. I've seen lay people do some great things, owning their church, leading it. With a wider variety of skills and experience, we could develop models of ministry to better meet the needs of the community.

I think too many ministers focus on making congregations comfortable rather than challenging and disturbing them. A minister's role is to do both: we need to comfort and provide security but we also need to disturb and challenge, otherwise where does change come from?

If you care for people, you want to keep them safe and secure, but you can lose sight of the goals and cease to see the bigger picture. The Church was never meant to be for those of us who are part of it, it was meant to be for people beyond the walls. "Go into all the world" - that's the core call, but it has been substituted over the years by the survival mentality.

**Rev Arthur Christie** has recently retired after nearly 25 years in parish ministry. Until earlier this year, he was minister of linked parishes in the East Neuk (Anstruther, Cellardyke and Kinrennie) in St Andrews Presbytery

## Rev Keith Graham

Reforming our resources



We need to find a way of reviewing our buildings more strategically. We have too many buildings, but we tend to proceed on a case-by-case basis: there is a union of congregations so we decide which building to keep and which to dispose of.

Our buildings are also a great asset, but we should concentrate on keeping the best. In a city like Edinburgh, for example, I think it would be far better to reduce the number of buildings we have (not necessarily reducing the number of congregations) and maintain the ones we do have at a high standard: instead of maintaining 75 buildings and just about managing, we'd have 30 or 40 at modern, fit-for-purpose requirements.

*"You can preach to people about mission, but if they don't have a strong sense of their own Christian identity, it's difficult for them to be confident about what they are being missional about"*

I also think we need some sort of reform of Kirk Sessions. Because Kirk Sessions are made up of Elders, and Elders are ordained for life, the group can often be stacked towards people who are elderly. In parishes where there are a lot of Elders, the Kirk Session can be 40 or 50 people: that's not a nimble body for making decisions, and it can be rooted in the past and resistant to change. A smaller number of people serving for a fixed term would make it easier to make decisions and move forward.

We are facing a shortage of ministers, but at the same time we are asking people who want to train for ministry to give up their jobs and go back to university for three years, then do a 15-month probationary placement as an assistant minister, and only after that start applying for jobs. For someone who has a job, a salary, a mortgage, a family

to support, that's a lot to ask. I think we should adopt a model more like a company graduate scheme, whereby we pay people from day one as part of their training.

Also - and I know this one will be deeply unpopular - I think we shouldn't be doing funerals for free. There has been a huge change in funerals in the past decade. Now, anyone organising a funeral has a range of options: a humanist celebrant, a non-religious celebrant or a minister, and everyone else is charging a fee. The Church of England charges a fee for each funeral. Even a £150 fee for a funeral would be worth a few million a year, and that could be used to pay for new ministries. There could still be provision for people who would struggle to pay.

Finally, a more abstract point. There's a lot of talk about mission, but the term is used so much it almost loses its meaning. We need to try to make sure we don't separate mission from identity. You can preach to people about mission, but if they don't have a strong sense of their own Christian identity through the education and nurture we offer, it's difficult for them to be confident about what they are being missional about. Sometimes, people focus on acts of charity because it's easier than sharing about what they believe. We need these two things, mission and identity, working closely together, energising each other.

**Rev Keith Graham** is minister of Murrayfield Parish Church in Edinburgh, and has been in ministry in Edinburgh churches for 10 years.



**Margaret Willis**

Getting alongside people

Our church service is quite traditional on a Sunday, and it doesn't attract the families I work with. But we do Messy Church in the middle of the week and it's full. I think that challenges what we think of as Church: is it just the Sunday morning service? Can Church be all the other things going on through the week?

Messy Church is a lot like church - we sing songs, pray and have a Bible story. All the fundamentals are there, it's just a bit more informal, people feel a bit more comfortable. There are crafts and activities around a theme, and we all eat together afterwards. It's very interactive, I think that's the difference, maybe that needs to be brought into other services sometimes.

*“Rather than expecting people to fit into Church culture, maybe we should be doing more to connect with people where they're at”*

Rather than expecting people to fit into Church culture, maybe we should be doing more to connect with people where they're at. If we have something like a parish baptism, where visitors come in, I have a feeling they're not quite sure where to sit, when to sit, when to

stand. Even some of the language we use in church is quite hard to understand. Some of our volunteers at Messy Church have challenged us about that: what does that actually mean?

If we were to isolate the Sunday morning service, it's not a true reflection of the numbers of people who come through the building during the week. But a lot of the families who come to Messy Church might not necessarily see that as Church. It has a lot to do with the preconceived idea of what Church is, and we have preconceived ideas as well.

We find that if we do anything at the weekend, even a Summer Fayre, it's not well attended. Families tell us that midweek is much easier for them. It might be because families are split and the children are elsewhere at the weekend. But people who work are often trying to fit that around childcare, working evenings and nightshifts, so the weekend might be their only time to be together as a family. Weekends have become more precious for families, and as a family worker I want to encourage and support them to have time together.

It's about the future, isn't it? Church numbers are decreasing. We've got a challenge ahead because I don't think the Church can keep going the way it is at the moment. There is a gap: there are kids around, and older people, but we're trying to reach the people in between, and families are part of that. It's about getting alongside people and seeing where they're at.

Messy Church isn't for everybody. It's about knowing your parish and what will work for the people there. We're all on a journey, faith-wise, and we're all still learning more about each other as well. It makes you wonder, are we chained to tradition? Do we really need to challenge ourselves? What is Church, and is that different for you and for me?

**Margaret Willis** is a member of Ministries Development Staff at Easterhouse Parish Church, Glasgow

# AN ONGOING MOVEMENT

The Protestant Reformation was one of the most powerful factors in the shaping of Western history. However, as theologian **Paul T. Nimmo** suggests, the reforming impulse should not be consigned to history alone

## THE LONG READ

*In 2017, events were held around the world to mark the 500th anniversary of the Protestant Reformation, that movement which split the medieval church in Western Europe with massive and enduring consequences. Events to mark the date took place in Scotland, notably in St Andrews, one of the places where Reformation ideas from Europe first landed on Scottish shores. But the most prominent events took place in Germany, focussing especially on the small town of Wittenberg in Saxony, around 60 miles south-west of Berlin.*

It was there, on 31st October 1517, that an Augustinian monk named Martin Luther is famously alleged to have nailed his '95 Theses' to the door of the All Saints' Church in an act which started the Reformation. In truth, it is not historically certain that Luther nailed the theses he wrote that year to any church door, let alone on that particular date. But his theses, and the controversy surrounding them, proved to be a catalyst for religious change and societal upheaval on a level that not even Luther could have anticipated.

Yet the Protestant Reformation was far from the first attempt to reform the church. Within the context of the Western medieval church, for example, there had been previous reforming impulses associated with places such as Cluny Abbey (in the 10th century), or with councils such as the Fourth Lateran Council (in the 13th century). These were reforming movements which were broadly contained *within* the existing structures and bounds of the church.

But there were other groups of reformers who preached or practised reform which were clearly *excluded* from the church and sometimes persecuted by the church – groups such as the Hussites in Bohemia; the Waldensians in France, Germany, and Italy; and the Lollards in England. And within the Protestant Reformation itself, the way in which the call for reformation spread and developed was markedly influenced by the different personalities, locations and points in time involved. In Scotland, for example, John Knox and the events of 1560 have far more direct historical significance and resonance than Martin Luther and those of 1517.

With this in mind, it may even seem rather problematic to speak of 'the Reformation' at all: it could be claimed that there was not truly one 'Reformation' but several – even within the early 16th century – each with its own character and context.



On the one hand, Protestantism has, from the beginning, played host to widely competing voices and hugely divisive controversies. Alongside those who inclined towards Luther and the Wittenberg reform (later known as 'Lutherans') there were also those who followed the reforming impulse present in the cities of Switzerland (later known as 'Reformed'); and alongside these arose a number of smaller, more radical, anabaptist movements such as M ntzerites, Mennonites, and Hutterites.

On the other hand, meanwhile, the path of Protestant reformation in each city or state where it was successful was greatly shaped by local particularities. The Scottish Reformation of 1560, for example,

of the Reformation, both in the past and in the present.

This common vision has, in recent years, been characterised by a series of five slogans called the five 'solas'. These are: *sola fide* ('by faith alone'); *sola gratia* ('by grace alone'); *sola scriptura* ('by Scripture alone'); *solus Deo gloria* ('glory to God alone'); and *solus Christus* ('Christ alone').

The first two 'solas' were central claims of Protestant belief in the era of the Reformation itself, and were used polemically against what was perceived to be the teaching of the medieval church regarding salvation. For Protestants, salvation was to be achieved 'by faith alone' *as opposed to by human works*, and 'by grace alone' *as opposed to by human merit*.

The third 'sola' describes the way in which Protestants defended their views against the previous teaching of the medieval church – on the basis of 'Scripture alone' *as opposed to tradition as a source equal with Scripture*. And the final 'solas' function similarly in terms of demarcating the position of Protestant thought: glory to God *as opposed to Mary or the angels or the saints*; Christ *as opposed to any other mediator*.

The very term 'Protestant' indicates that the whole

Reformation movement was born out of *protest* – the desire to oppose and to remedy the errors which were perceived to dwell in the teaching of the medieval church. Yet to rest with that simple portrait is to ignore the fact that, although it began in opposition to an existing paradigm of Christian life, the Reformation rapidly developed a new and positive vision of belief and practice.

At the heart of this paradigm was an unshakeable insistence that the relationship between God and the believer was mediated only by Jesus Christ, and was characterised by the interplay of divine grace and human faith. This insistence in no way denigrated the centrality of the church – including its clergy, sacraments, and traditions – or the necessity of good works or the importance of human community. However, each of these aspects of Christian existence was carefully considered in light of the reformers' reading of Scripture, and then subjected to major reform and renewal. The result had significant consequences for both church and society in those cities and lands in which the Reformation took hold.

Thus, it is no surprise that attitudes towards the 500th anniversary of the Reformation varied widely. At one extreme, particularly among conservative Roman Catholic scholars, the Reformation was lamented as the event which not only shattered the Western church, but also carried the blame for all manner of ills – from modern individualism through world wars to rampant capitalism. At the other extreme, particularly among conservative Protestant scholars, the Reformation was celebrated as the dawning of a new era in the history of the church, the liberation of the Gospel from the darkness of the errors and abuses of the medieval church.

Between these two extremes lay the more nuanced positions of moderate Roman Catholics and Protestants, who sought to recognise the impact of the Reformation in a more measured perspective. Here, the term regularly used was neither

## “At the heart of the Reformation lay a new understanding of salvation”

broadly followed the trajectory of Swiss reform, but its path was heavily influenced by unique contextual factors such as the state of the monarchy, the domestic relationship between church and state, and the competing influence of France and England.

Despite this multitude of reformations, however, there seem to be more than sufficient commonalities between the various early 16th-century church reform movements to justify the title 'the Reformation'. Luther's reforming impulses had been directed against certain aspects of the teaching and practice of the medieval church. He opposed, for example, the teaching that human beings could meet the demands of the divine law and thus achieve salvation (at least in part) by their own merit. And he opposed – above all, in the '95 Theses' – the church practice of selling indulgences, by which Christians were exempted from some of the works of penance required of them following confession in return for a donation.

Luther subsequently developed these original instincts further, and as others came to identify themselves with his reforming agenda, extending and fortifying his ideas, there emerged a common agenda of reform. For all the subsequent distinctiveness of the different Protestant reformations across Europe – for example, in respect of the understanding of the sacraments – there was always far more which united the teaching and practice of these churches than separated them.

At the heart of the Reformation lay a new understanding of salvation and how it was effected, and the undisputed source of this new understanding was the Word of God found in Scripture. It is these core features which unite the various manifestations



Continue »



celebration nor lament – or at least not the one without the other – but commemoration. There was a mutual and sober recognition not only of the gains of the Reformation, but also of its losses.

In the midst of such retrospective contemplation, there is a risk that the Reformation be conceived as a purely historical event – something that, for all that it may have background import or material echo in the present, belongs to the distant past and has no relevance for the present day. And the accompanying danger is that the reforming agenda of the 16th-century Protestant movement is also consigned to the past, as something that need not concern the church today.

Certainly, it would seem unhelpful to elevate the views, beliefs and practices of one particular moment in the life of the church above all others, whether that moment be the time of the Reformation or any other. That would be to ignore the changes in time and context, in people and needs, which have taken place across the intervening period, and to turn the goal of church reformation into a lifeless idol. It would also be to go against the basic instincts of the reformers themselves, whose explicit governing principle was to locate the criterion for true discipleship and true churches not in a moment or movement of history of their own devising but in the Word of God.

At the same time, the core impulses of the Reformation concerning the necessity of grace, the importance of faith, and the centrality of the Word of God would seem to have as much relevance for the church of today as for the church of every period. Such insights seem worthy of preservation at all times. Yet they are worthy of such not only in so far as they are considered to conform to the Word of God attested to us in Scripture. They are also worthy in so far as they must be made relevant and fresh for and in the church of today, and must be preached and lived for and in the world of today.

The reformers are thus to be seen not as a tribunal passing judgment on all subsequent church beliefs and practices, but rather as companions in the communion of saints, pointing us to the Word of God and calling us to deeper questions – and answers. For this reason, then, it is not simply the core Reformation impulses that may helpfully be retained but the core *reforming* impulse. It is no accident that, as early as the 17th century, the descriptor ‘the reformed church’ (*ecclesia reformata*) was expanded to run ‘the reformed church always in need of being reformed’ (*ecclesia reformata semper reformanda*).

Such reform, past or present, was always and explicitly to be reform ‘according to the Word of God’. Thus to speak of the need to preserve the reforming impulse of the Protestant Reformation is not to suggest that the Reformed churches should seek change for the sake of change, or that they should change in order to run with or conform to the fashion or culture of the surrounding world.

Instead, for the Reformed churches of the 17th century – as for those of the 16th century and those of today – the sole criterion was the Word of God. And this means that it is the ongoing task to contemplate and to discern the Word of God, as it comes to us today by the grace of God and by the power of the Spirit, that lies at the heart of the life of any truly Reformation church.

Our own church today is facing major challenges, from clergy shortages to dwindling congregations, from regulatory


overload to societal apathy, not to mention financial pressures. There is no doubt that reform of the church in diverse ways is needed, and that the traditional Presbyterian reluctance and obstructivism in respect of change must be addressed and tempered.

In seeking to learn from the example of the Reformation in our context, one might usefully consider afresh the outward-focussed nature of a church which takes seriously the reforming impulse. First, such a church will constantly look beyond itself to the Word of God for its direction, seeking to be inspired by the Spirit to attend to what service God desires of the people of God today. Second, such a church will constantly look beyond itself to the world for the arena of its witness and concern, seeking to be inspired by the Spirit to attend to the needs of the world with love and with justice.

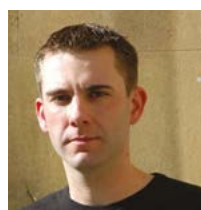
In both directions, the church will seek to continue to reform itself as is required to be the most effective servant possible. Nowhere is the church called upon to act with the aim of self-preservation or out of self-interest – the church is never the centre of its own mission.

If such a vision of the church has merit, if the church is indeed called to live *from* beyond itself and *towards* beyond itself, then all the more is this true of its people. And this is true, above all, of those who pastor to those people. For ministers of the church, then, as they engage with their own profound calling yet fearsome burden, this means that reformation always begins with the self, in their constant turning to God and seeking transformation from God.

Their work towards the ongoing reform of the church is thus only possible as an obedient act of discipleship when they desire and seek ongoing reform in their own lives. Such an act of seeking reform can only be undertaken in faith and prayer, in the knowledge that the blessings of God come new every morning.

The result of this act of seeking – the journey of reform and the resultant transformation of their minds, souls, voices, and actions by divine grace – will never be complete in this life. But in striving to embody and ensoul this constant dynamic of reformation, ministers will not only be invoking the reforming impulses of 500 years ago, but also faithfully guiding the church of the present day. 

**Prof Paul T. Nimmo** holds the King’s Chair of Systematic Theology at the University of Aberdeen. He is the co-editor – together with Rev Prof David Fergusson of the University of Edinburgh – of the *Cambridge Companion to Reformed Theology*, and a series of books and articles on different aspects of Protestant theology. He is an elder of Kemnay Parish Church, and a regular lay preacher. For four years, Paul was the Theological Adviser for the *Learn* programme, producing learning resources for local churches including the bestselling ‘*Eldership*’ volume.



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Coach and communicator, **Di Murray**, founder of *ComingUp4Air*, describes the approach she has developed for exploring reform in our inner lives, so that we can begin to be agents of change in the world and in the Church

# Creating a Breathing Space

My more honest conversations with friends and fellow members of our local parish centre on an **AWARENESS** of our growing disenfranchisement, disconnection and, quite frankly, disappointment with Church as it is. We are challenged with holding two things at the same time: our deep longing for Church to be a place of meaningful connection with the divine, with ourselves and with one another, and an **ACCEPTANCE** that it can also be a place where we experience distance from all three.

The lack of **ALIGNMENT** with the things we truly value when trying to maintain the status quo or, indeed, protesting for change, is exhausting. Striving for the **AGILITY** needed to cope with the demands of our outer world and the deep unrest in our inner world can feel like a contortion of protest.

I am curious about the process that led up to the Reformation and how we now go about reforming our hearts, minds and bodies as we wrestle with reforming our outer world. What practices are going to assist us in the process? What postures do we need to adopt?

*Reform - Making changes to something to set it back on the right path...*

ComingUp4Air was born out of a sense of inner disconnect and discomfort with the status quo and a yearning for meaningful spaces to explore something 'other'. It began with my own inner unrest and deep listening, before it was nurtured through conversation and collaboration with the community.

The four 'postures' provide a framework to investigate our inner world, in order to be part of the change that we long to see in our outer world. They are offered through workshops, retreats and supportive one-to-one coaching. While change begins deep inside us, we can be supported in community and champion reform in others through values of **curiosity, compassion and courage**.

ComingUp4Air provides collective spaces where we can linger over questions without jumping to answers, deepening our approach to self-care and to the care of others. Those on the fringes and deep within the foundations of Church long for honest exchanges and spaces to breathe. In these places of uncertainty, there's permission to try and fail and - importantly - contribute and belong to the emergence of the Spirit-led 'new'.

How can we as leaders hold spaces like this, if we have never had them held for us? If our protest remains inside us unspoken, will it consume, debilitate and ultimately distort who we are designed to be? It is a spiritual matter to listen deeply to the source of this protest. What would it take, then, to set things back on the right path - the very definition of reformation?

## The 4 Postures of ComingUp4Air:

### Rest with Awareness

It's no surprise we need to **REST** our minds from the information- and communication-saturated age we live in and its falsehood that people have the right to unfettered access to us. Rest and solitude can unleash a mind run ragged with rumination, regretting the past or worrying about the future.

Rest is more than a physical place. Indeed, in this distracted world, solitude is more a **state of mind**. A 16th century Spanish monk suggests true rest is "letting go of the things you use to reliably prop you up and just rest(ing) in the darkness".

Do we need to "rest in our unrest" on the path to reformation? What would it look like if we did this consciously, collectively, creatively? ComingUp4Air offers mindful, restful practices to apply in the everyday.

### Reflect with Acceptance

I notice a reluctance to accept fully the revelation that fresh awareness might bring. We avoid, sidestep and sideline the painful things with a desire to move to the answer, a positive spin, a theological explanation of what Jesus would do, or perhaps to just put our heads down and keep going.

Awareness can also provoke a deep fear response, tipping us into being overwhelmed at the state of our world, our Church or our perceived shortcomings. If we really lean in and accept the current state of our institution, our Church, our relationships, are we giving up?

Far from rendering ourselves impotent, acceptance is fully facing into the reality of things as they are. Practices within CU4Air enable us to reflect with compassionate acceptance and the childlike curiosity we are called to adopt: important pre-requisites for reformation.

### Restore with Alignment

The third CU4Air 'posture' is a turning towards our values, reminding ourselves of the unique God-seed in us. It is about realigning and attuning both to the value of our diversity and the diversity of our values. In gaining clarity about what energises or drain us, what drives our sense of purpose, we can experience ease and joy in what we say 'yes' to and, conversely, contentment with our 'nos'.

Restorative leadership requires a vulnerability and a courage devoid of shame. We are then restored to recognise and release others in their own values-aligned work. Being a champion of someone else is one of the most powerful and privileged opportunities we have in this life. ComingUp4Air draws on tools which help us identify and nurture our values, but also see where we might need to "adjust the volume" of certain values to better serve ourselves and those in our care.

*"ComingUp4Air provides collective spaces where we can linger over questions without jumping to answers"*


### Reset with Agility

Confession and forgiveness are available to us moment by moment and help us to reset, but we can quickly return to binary ways of thinking and being. Rigid postures, be they biological, psychological or theological, can prevent us from being agile in our leading.

Yet agility is what we most need in our busy, stressful parish lives. A 'conform or compete' mindset, for example, does little to set us free for creativity, nor does it enable us to champion it in others. There are no short cuts when it comes to agility. Current social science research focussing on our adaptive capacity in a rapidly changing world is confirming that we can indeed be "transformed by the renewing of our minds": new neural networks can be laid down as we turn towards more emotionally agile ways of thinking.

Coming Up 4Air encourages you towards wonder and awe again, to engage, through curiosity and courage, all of our senses and all of our being. Living in one of the most disembodied cultures and times the world has known, we need practices which help us to reset, with permission to fail and try again, to laugh at ourselves and become more agile.

Luther reflected: "God writes the Gospel not in the Bible alone, but also on trees and in the flowers and clouds and stars." This was born out in his love of music and acknowledges that music, metaphor and nature deeply connect us to our creator and our authentic selves.

ComingUp4Air draws on elements of the natural world through our workshops, inviting you to engage with more embodied ways of being and with your senses (not just your sensibilities). We use creative exercises, journaling and coaching tools to resource us as we go through the four postures. 



**Di Murray**, the founder and creator ComingUp4Air, is a resilience practitioner, coach, communicator and creative. In church culture as in the rest of the world, we find perfectionism, performance and pace depleting sustainable wellbeing. ComingUp4Air offers powerful practices to help push back. Described as a "compassionate disrupter", Di enjoys facilitating spaces which fertilise the ground for seeds of reformation in our land to be sown. Find out more at [www.Comingup4air.com](http://www.Comingup4air.com) Contact her at [di@comingup4air.com](mailto:di@comingup4air.com)



## BUCHAN PRESBYTERY: A PLACE OF CONTRASTS

Buchan is an area of undiscovered beauty, but many congregations face the challenge of long-term vacancies

From rolling green fields inland to the rugged cliffs and fishing ports of the coast, Buchan is a picturesque hidden gem, often overlooked, between the busy city of Aberdeen and the Moray Firth.

The area stretches over 277 square miles, with a population of 40,000. Peterhead, on the east coast, is the main town, but there are many villages and hamlets dotted across the land. The winding sandy beaches of Fraserburgh and the RSPB's Loch of Strathbeg Nature Reserve in Crimond ensures that outdoor lovers are well catered for. In fact, the nature reserve acts as a vital area during the winter for up to a fifth of the world's pink-footed geese.

Buchan has a total of 23 charges and 34 congregations. As with the majority of Presbyteries across Scotland, it faces the ongoing challenge of meeting the demand for ministers to serve these thriving congregations. Indeed, the linked charges of Crimond and Lonmay have the unfortunate record for holding the longest vacancy within the Church of Scotland, currently 16 years. However, the dedication and hard work of the Kirk Session, Board and church members has ensured they maintain an ongoing Christian service in the parish.

“There is a good quality of life here in a beautiful rural area”

Rev Sheila Kirk, Presbytery Clerk.

Overall, there are currently 12 vacant charges within the Presbytery – 52% of the overall total – and this figure is not anticipated to reduce. As the majority of these vacancies have been advertised for over a year, it has been a challenging time for Buchan. However, church leaders in the area have expressed an interest in replicating the model of Hub Ministry which was put in place in Argyll Presbytery earlier this year.

With a few ministerial retirements coming up, the Church faces the added challenge of preserving its service to the local community when they need it most. Indeed, the community's traditional fishing and agricultural industries are being threatened by the outcome of the recent Brexit vote, due to their heavy reliance on European Union subsidies. This is on top of the current downturn in the oil industry on which parts of the local community relies.

Despite Buchan's challenges, it remains a flourishing and friendly area with strong inter-community spirit, and its local congregations remain at the heart of this.



### Year of Young People 2018

Buchan's congregations are taking part in this year's Year of Young People events, and hope to reach out to the younger members of the local community through a variety of events and initiatives.

### Messy Church

Local churches are actively participating in the Messy Church initiative, which fosters relationships and provides a fun space for local families outside of the usual church context.

### Geocaching Trails

Churchyards and buildings will be turning digital this year with the introduction of new geocaching trails. Geocaching is a treasure hunting game where participants use GPS to seek out hidden containers. It's a fun, free way for people to explore our churches, get outdoors and off the beaten track.

### Puppet Ministry

In 2015, Maud and Savoch Church were awarded a Go For It grant to develop a team of adults and young people trained in puppetry skills, allowing them to deliver the Christian message to the community in a fun and accessible way.

### Global Twinning

New Deer St Kane's and Maud and Savoch Church have been linked with M'buka CCAP, a church in Malawi, since 2011. Several visits to and from Malawi have been made since the twinning started.



Gabby Dench  
Pastoral Support Manager

Ascend is committed to developing a Pastoral Supervision Strategy that allows for every minister within the Church of Scotland to engage with the practice of supervision if they so choose. We currently have some funding available and this will increase further in 2019 and beyond. If you would like to explore pastoral supervision further please get in touch.

[ascend@churchofscotland.org.uk](mailto:ascend@churchofscotland.org.uk)

## SUPERVISION - IS IT FOR YOU?

Pastoral Support Manager **Gabby Dench** explores how the practice of supervision can support those in ministry

### What is supervision?

The Association for Pastoral Supervision and Education (APSE) define pastoral supervision as:

- a regular, planned, intentional and bounded space in which a practitioner skilled in supervision (the supervisor) meets with one or more other practitioners (the supervisees) to look together at the supervisees' practice
- a relationship characterised by trust, confidentiality, support and openness that gives the supervisee freedom and safety to explore the issues arising in their work
- spiritually/theologically rich – works within a framework of spiritual/theological understanding in dialogue with the supervisee's world view and work
- psychologically informed – draws on relevant psychological theory and insight to illuminate intra-personal and inter-personal dynamics
- contextually sensitive – pays attention to the particularities of setting, culture and world view
- praxis based – focusses on a report of work and/or issues that arise in and from the supervisee's pastoral practice
- a way of growing in vocational identity, pastoral competence, self-awareness, spiritual/theological reflection, pastoral interpretation, quality of presence, accountability, response to challenge, mutual learning
- attentive to issues of fitness to practice, skill development, management of boundaries, professional identity and the impact of the work upon all concerned parties

### What pastoral supervision is not

APSE also helpfully outlines what pastoral supervision is not:

- Spiritual accompaniment – for the sole or primary purpose of exploring the spiritual life and development of the supervisee(s). Aspects of this may arise in pastoral supervision but are not the main focus.
- Counselling – for the purpose of helping the supervisee(s) gain insight into their personal dynamics, or helping the supervisee(s) to resolve or live more positively with their psycho-social limitations. Aspects of this may arise in pastoral supervision and, if necessary, the supervisee(s) may be encouraged to seek counselling support.
- Line management – for the purpose of addressing professional practice and development issues in relationship to the supervisee(s)'s performance and accountability (whether paid or voluntary) to her/his employer. Aspects of this may arise in pastoral supervision but are not the main focus.

### Is pastoral supervision for you?

We believe that pastoral supervision could be an effective support to all those in ministry and that is why we are committed to funding this opportunity for any minister who wants to explore this further. You can find out more information on [www.churchofscotland.org/ascend](http://www.churchofscotland.org/ascend) or by contacting the pastoral team. 🚀



# 60 SECONDS

with

Rev Professor Andrew McGowan



## Name:

The Rev Professor Andrew McGowan

## Minister since:

1978

## Minister for:

Inverness East Church

## Education:

Tannochside Primary School, Uddingston Grammar School, Aberdeen University (BD), Union Theological Seminary, New York (STM), Aberdeen University (PhD)

## Relationship status:

Married to June for 40 years. We started going out while we were still at school.

## Family:

We have three sons: Scott (married to Rachel); David (married to Pamela); and Christopher (getting married to Katie in June). David and Pamela are expecting our first grandchild in July. We already look after their beagle, Holly, while they are at work, so we are getting used to babysitting.

## First Job:

After my assistantship at St Cuthbert's in Edinburgh, my first parish was Mallaig and the Small Isles. It had six places of worship - Mallaig, Eigg, Muck, Rum, Canna and Knoydart five of them accessible only by boat!

## My Faith:

I was born and brought up in the Church of Scotland and when I was 14 I was born again and came to know Christ personally. That same year I sensed a call to the ministry. My faith and my study of Scripture led me to the evangelical and reformed strand within the church and I have a vision to see the Church of Scotland restored to the vibrant, reformed faith which it demonstrated in the earliest days of the Scottish Reformation.

“(I need to) recognise that I can't do all the things I'm asked to do, or even all the things I want to do. My wife says that I should stand in front of the mirror and practise saying 'No'.”

## My Life before Ministry:

I went straight from school to university, then to postgraduate study and then on to St Cuthbert's, so there was no 'before'.

## My Call to Ministry:

I was sitting in my home church (Viewpark, Uddingston) one day when I had an overwhelming conviction that God wanted me to be a minister. I thought that this was a very bad idea. It sounded like a rather dull life to me; I wanted something more exciting. Before long, however, I understood that it truly was God's call and I embraced it wholeheartedly. It has never been dull.

## I'm delighted...

That I came under the teaching and influence of three special men while I was a student. First, I sat under the ministry of William Still in Gilcomston South Church in Aberdeen and learned the importance of systematic exposition of the Scriptures. Second, I had a placement at Gilcomston Park Church under the ministry of Archie Campbell, who taught me to read widely and think beyond the confines of my tradition. Third, I had Professor J.K.S. Reid as a teacher in theology. He encouraged me to study systematic theology and had one of the sharpest minds I have ever encountered. He also preached at my ordination in St Cuthbert's.

## My superpower is:

My wife June, who has supported, encouraged, helped and kept me going through 40 years of marriage and ministry. She has also helped to prevent me from making many bad decisions.

## I love ministry because:

It is a great privilege to preach, teach and minister the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. It is also a privilege to be with people through their joys and sorrows, through births and deaths, weddings and funerals.

## My biggest challenge is:

Learning to pace myself and to recognise that I can't do all the things I'm asked to do, or even all the things I want to do. June says that I should stand in front of the mirror and practise saying 'No'.

## I'd rather be:

As good a guitar player as my son Christopher.

## People don't know:

I love boats. This started with my years travelling around the Small Isles in my first parish. While in that parish, I was recruited by Donald Erskine of the National Trust for Scotland to serve as chaplain on their annual cruise. I have now done this for 33 years. 🚢



Peggy Mulambya-Kabonde

General Secretary of the United Church of Zambia

# CHANGING FOR THE BETTER

In the last 50 years, the United Church of Zambia has undergone major changes, but is emerging as a strong, dynamic and self-resourcing organisation, writes **Peggy Mulambya-Kabonde**

Traditionally, in the past, the United Church of Zambia has depended on overseas partners, mainly in the Northern hemisphere, to provide resources to undertake its operations and mission programmes. This is a throwback to the colonial part of our history and was not helpful or dignifying to either side.

Independence and the post-colonial era in Zambia brought great change. There was a paradigm shift, with the focus in mission in the world shifting from the Northern hemisphere to the Southern. As a young, developing church, the United Church of Zambia was affected by this. We realised the importance of embarking on a long-term stewardship programme to make our Christians aware of the necessity, morally and spiritually, to become more self-reliant. We needed to look to God and to ourselves for what we needed to be the people of God doing God's work.

This ambitious project has led us to begin many income-generating activities at every level. At present, the UCZ is able to meet 75 per cent of the costs of all its mission programmes. Paul, the apostle, was a tent-maker who generated income to fund his mission. A number of our clergy now have their own 'tent-making' activities so they are not totally reliant on their stipend or pension.

Our Synod Complex Building, which was crowd-funded, demonstrates another form of income generation which helps ensure greater financial independence for the Church as a whole.

The Zambian Government has embarked on a process of decentralisation in order to bring its services closer to the people, creating a new province and new districts.

Administratively, the UCZ has pre-empted this by expanding its own presbyteries. We now have a presence nationwide and are represented in all provinces and districts, even outside our traditional heartlands, with a significant presence in North-western and Eastern Provinces.

Nationwide we proclaim the love of the Lord Jesus Christ by word and deed, under God's direction, and demonstrate our concern for the spiritual, social and physical wellbeing of all people. We call it holistic salvation.

We work with the government to bring quality education to the Zambian people, enhancing our reputation by rebranding our schools to improve both the infrastructure and the teaching and learning environments. There is income-generation here, too, through agriculture and leasing of facilities in the holidays.

Similar work is underway with health. A recent development has been the opening of five 'health posts' at UCZ Churches in the slums of Lusaka to take the pressure off the government clinics. These UCZ clinics offer frontline healthcare in otherwise under-served areas of the city.

With the Social Development and Social Justice Department, we undertake advocacy, alongside more practical activities, to empower disadvantaged groups. Tailoring, chicken-rearing, peanut butter making, vocational training, communion wafer making and Mother and Child groups are all areas in which the Church is involved.

This missional approach nurtures and supports, is God-

Continue »





centred and attuned to people's needs. It speaks out for and stands with the suffering and marginalised, in partnership. We work locally, with like-minded ethical groups, and internationally where appropriate, working for transformation and bringing fullness of life.

Our UCZ missional congregations reach out to their surrounding community with partners, not always needing to look to the centralised Church for resources. As a Church which was born in the midst of Empire, we try to avoid the dependency syndrome: Revive thy Works, O Lord, is our theme.

As a country, Zambia is still too reliant on outside help to address our needs. Both Church and nation need partners, not experts telling us what to do. Zambians also need to take

*“We needed to look to God and to ourselves for what we needed to be the people of God doing God's work”*

greater responsibility for things, beginning with ourselves. The littering of our environment and deforestation are cases in point. The UCZ is campaigning to ban the use of plastic bags and to preserve, protect and replace tree cover in Zambia.

Leadership training for both laity and clergy is taking place through Theological Education by Extension in Zambia (TEEZ) and other programmes, so that authority can be delegated when necessary. Church management and leadership has become more democratic and collegiate, less hierarchical than it used to be.

Congregations are empowered to think, plan and act in God's calling. They work together to realise the vision, sharing the


Gospel in their communities by serving both the Church and unchurched.

The UCZ realises that people need to have an income before they will give. Once leaders are equipped and gifts recognised, and the Gospel is shared in practical ways, generous giving for the work will follow.

Devotions, Bible Study and prayer are also part and parcel of a missional congregation. Christ-centred worship is integral, as is discipleship for growth and putting into practice our faith through service to others.

The partnerships we make are strategic, and do not compromise our identity or integrity. Our aim is transformation, as we make people aware of new paradigms and provide alternative models to Empire. Care and support for people and their development is what our UCZ missional work is all about. Mission is God's place of activity where we share the good news, having empowered our presbyteries, congregations and sections.

Christ's Mission came from the margins to the centre, from the marginal town of Nazareth in Galilee to Jerusalem. In the past the UCZ was a victim of change, but over time we have learned

the need to be agents of change, shaping and forming our own way and direction. We believe these changes to be God's way forward for us as he transforms, creates, liberates and reconciles. 

**Peggy Mulambya-Kabonde** is the General Secretary of the United Church of Zambia. UCZ is the largest Protestant church in Zambia, active in all ten of the country's provinces. It has three million members in 1,060 congregations



**Jane Howitt**  
Minister, St Rollox  
Church of Scotland,  
Sighthill, Glasgow

Reflecting on Psalm 137, **Jane Howitt** looks at how the great truths of the Lord's song can be an anchor in changing circumstances

## SINGING THE LORD'S SONG IN A FOREIGN LAND

Chosen, enforced or threatened, sometimes even willingly embraced, change is no stranger to any of us. It comes uninvited, suddenly, and challenges us to respond. It creeps up stealthily and disrupts the status quo. Occasionally, we long for it and wonder why it takes so long to arrive. Even when change is long-awaited, it still has the power to discombobulate.

**Take a moment to think about a recent change, and the disruption it brought to your life, then reflect on how you reacted to it.**

The questions the Lord's people ask in Psalm 137 help me think about change. Exiled, far from home, those who had escaped Nebuchadnezzar's purge with their lives found

*“For the Israelites in Babylon, the Lord's song was constant, unchanging. Its content was their anchor”*

themselves in an unfamiliar land, very different to anything they had known. This forced relocation plunged them into a new cultural experience. Change deprived them of security and set them in a place where their normal everyday coping mechanisms were severely challenged.

Demands were made upon them that shifted the landscape of their minds away from answers and rational certainties towards questions of theological and spiritual contextualisation which up till then they had taken for granted. Just think of the Lord's songs that they had been so used to singing in Jerusalem, and the delight with which they offered that praise to God as part of the temple tradition. How were they to sing them now, when everything around had changed?

Praise on demand, how did that work? And praise, when their external environment speaks of pain, loss and flux? What is the appropriate response that will preserve both integrity and life in the face of their captors?

**What situations have you encountered recently in which the old certainties and answers you relied upon were overtaken by changing circumstances? Has change brought a fresh theological and spiritual searching for a new honesty and integrity to contextualize faith and practice?**

Identifying that which remains unchanging in the midst of flux is a way of anchoring ourselves in times of change. For the Israelites in Babylon, the Lord's song was constant, unchanging. Its content was their anchor. The great truths of the Lord's song - His historic faithfulness, His undisputed righteousness, His powerful acts of salvation, prophetic promises and enduring love - provided an immovable point of reference.

It helped them understand their current position and tease out its practical implications for them. That's why it was so important to remember the past and all that Jerusalem stood for, particularly in terms of being the place where God was known. The challenge facing God's people was about learning how to communicate that great song in their new, vastly changed surroundings.

**How are your song-writing skills? Perhaps you could take some time to reflect on what the content of the Lord's song might be and then put it into your own words and use it in a time of praise.**

Increasingly, in the Church, we find ourselves in a foreign land. Our landscape has changed dramatically. Where once we were a recognized voice, we are rapidly becoming a marginalized voice. The environment in which the Church finds itself in our current society reflects pain, loss and flux





and that is a part of our experience as we seek to learn how to sing the Lord's song in this unfamiliar landscape.

Like the exiles, we are working out how we sing this unchanging song among those who have no experience of what Jerusalem represented. The foreign land has stripped us of much of our confidence because that which we knew and were certain of has been challenged by the fresh and acute need to recontextualize. And just as we think we have found a way to fit the new context, it changes again.

In these circumstances, one can find oneself living in a permanent state of discomfort and drift. That temptation must be resisted by identifying in our situation that which is unchanging in terms of our identity as the people of God. A good place to start is to remind ourselves of the Lord's song, how it is a song of joy which anchors us amid the fluidity of 21st-century Scottish society.

One can admire the strength and courage of the exiles as they wrestled with this question and ultimately found a way to sing the Lord's song in that foreign land. One can admire their integrity in posing the question and not just assuming that the same old solutions would work in this new situation of change.

**In what ways might we recontextualize our singing of the Lord's song in this new landscape facing the Church in Scotland today, both externally and internally? How might the Lord's song ring out in such a way as to be heard afresh in today's culture?**

Exile has a way of strengthening identity. It has its own Spirit-breathed way of birthing creative thinking and practice that leads into the post-exile period with clear intentionality. It brings a fresh perspective borne out of radical, rigorous engagement with the theological and spiritual questions present in the community of God's people.

Exile might bring a separation from external familiarity, but it does not bring separation from the presence and power of God and His Spirit. It is that internal anchor of relationship with God: Father, Son and Spirit that enables us to ride the waves of change rather than to sink under them.

**Take a moment or two to recognise the creativity the Holy Spirit is bringing into your own situation and how he is prompting fresh and innovative practice in your ministry and the community of God's people in which you are set.** ➤

### Prayer

Lord God, You know the challenge of singing Your song in the foreign land in which we as a Church find ourselves at this time. You also promise to equip us and enable us to serve You, so we look to You to keep that promise to us and to encourage us through the ministry of Your Holy Spirit. Remind us of the great truths contained in Your song and lift our eyes afresh to see You in all Your glory, for Jesus' sake.

Amen.

## ENABLING CONVERSATIONS THAT LEAD TO CHANGE



**6-7 NOVEMBER IN ABERDEEN**

### Change...

*'...places demands on us as individuals and as a Church to become change ready and adaptable: strengthening and maintaining our core values while being ready and prepared to adjust to our changing environment.'*

Dialogue is the basis of all human relationships and enabling conversations help us to plot our pathways through life. There is research emerging about the benefits of growing a 'conversational culture' whereby organisations are helping people to improve the quality of conversations so that they become the main source of change within those organisations.

Includes DiSC Profile.

Book online now – eligible for Study Leave and First Five Years.

**[www.churchofscotland.org.uk/ascend](http://www.churchofscotland.org.uk/ascend)**

## PROJECT MANAGEMENT TRAINING COURSE



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Learn how to manage and coordinate projects. Further your understanding on;

- the definition of a project
- the value of applying the PRINCE2 or Agile structured approach to projects
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- how to carry out a simple risk assessment.

Book online now – eligible for Study Leave and First Five Years.

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# WHO IS WHO?



**NEIL  
GLOVER**

Neil is Convener of Ministries Council. He believes in the transformational power of ministry to change both the minister and those around them. His vision is of a Council which exists to support ministry.  
[nglover@churchofscotland.org.uk](mailto:nglover@churchofscotland.org.uk)



**GABBY  
DENCH**

Gabby Dench is our Pastoral Support Manager. Gabby is passionate about providing care for “caregivers” and firmly believes in the importance both of listening and being heard. Gabby co-leads on Ascend.  
[gdench@churchofscotland.org.uk](mailto:gdench@churchofscotland.org.uk)



**JAYNE  
SCOTT**

Jayne is Council Secretary for Ministries Council. She offers strategic leadership in support of the Council’s development of its vision, strategies and plans. Jayne manages the work of Ministries Council and leads the Ministries Senior Management Team.  
[jscott@churchofscotland.org.uk](mailto:jscott@churchofscotland.org.uk)



**HELEN  
SILVIS**

Helen Silvis is a Communications Manager for the Church of Scotland who works with people from all walks of life to tell stories that uplift and inspire. Helen believes everyone has a story to tell.  
[hsilvis@churchofscotland.org.uk](mailto:hsilvis@churchofscotland.org.uk)



**CHRIS  
FLEXEN**

Chris Flexen is the Design Team Leader in the Church of Scotland’s Communications Department. He works to provide a design service that contributes creatively to its councils and departments.  
[cflexen@churchofscotland.org.uk](mailto:cflexen@churchofscotland.org.uk)



**RHONA  
DUNPHY**

Rhona Dunphy is our Pastoral Support Officer. Knowing that even people who work within the church can hurt, she aims to offer the care and resourcing they deserve.  
[rdunphy@churchofscotland.org.uk](mailto:rdunphy@churchofscotland.org.uk)



**ELEANOR  
MCMAHON**

Eleanor is the Vice-Convener responsible for Education and Support. As an interim minister, she supports congregations travelling in times of challenge and change.  
[emcmahon@churchofscotland.org.uk](mailto:emcmahon@churchofscotland.org.uk)



**DAVID  
PLEWS**

David Plews is the Education & Training Secretary for Ministries Council and co-lead on Ascend. David’s background is in theology and projects. David leads the change programme for ministerial training.  
[dplews@churchofscotland.org.uk](mailto:dplews@churchofscotland.org.uk)



**RUTH  
MACLEOD**

Ruth MacLeod is the Head of Communications for the Church of Scotland, managing a multi-disciplinary team which is focussed on delivering effective communication.  
[rmacleod@churchofscotland.org.uk](mailto:rmacleod@churchofscotland.org.uk)



**EILEEN-JOANN  
MCCORMICK**

Eileen-Joann is Ascend’s CMD Project Officer. Her focus is on project management, including the planning and delivery of the many resources and services provided by Ascend.  
[ejmccormick@churchofscotland.org.uk](mailto:ejmccormick@churchofscotland.org.uk)



**LEZLEY  
STEWART**

Lezley is the Recruitment & Support Secretary for Ministries Council, providing leadership for vocational guidance of ministries in the Church and oversight of the pastoral support services of the Council.  
[lstewart@churchofscotland.org.uk](mailto:lstewart@churchofscotland.org.uk)



**CRAIG  
RENTON**

Craig is our Depute Council Secretary, acting on behalf of the Council Secretary during any absence and with line management responsibility for the Council’s various functions.  
[crenton@churchofscotland.org.uk](mailto:crenton@churchofscotland.org.uk)

*Lord God, You call us to come, just as we are  
and discover that You are a God of Word and Action.  
Your Word became flesh in Jesus, who showed Your love through his actions -  
most powerfully in his death and resurrection.  
Your Word and Action reforms and challenges our thinking,  
setting us on the path of faith and discipleship.*

*We give thanks that the disciples did not retreat to hide behind closed doors  
but through the power of the Holy Spirit they were renewed and reformed to go out -  
for Jesus had said ‘Peace be with you... I send you out’.  
That message is as fresh today as it was then  
and our prayer is for an awakening within Your Church -  
that all-reforming, renewing, liberating power  
that vitalised men and women down through the ages with vision and wisdom.*

*Sometimes we find ourselves stuck in a rut and it is difficult to find that path to renewal.  
Often familiar ways and routines feel comfy, just like a favourite jumper.  
We wear it out until the holes can no longer be repaired and it is only fit for the bin.  
Forgive us when we sometimes cling to the past.  
Help us to have a clear-out of what is worn and done and embrace the new with joy,  
remembering Jesus’ words – ‘Behold I make all things new’.*

*Lord, come with Your reforming power and challenge Your Church today.  
You were never one to let the grass grow under Your feet.  
Your teaching was radical and challenging,  
a fresh inspiration to all who listened and took Your words to heart.  
Yes, You angered those who didn’t like Your ‘new ideas’ -  
and we have all been guilty of that!  
Free us from all that stunts growth.  
Plant the seeds of hope and faithfulness in our hearts.*

*Come, Spirit of the Living God,  
Come, with Your reforming power, transforming us to be the people You would have us be.*

*Amen.*

**MARION STEWART** IS DEACON AT SKENE PARISH CHURCH IN GORDON PRESBYTERY, ABERDEENSHIRE, AND CURRENT PRESIDENT OF THE CHURCH OF SCOTLAND’S DIACONATE COUNCIL

*Behold, Behold, I make all things new  
Beginning with you and starting from today  
Behold , Behold, my promise is true  
For I am Christ the Way*

(COMPOSED BY **JOHN BELL** AND USED AT THE 1ST DRAE CONFERENCE  
(DIAKONIA REGION AFRICA EUROPE)  
HOSTED BY THE CHURCH OF SCOTLAND DEACONS IN STIRLING 1994)



# Essential Info

## Ministries Council

Tel: 0131 225 5722

Email: [ministries@churchofscotland.org.uk](mailto:ministries@churchofscotland.org.uk)

Email: [pastoralsupport@churchofscotland.org.uk](mailto:pastoralsupport@churchofscotland.org.uk)

Email: [ascend@churchofscotland.org.uk](mailto:ascend@churchofscotland.org.uk)

For support information please visit

[www.churchofscotland.org.uk/ascend](http://www.churchofscotland.org.uk/ascend)

## Communications Department

Tel: 0131 225 5722

Out of hours: 07854 783 539

## Law Department

Tel: 0131 225 5722

Email: [lawdept@churchofscotland.org.uk](mailto:lawdept@churchofscotland.org.uk)

## Safeguarding Department

Tel: 0131 240 2256

Email: [safeguarding@churchofscotland.org.uk](mailto:safeguarding@churchofscotland.org.uk)

*Safeguarding is about preventing harm and abuse.*

*And making a timely and appropriate response if it occurs.*

## Housing and Loan Fund

Email: [lmacmillan@cofscotland.org.uk](mailto:lmacmillan@cofscotland.org.uk)

*The Church of Scotland Housing and Loan Fund for Retired Ministers and Widows and Widowers of Ministers was established to facilitate the provision of housing accommodation for retired ministers and widows or widowers of ministers. Help may be by either providing a house to rent or by advancing a house purchase loan.*

## Reporting Illness - for parish ministers

*To submit a sick line or ask about sick leave paperwork, please contact:*

Tel: 0131 225 5722 (ext. 2303)

Email: [pastoralsupport@churchofscotland.org.uk](mailto:pastoralsupport@churchofscotland.org.uk)



The Church of Scotland

[www.churchofscotland.org.uk/ascend](http://www.churchofscotland.org.uk/ascend)

Scottish Charity Number: SC0 11353