

ascend

centre for support & development

a magazine for ministry



resilience in ministry

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'

Book your Ministerial Development Conversation online or phone the office.
www.churchofscotland.org.uk/ascend

Tel: 0131 225 5722 - ask for Alison Stewart, Ministries Council.

We were nominated for an award with The HR Network (Scotland).
The award is for Organisational Development of the Year for the work of Ascend
and Ministerial Development Conversation (MDC).

Find out more at www.churchofscotland.org.uk/ascend



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please mark email or letter:
FAO Ascend Editor.

HELLO

Hello and thank you for picking up our sixth Ascend Magazine. We wanted this edition to focus on the resilience research undertaken by Professor Leslie Francis, Resilience and Wellbeing in Ministry: An empirical enquiry within the Church of Scotland.

I think one of the things we can be too good at is “keeping on keeping on”. I recently heard a minister make the comment: “I didn’t know I was breaking until I broke.” Ascend is committed to providing resources which support you to remain well and resilient, and not simply when you find yourself broken. Regardless of where you are at in your ministry journey, or what role you hold, there are resources available and we would love to hear from you if you would like to explore any of these further.

As I have read through this edition I have been encouraged by the personal reflections on that which has enabled individuals to persevere even in the midst of challenge and disappointment. As a church we find ourselves in times of great change. Change is happening around us and despite us, regardless of whether we are involved in driving this, feeling engaged and excited by it, or passively or fearfully watching and wondering what the coming weeks, months and years might bring for the Church and our roles within it.

In the Long Read we read about the ‘balanced affect’ model which suggests that whilst we cannot change or remove many of the factors that lead to stress, exhaustion and weariness in ministry, we can try to provide resources which affirm and support the aspects of ministry that lead to satisfaction. Embracing the ‘positive’ aspects of ministry can lead to greater resilience in managing that which we experience as ‘negative’. I find a lot of hope in this and in the fact that the research shows that 88% of those who responded to Leslie’s research responded that they gained personal satisfaction from their current ministry – an encouraging statistic indeed!

In Rich Robinson’s article we are invited to consider Ephesians 4 as a ‘blueprint’ and encouragement for us in our current context. As I read this piece I reflected on our context: we are recruiting fewer ministers and ministry



staff, increasingly lengthy vacancies are a reality, and pressure and expectations on a finite number of ministers seem to increase yearly. I hope this material may offer some solace. We all know and have heard many times that church is not about the minister doing everything. It is not always easy to go from being painfully aware of that reality to actually getting people to agree to commit precious and rare free time to serve within the church, or indeed to find people who have the energy or ability. I think the core of what Rich is describing is affirming people in their God-given giftedness and helping them find places to bring those gifts to bear. Rather than adding burdens, something else that needs to be done or attended to, this is about ways we can bless and encourage those who journey with us.

As always we are keen to hear from you and take on board feedback for future editions. If you would like to contribute to a future edition of Ascend Magazine please do get in touch.

A handwritten signature in white ink that reads "Gabby Dench".

GABBY DENCH

Ascend Lead

BULLETINS

COACHING

We offer Coaching as an avenue for personal development and change.

CHANGE?

You (can) make it happen!

"...a powerful help to me. Makes me think about things again."

Tel: 0131 225 5722

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STAFFING UPDATES

At the end of June we bade farewell and thanks to Rev Jayne Scott for her time as Council Secretary.

Kay Cathcart (right) has now joined us as Education & Training Secretary

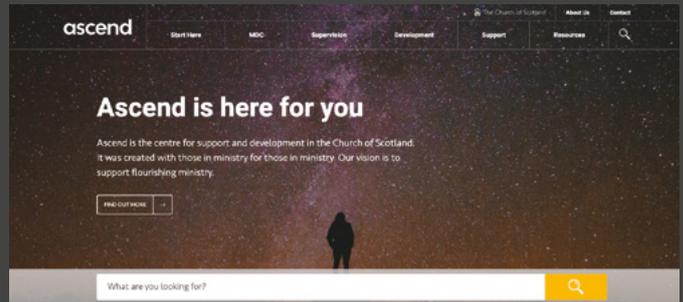


MDS POLICIES

We are working on developing content on Ascend for Ministries Development Staff and their line managers. A range of MDS policies can now be found in the Resources section of the Ascend website and further policies will be uploaded in due course. To download the policies, visit:

ascend.churchofscotland.org.uk/resources

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!

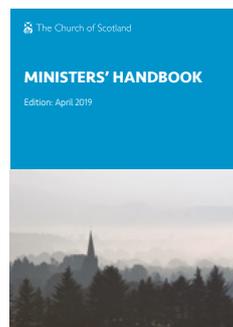
ascend@churchofscotland.org.uk

FIRST FIVE YEARS CMD

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

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 handbook at:

www.churchofscotland.org.uk/ascend

ascend | The Church of Scotland

CORRECTIONS

We would like to clarify that Aberdeen University is not the sole academic provider for Readers-in-Training as implied on page 14 of No Minister is an Island. Highland Theological College (an Academic Partner in the University of the Highlands and Islands) is the other main provider of academic training for readership and we value their continued dedication to the Church of Scotland. Our sincere apologies for the confusion this omission caused.

Rev Alison Burnside is based at The Bengairn Parishes Castle Douglas rather than Kingussie Parish Church as stated on Page 12 of The Dark Night of the Soul.

Rev Dr Andrew Gardner was introduced as Interim Minister to Christ Kirk in Glenrothes rather than appointed as stated on Page 7 of The Dark Night of the Soul.

EVENTS

ENABLING VIBRANT TEAMS

19 – 20 NOVEMBER 2019, EDINBURGH

Spend two days with Alan Hirsch, digging into Ephesians 4, and learning about how to recognise and invest in your ministry.

Each of us is gifted in different ways, and whether you are an Apostle, Prophet, Evangelist, Shepherd or Teacher, this conference will help you to uncover the gifts and passions that go along with each ministry, and start to understand how all five might be woven together for the benefit of the Church.

Ephesians 4: 11 -13 "So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ."

Included in the programme:

- Lunch and light refreshments
- APEST Personal Vocational Assessment
- A copy of "Activating 5Q" by Alan Hirsch & Jessie Cruickshank
- Facilitated learning programme

For more information and booking details please visit the Events page at:

www.churchofscotland.org.uk/ascend

THE INVITATION TO HEAL: DENIS DUNCAN LECTURE 2019

21 NOVEMBER 2019, EDINBURGH

The Guild of Health and St Raphael are delighted to run this lecture in partnership with The Church of Scotland. The lecture will be followed by a panel discussion with some leaders in health and healing for the church today.

In this lecture, Michael Harvey will challenge the way we think about mission. He will call for the bringing together of the latest findings in the area of science with theological reflection. He will hypothesize how healing does or may take place in mission, and lead us to some best practice ideas which every individual Christian and church can do, to bring back together the proclamation of the kingdom of God and the healing of the sick.

For more information and booking details please visit the Events page at:

www.churchofscotland.org.uk/ascend

TRAINING FOR LEADING WORSHIP IN A LOCAL CONTEXT

13 JANUARY 2020, EDINBURGH

This course will be of interest to those who wish to explore the possibility of leading worship in their local church setting. It will focus on the history, theology and structure of worship services in a variety of styles, in order to ground current practice in its wider context. All the components of a church service will be considered in theory and from a practical perspective. Participants will have opportunities to prepare and deliver prayers, children's talks and sermons, and to construct meaningful orders of service.

Classes will take place 13 January – 3 April 2020.

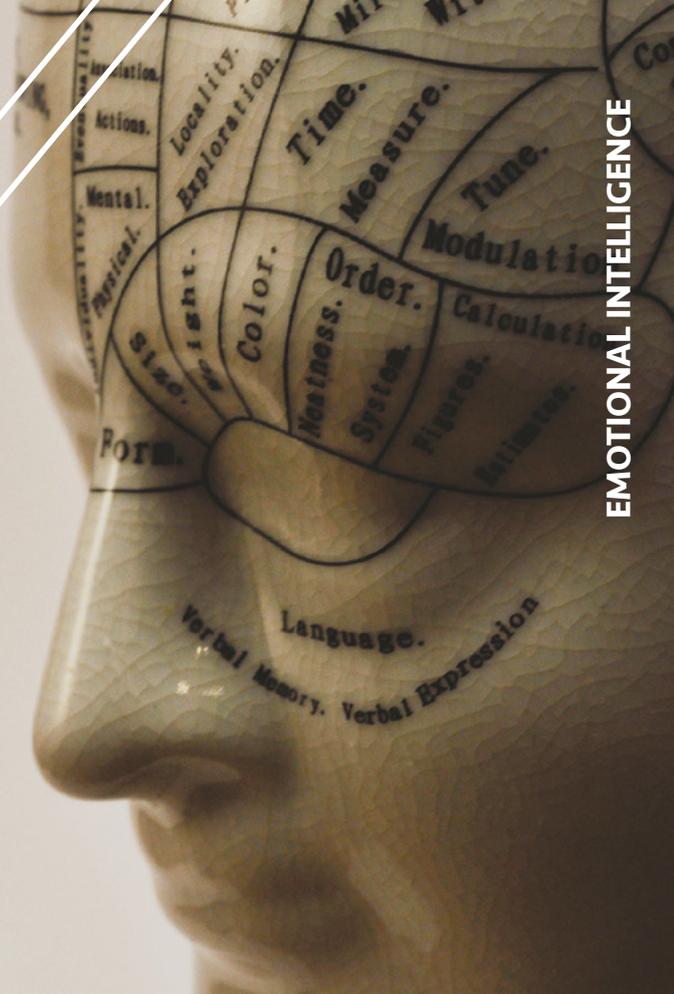
The courses will be run in partnership with the Mission and Discipleship Council of the Church of Scotland, the Presbyteries of Edinburgh and Lothian, and the Scottish Episcopal Institute. They will be led by experienced academics and practitioners.

Each course will involve six evening classes and two Saturday afternoon classes.

For more information and booking details please visit the Events page at:

www.churchofscotland.org.uk/ascend

The EQ Factor



Emotional Intelligence has been identified as an important factor in improving resilience. **Rev Iain Goring** explores what it means in ministry

Emotional Intelligence is one of those phrases I have heard often over the years, but I confess that until recently I wasn't too sure what it meant! That changed when I was asked by Ministries Council to attend a training course that would allow me to administer what is known as EQ-I 2.0—an assessment that measures emotional intelligence—as part of my work with the Ascend programme.

So what is it? The formal definition is as follows: "Emotional Intelligence (EI) can be defined as a set of emotional and social skills that influence the way we perceive and express ourselves, develop and maintain social relationships, cope with challenges and use emotional information in an effective and meaningful way." It is also sometimes known as Emotional Quotient (EQ).

If we have a healthy emotional intelligence then we are better able to react to and manage the situations of life that come our way—the people, the pressures, the problems, the highs and the lows. For myself, I know that there have been times

“Emotional Intelligence is not fixed. We can decide to work on our emotional intelligence, to change and develop particular aspects of it so that we might handle the things that life throws at us in a different way.”



Rev Iain Goring

Continue »



in life when I have not handled things as well as I would have liked. There have been times when I have let things get on top of me, when I have become irritated or defensive or impatient or overwhelmed in such a way that I have stopped handling a particular situation as effectively as I could.

It is as if something deep in me, in the way I think and feel about the world (and myself) takes over, bringing thoughts, reactions and emotions that threaten to 'derail' me—and when that happens I am not engaging my emotional intelligence in a way that is helpful. The first step to changing this is for me to be aware of what is happening, to think through why it is happening and then to decide what I want to do about it. That is what the EQ-I 2.0 assessment offers.

The assessment itself is a straightforward online questionnaire. Once it has been completed, the participant—or the coach with whom someone is working—receives a report based on the answers given. There is then an opportunity to look together in depth at the report over a couple of hours, allowing time for reflection and decision-making as appropriate.

These reports present a huge amount of helpful material. They have five main headings (with 15 sub-headings): Self-Perception, Self-Expression, Interpersonal skills, Decision-Making and Stress Management. The process allows us to identify more clearly our strengths and weakness in each of these areas of life and then to decide what, if anything, we are going to do about it. And this is the key to EQi. Having identified strengths and weaknesses, we can then make decisions about which areas we want to work on, change and improve.

Emotional Intelligence, unlike personality, is not a rigid, fixed, unchangeable element of who we are. We can decide—if we choose—to work on our emotional intelligence, to change and develop particular aspects of it so that we might handle the things that life throws at us in a different and maybe healthier way.

It is fascinating that the recent research for Ministries Council on 'Resilience and Wellbeing in Ministry' led by Professor Leslie J Francis says that: "From the insights of positive psychology, both purpose in life and emotional intelligence emerged as enhancing resilience." Clearly, if we can develop our emotional intelligence then we are also likely to increase our resilience—and that has to be an extremely positive outcome. ✓

Iain is retired from full time-ministry having been an interim minister for his last 12 years. He is a coach and Ministry Development Conversation (MDC) facilitator through the Ascend programme and is also a family mediator.

Ascend currently has two coaches trained in EQi and if you would like to find out more please contact:

gdench@churchofscotland.org.uk



We asked **Rev Kate McDonald** how she stays motivated and manages to bounce back from difficult times.

How do you keep on keeping on?

I've been living in Tiberias, Israel, for nearly four years now and I love the work I do here. As minister at St Andrew's Church and chaplain at the Scots Hotel and Tabetha School, I have the opportunity to meet people of all kinds of backgrounds from all over the world.

I also get to travel around Israel, the West Bank and Gaza visiting our partner organisations and witnessing the remarkable ways they are trying to create a more peaceful and just society in this beautiful but conflicted land.

Hearing our partners speak with courage, compassion and conviction about their work with the disadvantaged and marginalised communities in the land is always inspiring.

As vibrant as work and life are here, there are still times when my motivation wanes. I find myself overwhelmed by the complexity of the Israel-Palestine conflict and wonder what difference our presence here makes. I go on to social media and my heart breaks at the myriad ways humans can be unkind to one another. Or I just wake up tired and struggling to face the tasks that lie ahead.

Staying motivated often means staying connected with my calling to this particular ministry. When the expectations of others begin to overshadow my sense of God's presence and guidance in my life, I find myself increasingly discouraged and disconnected.

Walking has always been a way of praying for me, so I take time to walk regularly, whether on days out on the Israel National Trail or evening walks by the sea. An hour of yoga or swimming at the start of the day also allows me to get in touch with how I'm feeling and listen for how God might be speaking to me.

I've learned that 'desk work' such as report writing, admin, or meetings can quickly take a toll on my energy and motivation levels. So I try to schedule into my weeks a balance of office time and partner visits. Hearing our partners speak with courage, compassion and conviction about their work with the disadvantaged and marginalised communities in the land

is always inspiring. It reminds me that even a small action can make a big difference, and that we are all working towards the same vision of a society in which all people are treated with dignity and given opportunities to flourish.

In times when negative comments — especially negative attitudes towards women's ministry (and this is a very patriarchal context) — get me down, I look through some of the encouraging letters and printed emails, thank you notes and beautiful drawings that have been given to me by adults and children since I was ordained. It always makes me smile. Kindness is precious.

Like most of us, I've also experienced times of emotional upheaval, both in my personal life and in my ministry. To cope with these, and to work through the lasting effects, I've been very fortunate to find — and to be able to afford — a very good therapist whom I see regularly. I haven't been able to find a spiritual director here, but my therapist

is Jewish and I have appreciated his openness to discuss spirituality, his rich understanding of our shared Scriptures and the insights he brings into our sessions.

During a particularly difficult period in my ministry, I went on retreat at Sheldon in Devon, known for its ministry to clergy in times of stress and crisis. The fresh country air, delicious healthy meals, time to rest, quiet prayerful spaces and gentle conversations were deeply healing.

Sometimes, in the storms of life, it can be difficult to know where God is. So I am grateful to have wise people around me who embody God's love even when I'm afraid and doubting. ✨

Rev Kate McDonald is associate minister of St Andrew's Church Jerusalem and Tiberias and mission partner in Israel and Palestine. Catch up with Kate's blog at:

imaginationofpeace.com

a worthwhile time to reflect

Rev Richard Houston talks to Susan Mansfield about his experiences on a Renewing Ministry conference

Every minister needs time to stand back, and that can be all the more true the longer one is in ministry. That's the thinking behind Renewing Ministry, a five-day conference offered annually by the Church of Scotland's pastoral team for those who have served for 10 years or more.

Rev Richard Houston, minister at St Ninian's Craigmalen in Linlithgow, who took part in the conference earlier this year at St Mary's Kinnoull in Perth, describes it as "worthwhile" and "a really positive experience".

After 21 years in parish ministry, 15 of them in his current parish, Richard wanted to think ahead to retirement, and

“It was great to come out of the parish for five days to think about the work and what I would like to do over the next few years”

was taking part in a six-month coaching programme offered by Ascend. "I'm 62 years old, and have four or five years in ministry left. I wanted to shape the last few years of my ministry, to prepare myself for finishing but also to prepare my congregation for changes likely to come," he says.

His coach, Ian McDonald, recommended Renewing Ministry as a useful complement to the work they had been doing. The conference offers ministers time out from parish life to reflect on which aspects of ministry are encouraging and energising, what helps to sustain them and their hopes for the next five years. As well as a variety of speakers, there are workshops which help participants explore their ministry style and personality.

"The thing that stood out most to me was an analysis of our behavioural traits to find out what kind of behavioural

personalities we had," Richard says. "I've always been a bit sceptical of that kind of thing, but I was really surprised how much this nailed my personality. It had me down as someone who is analytical, weighs all the pros and cons, but probably takes too long to make decisions. I need to learn to make decisions a bit more quickly."

He said it was also quite rare for a group of ministers to get the opportunity to share their experiences. "One of the most interesting things was listening to the experiences of the eight or nine others who were there, how much their experiences touched on some of mine, but how different they were too. It was great to come out of the parish for five days to think about the work and what I would like to do over the next three or four years."

Both the conference and the coaching have been affirming in terms of "reassuring me that I'm on the right track" with initiatives in the parish, such as a short midweek service on Wednesdays, and a fledgling study group. Looking ahead to the legacy he will leave after retirement, he is also mindful of the way church structures might need to change in the next decade.

"Given that the Church of Scotland has been looking at having ministers working in teams with clusters of churches, one of my aims is to develop the worship group we have in the parish. They already lead worship for special services, but I would like to encourage them to be involved more regularly. If this church becomes part of a cluster in which two or three ministers are looking after five or six churches, there will be people available to lead worship if a minister, reader or locum is not available."

He says he would heartily recommend Renewing Ministry to others. "If the coach hadn't suggested it, I'm not sure I would have bothered, but it was very worthwhile, to the point that I



ministry

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sanctuary

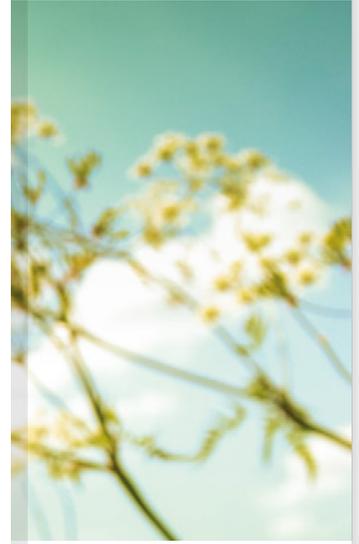
conference 2020



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would recommend it to any colleague.

In 2020 Renewing Ministry will be trialling a new format. Sanctuary, as this conference will be known, is open to ministers at any stage of ministry who are looking to find rest, to receive from God, and to feel restored. A time to be ministered to.

Sanctuary gives a time to breathe, to slow down, to enjoy the beautiful surroundings of Kinnoull Monastery and to prepare for whatever's next in ministry, with the opportunity to speak one-to-one with a trained spiritual director or pastoral supervisor.

Each day will be punctuated with reflections and communal prayer but will mainly offer a contemplative space giving time for God to speak into our lives in ministry.

For those who might be looking for more input there will be opt in sessions every afternoon. These sessions will cover various topics including managing transitions in life and ministry, and reflecting on our ordination vows. There will also be an optional daily book group to participate in (the book will be sent to you before the conference).

Using the spirituality of Ignatius of Loyola, the conference will take the form of a retreat charting a course for wise decision-making and transformative action. It is important to note that this conference will deliberately aim to provide space and time for individual discernment and so it will not have a full programme.

Discernment is at the heart of Ignatian spirituality and over the centuries people have found that silence and guided prayer can resource a creative and faith-filled response to all

that God is calling us to, now and into the future.

The retreat will be facilitated by Duncan Hughes. Duncan worked as a lawyer in the criminal courts, children's panel and mental health tribunals before training in pastoral supervision with the Institute of Pastoral Supervision and Reflective Practice. He is passionate about helping people from a variety of workplaces to rediscover the life in their vocation through creative one-to-one conversation. Duncan knows from personal experience the cost of working with people in crisis and difficulty and offers a compassionate, non-judgmental space for individuals to reflect and process their experience of helping others. He uses words but recognises that other ways of expressing deep emotions such as art or poetry can sometimes be more helpful. He hopes to help people to find that elusive balance between work and life which is nourishing and sustaining. 

This event is Study Leave eligible
and can be booked at:
[www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/
sanctuary-2020-tickets-71780769213](http://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/sanctuary-2020-tickets-71780769213)

BECOMING MORE RESILIENT

SPRINGING BACK INTO SHAPE

One definition of resilience is ‘the ability of an object to spring back into shape’. **Chris Dunkerley** explores some practical strategies to aid resilience in ministry and in life

There is no pill for resilience. Everyone is talking about resilience these days, but it is as old as the Bible. Jesus’ brother called it ‘perseverance’: “Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance.” (James 1:2-3, NIV)

Resilience is the ability of an object to spring back in to shape. In human terms, it is the ability to recover quickly after adversity, distress and difficulty. In terms of change, it is the ability to keep running the race, eyes fixed on the prize, when everything around you is shifting.

Resilience is a key factor in much of what I do. I am a clinical psychologist and work for HealthLink360, a Christian healthcare charity. We work with missionaries, aid workers, those in ministry and ordinary folk whose lives are awash with change, conflict, trauma and relationship difficulties. Some of them are remarkably resilient. Others are resilient in some areas but not in others. Many would like to be more resilient.

Resilience is a multi-faceted concept that takes in the whole person. These are the most common interventions I give to clients to help them become more resilient:

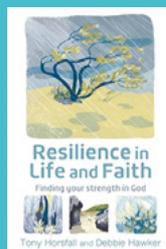
- **Manage priorities** Brother Yun is a Chinese Christian who has endured what, to most of us, would be mind-boggling adversity. In his book *The Heavenly Man*, he writes of how he, his ministry and his family almost came apart because he put his ministry before his family. Does that sound familiar? Wisely, he re-ordered his priorities to: 1) God, 2) family, 3) ministry.
- **Sabbath rest** Sounds good, doesn't it? It is the fourth of the Ten Commandments, before the prohibitions on murder and adultery. We don't quibble with those, but we appear happy to discard the need for weekly rest. It's not about this or that day of the week, it's about regular, ring-fenced times of rest. Each person needs to work out what that means for them, but it probably needs to include stillness, silence, laughter and an absence of productivity.

“Holding on to unforgiveness is like walking around with rocks in your pockets: it weighs you down and wears you out”



- **Take exercise** You need to have lived in a ministerial bubble for the last 20 years if you don't know that regular exercise is key to mental, emotional and physical health. Because of that, it is key to resilience. The problem that most people have is not ignorance of this fact but knowing what to do and when. In 2014, we screened aid agency and NHS staff going to Sierra Leone for the Ebola outbreak. It was vital that, under such pressure, they got some exercise. Some were runners who would be confined to a compound, others were swimmers who'd be 30 miles from a swimming pool. The solution was exercise apps and routines that could be used in one's room (preferably with the curtains drawn!). Engage your ingenuity and work out how you will work up a regular cardiovascular sweat.
- **Process your feelings** Every week we accumulate experiences that produce anger, anxiety, frustration or fear. If we don't process these, it is like hiding fresh food in a dark cupboard and leaving it. Over time, it goes bad, causing a stink or even sickness. There are many ways to process uncomfortable feelings: supervision, counselling, journalling, or just a cup of coffee with a trusted friend.
- **Choose to forgive** Holding on to unforgiveness is like walking around with rocks in your pockets: it weighs you down and wears you out. There is a huge amount of research into the destructive effects of unforgiveness; it is bad for you in just about every way you can think of. Remember: forgiveness is not a feeling, it's a choice to cancel someone's debt.
- **Don't ruminate** Rumination is going over an event and all its connotations again and again. It saps your energy like a hole in a petrol tank. It's a cause and a consequence of many mental health problems, including depression and anxiety. "So why do I keep doing it?" you ask. Your brain is probably thinking: "If I go over this one more time, I'll resolve it." But it never works, does it? So notice it and then choose to disengage. Ask God for help not to chew on that stuff. Then focus on worship, notice the beautiful sounds/sights/smells/textures around you. If you're ruminating about a situation that needs action, then act; but after that, switch your attention back to God and the world around you.
- **Seek stillness** Perhaps the opposite of rumination is stillness and silence. It's wonderfully unproductive and I wish I did more of it. It's about lying down in green pastures and being led beside still waters. Guess what? It restores your soul. Don't wait until there's a gap in your schedule; intentionally write stillness and silence into your schedule.
- **Enjoy company** We need solitude, but we also need people. One of the most well-evidenced findings in psychology is that support from friends, family and colleagues reduces the risk of developing mental health problems. Conversely, isolation is linked to just about every mental health disorder. People are good for you, even if your job involves giving out to others. But you need to pick the right people. Take a moment to think: who do I feel better for being with? Who increases my joy in God and life? Again, don't wait until there's a gap in your schedule – deliberately write these people into your schedule. ✓

Helpful Resources



Resilience in Life and Faith: Finding Your Strength in God by Tony Horsfall and Debbie Hawker, Bible Reading Fellowship, 2019. This book pulls together biblical wisdom and psychological research to show how you and those you care for can become more resilient.



Trauma and Resilience: A Handbook by Frauke and Charles Schaefer, Condeo Press, 2016. This is a handbook for those who suffer as they serve God, as well as those who offer them pastoral support. It is written by a psychologist and a psychiatrist who work with missionaries and pastors.

Chris Dunkerley (DClinPsy) is a clinical psychologist. He joined HealthLink360 in June 2014 after working in an NHS community mental health team. Chris is now head of psychological services at HealthLink360.

You can contact Health Link 360 if you are interested in any of their services.

Alternatively you can speak to the Support Team through Ascend who will arrange a referral for you.

HealthLink360 specialises in medical and psychological support for missionaries, aid workers, people in ministry and ordinary folk. Medicals, psychological assessments, reviews, counselling and travel vaccinations are all available at their clinic at Carberry, near Musselburgh.

For those who cannot visit, they deliver many of their services by WhatsApp, Skype or phone.

www.healthlink360.org
admin@healthlink360.org
 0131 653 6767

Susan Mansfield travelled to Wales to meet **Professor Leslie J Francis**, the man behind the research on Resilience and Wellbeing in Ministry in the Church of Scotland

A man of many aspects

Invited in to Professor Leslie Francis' home, a former coaching inn in Llanfairfechan, North Wales, the first thing you notice is the teddy bears. You can't miss them. There is a large congregation in the hallway, presided over by a big brown bear who sits chest-high to an adult human. This is the first intimation I have that Prof Francis, in addition to being a psychologist and theologian, is a writer of children's books.

The hero of more than 20 of these is Teddy Horsley, a bear who explores the world - and the Bible - with his bear friend Betsy and the children, Lucy and Walter. Prof Francis introduces us formally: "Teddy Horsley is a bear who likes receiving visitors. Today he is receiving a visitor from Scotland. Teddy Horsley likes learning about Scotland."

When not writing books for children, in his other roles (I will learn he has several), he serves as Professor of Religions and Education at the University of Warwick and as honorary director of the St Mary's Centre in Wales, a Christian research institute that works in the broad fields of religion and education. In this connection, Prof Francis was invited by the Church of Scotland to produce a major piece of original research, *Resilience and Wellbeing in Ministry: An Empirical Enquiry within the Church of Scotland*, which has now been completed.

He is perhaps uniquely qualified to do so, having an academic background in both psychology and theology (he was previously Professor of Practical Theology at Bangor University) and being an ordained Anglican priest (now Canon Theologian at Liverpool Cathedral). His wide-ranging research interests include the developing science of 'clergy work-related psychological wellbeing', and he has carried out research on this subject in the UK, Italy, Australia and the USA.

Rev Gavin Elliott, former ministries support officer with Ministries Council, who worked on commissioning the report, said Prof Francis was chosen because of his 'formidable record' in this field. He said: "He had already completed similar research with the Anglican Church, the Roman Catholic Church and the Church in Wales. I felt that there was considerable benefit to be had from the fact that Leslie belongs to a different church tradition with a very different polity from ours. It is clear that we have much to learn from other churches in this regard."

Speaking to Prof Francis about his work, it is clear that two elements are fundamental: a theological basis for all he does, and a thoroughly tried and tested set of psychological instruments. He studied theology first, keeping on his interest in psychology as a subsidiary subject, did a doctorate (at Cambridge) in the psychology of religion, then completed a masters degree in psychology.

He became interested in how the two disciplines might speak to one another. "I thought - a bit arrogantly, I suppose - that I'd seen church use psychology, but not in a way that psychologists would recognise. What I wanted to do in my doctorate was test out whether religion and psychology could go hand in hand in a way that could be understood by both conversation partners."

He heard a call to ordination, but his time as a curate turned out to be what he would later recognise as an important lesson in psychological type theory applied to ministry. An introvert curate who was assigned to work with an extravert vicar, he began to doubt his abilities. "After four years I decided I wanted to become an academic because I could not do the job as he did it. I hadn't got a vocabulary to understand why. I wish I'd been able to say: 'Lay off, I'm not failing, I just don't get energised the way you do.'"

He continues to explore ways in which theology and psychology can inform one another in a range of areas, from the religious experiences of young people to the ways different kinds of people read Scripture. "When somebody asks me, 'What do you think theology is?', I tend to say 'I think it's the science of what it means to be human', and when they ask



“What I wanted to do was test out whether religion and psychology could go hand in hand in a way that could be understood by both conversation partners”

me what psychology is I say ‘I think it’s the science of what it means to be human’, but those two sciences have quite different epistemologies at their heart.”

He describes the theological basis of his work as the ‘theology of individual differences’. “I’m trained as a psychologist of individual differences, and that provides the lens through which I see human beings. That wonderful text in Genesis 1:27 – ‘So God created human beings in God’s own image... male and female God created them’ – implies a plurality but not an inferiority. And if that is true of male and female, is the same not true of ethnicity, and the differences of normal personality? That puts me as an introvert no longer feeling inadequate because I’m not an extravert, but I have to recognise that I’m different from an extravert. And if I want then to use religious language, I will say that the God who creates difference, respects difference and loves difference.

“What I wanted to do in this study was not to say to the Church of Scotland, ‘Here’s a psychologist come in from outside to give some assessment of wellbeing’, but ‘Here’s a theologian working within the Church’s structure that recognises that people differ’. And while that difference is recognised because of the language of psychology, it can be properly rooted in a doctrine of creation, fall and redemption.”

As the grandfather clock in the hallway measures the quarter-hours, Prof Francis shifts easily from discussing theology to talking about educational resources developed by the St Mary’s Centre for all curricular stages, to his church organ, made a century ago for a convent in London and carefully

reconstructed in his home by himself and a fellow organ enthusiast. And then there’s Teddy Horsley, waiting patiently in the hall for his next adventure. Prof Francis smiles. “I think I do have difficulty in being taken seriously because I do too many things! ✨

Leslie J. Francis is Professor of Religions and Education within the Warwick Religions and Education Research Unit, and Canon Theological at Liverpool Cathedral. He obtained his PhD from the University of Cambridge in 1976. His published works have been recognised by three higher doctorates: ScD from Cambridge in 1997, DD from Oxford in 2001 and DLitt from University of Wales, Bangor in 2007.

Professor Francis’ research in religious education has been shaped by creative links with practical and empirical theology and with the individual differences approach to psychology. The Pastoral and Vocational Care Task Group commissioned Professor Francis to undertake a significant piece of research for the Church of Scotland on resilience in ministry in 2017.

RESILIENCE IN MINISTRY:

what the research tells us

Professor Leslie J Francis talks about the research he conducted into resilience and wellbeing in ministry in the Church of Scotland, and the lessons we can learn from it

THE LONG READ

Resilience and Wellbeing in Ministry: An empirical enquiry within the Church of Scotland was commissioned in order to profile accurately those working in ministry today as a basis for shaping future decisions about how best to train clergy and support them in their ministry.

Professor Leslie Francis worked with a group convened by Ministries Council to design a questionnaire which was then sent to 1000 ministers, deacons and locums. Of these, 505 were returned completed, which provided the core data for the study.

Prof Francis' primary aim was to assess which factors were most important as predictors of work-related psychological health, including personal factors (age, gender, marital status and so on), psychological factors and contextual factors (the nature of parish, the support available and the like). He found that the most important factors in predicting resilience and wellbeing were psychological factors.

Prof Francis says: "When I'm asked a question about wellbeing and resilience, I say that wellbeing means different things for people according to their individual differences. It means different things for men and women, for introvert and extravert, because the strengths and vulnerabilities are in-built in a different way. There is no recipe for how to make a healthier clergy, apart from how to enable these individuals to accept and come to terms with who they are. The discovery of who they are, and the recognition of what is good and what is not good, has the capacity to be salvific."

Prof Francis analysed the information supplied on the questionnaires using a range of tried and tested psychological tools, including the Francis Psychological Type Scales (FPTS), his own system, directly derived from Jungian principles (there are some similarities with the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI) which derives from the same root). Individuals are profiled according to four measures, each of which has two categories: Extravert/Introvert, Sensing/Intuition, Thinking/Feeling, Judging/Perceiving (see page 19 for more information). These can be applied in different ways to show nuances and distinctions in psychological type.

"There is no recipe for how to make a healthier clergy, apart from how to enable these individuals to accept and come to terms with who they are"



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The distribution of psychological types in Church of Scotland ministers proved to be in line with similar analyses of ministers in other denominations. Church of Scotland ministers were more likely to be introvert than extravert (64% and 36% respectively, in both men and women), slightly more likely to be sensing than intuitive (55%/45% for men and 52%/48% for women), more likely to be feeling than thinking (59%/41% for men, 71%/29% for women - a significant departure from the population average for men) and significantly more likely to be judging than perceiving (77%/23% for men, 80%/20% for women).

Prof Francis is keen to emphasise that no type is better than another, or more suited to ministry. "Unlike many other psychological modes of personality, psychological type theory makes an explicit point of ensuring that the contrasting descriptions of personality are value-free. Introversion is not an absence of extraversion, but an equally valid expression of positive personality in its own right. Sensing and intuition, thinking and feeling and judging and perceiving are also considered equally valid."

This means it is compatible with Prof Francis' theology of individual differences, celebrating difference as created by God and bringing value to ministry. He says: "The system does not put people into boxes, it invites people to inhabit different boxes and see whether inhabiting those boxes illuminates their experience of reality. An understanding of type theory can identify ways in which ministers may be helped to play to their strengths and also be better equipped to manage their weaknesses. [See page 21 for more information]"

"So one of the things church often expects is for the minister to be up front and socially engaged. Like ducks to water, for extraverts. The introvert finds it more difficult to get into that social stuff; once in, he or she might be brilliant, but the access is slower. As an introvert, I believe I can do all things extroverted people can, but at a cost, and I have to know that the cost, at a certain point, will make me dysfunctional. It's not that I can't do it, but I can't do so much of it, and if I'm tired I might slip up."

In addition to the aspects of psychology explored in the FTFS, Prof Francis felt that the system did not cover fully the area of life he describes as 'emotionality'. "People differ in their emotional reaction to life, and I would want to argue that the difference in emotionality among the normal range of people is another fundamental individual difference, like the four we talk about in psychological type theory. I think the picture of individual differences is incomplete without it."

Again there is no value attached to a person's emotionality – the intensity to which they respond emotionally to situations. However, introversion and high emotionality have been identified as the two most important indicators of poor work-related psychological health among individuals engaged in professions working intensively with people.

But that's not the end of the story. In terms of determining who is at most risk of burnout, another set of factors needs to be taken into account. Prof Francis had already worked extensively on the subject of clergy burnout when an encounter with the then Archbishop of Canterbury, George Carey, made him look at the subject in a new light.

"I had been working with an established model of burnout, the Maslach model, which sees burnout as a sequential

progression: people begin by running out of emotional energy, that leads to depersonalisation and that leads to a lack of affirmation. But psychological theories are like any other theory, they can be wonderful until you test them against evidence, and sometimes the evidence has to win.

"I was talking about clergy burnout, I was getting quite serious about it and arguing the Church should do something about it, and George Carey came back at me and said: 'That's not my experience, people tell me how happy they are with what they're doing'. I suddenly recognised that he had missed something – and so had I."

That took him back to a model proposed in 1969 by the psychologist Norman Bradburn, which Bradburn called 'balanced affect'. The key to this model is understanding that people can experience positive affect (affirmation, satisfaction) and negative affect (emotional exhaustion, depersonalisation) at the same time, and that the positive affect can help balance the negative. In this model, burnout is likely to arise only when the negative affect far outstrips the positive.

"I began to develop some instruments to measure the two things separately, and came to the view that the people who were ultimately saying 'I've got to get out of this job' – I take that as the end product of not coping with it – were those that scored very high on negative affect and very low on positive affect. There are others who scored just as high on the negative but, because they were compensated by the positive, did not end up saying 'I've got to get out of this job.'"

In the Church of Scotland study, he measured exhaustion in ministry (lack of enthusiasm for ministry, frustration, impatience, negativity, cynicism, inflexibility, the sense of being drained and exhausted by the job and so on) and satisfaction in ministry (personal accomplishment, personal satisfaction, the sense of dealing effectively with people, being appreciated by others, deriving purpose and meaning from ministry and so on) separately using the Francis Burnout Inventory (FBI), and found that the results were similar to those in other similar clergy studies.

"That leads me to say to church: if that model works, you can do something about it. You can't take away the stuff that leads to exhaustion: there's too much to do, expectations are too high, and there are not enough people to do the job. So you're getting a workforce you know you're going to exhaust. But you can at least take those individuals seriously and affirm them, build up their positive affect, and that will go some way to mitigating the consequences of the bad stuff."

A study of 1276 Anglican clergymen, for example, found that those who engaged in pastoral supervision recorded higher levels of satisfaction in ministry, regardless of their levels of emotional exhaustion. Prof Francis said: "Supervision can't take away the reasons for exhaustion but can affirm and consolidate those aspects of ministry that lead to a sense of satisfaction. It enhances the positive affect that offsets some of the consequences of negative affect."

In terms of the learning coming from the study, Prof Francis says: "My take home message from the research is that overall, contextual factors are not that important. Psychological factors are important, and screening can identify them, and work on self awareness is the enabling facilitator.

"If the church cannot expect to transform introverts intro

The Francis Psychological Type Scales

EXTRAVERSION AND INTROVERSION

- concerned with where energy is drawn from



Extroverts are energised by the events and people around them. They enjoy communicating and thrive in stimulating and exciting environments. They prefer to act in a situation rather than reflect on it. They may vocalise a problem or an idea rather than think about it privately. They may feel drained by silence and solitude. They are often open individuals, easy to get to know, who enjoy having many friends.



Introverts are energised by spending time in their inner world. They may feel drained by events and people around them. They prefer to reflect on a situation rather than act on it, and tend to think deeply before voicing opinions. They enjoy solitude, silence and contemplation. They may appear reserved and detached, and they may prefer to have a small circle of intimate friends rather than many acquaintances.

SENSING AND INTUITION

- concerned with the way in which we receive and process information



Sensing types tend to focus on details rather than the overall picture. They will prioritise information perceived by the senses. They are concerned with the actual, the real and the practical, and tend to be down-to-earth and matter-of-fact. They may feel that particular details are more significant than general patterns. They may be conservative and tend to prefer what is known and well established. They are frequently fond of the traditional and conventional.



Intuitive types focus on the possibilities of a situation, perceiving meanings, relationships and ideas. They might value indirect associations and concepts more highly than information perceived by the senses. They focus on the overall picture rather than on specific facts and data. They follow their inspirations enthusiastically, but not always realistically. They are sometimes perceived as idealistic dreamers, and often aspire to bring change and innovation to established conventions.

THINKING AND FEELING

- concerned with how we make decisions and judgements



Thinking types make judgements based on objective, impersonal logic. They value integrity and justice, and are known for their truthfulness and for their desire for fairness. They value principles above cultivating harmony. They are often good at making difficult decisions as they are able to analyse problems impartially. They may consider it more important to be honest and correct than tactful.



Feeling types make judgements based on subjective, personal values. They value compassion and mercy. They are known for their tactfulness and for their desire for peace. They are more concerned with promoting harmony than adhering to abstract principles. They are able to take into account other people's feelings and values, ensuring they reach a solution that satisfies everyone. They find it easy to empathise and tend to be trusting and encouraging. They may find it difficult to criticise, even when necessary.

JUDGING AND PERCEIVING

- concerned with how we respond to the world around us



Judging types have a planned, orderly approach to life. They enjoy routine and established patterns. They follow schedules, make lists and use timetables and diaries. They tend to be punctual, organised and tidy. They may find it difficult to deal with unexpected disruptions to plans, and can be resistant to changes to established methods. They prefer to make decisions quickly, and stick to their conclusions once made.



Perceiving types have a flexible, open-ended approach to life. They enjoy change and spontaneity. They prefer to leave projects open in order to adapt and improve them. They may find plans and schedules restrictive and tend to be easy-going about deadlines, punctuality and tidiness. They might find last minute pressure a necessary motivation in order to complete projects. They are often good at dealing with the unexpected, and welcome change and variety. Their behaviour may often seem impulsive and unplanned.



“Churches are often full of square pegs in round holes”

extraverts, perceiving types into judging types, thinking types into feeling types, or ministers displaying higher emotionality into ministers displaying lower emotionality, strategies may need to be found to enable such ministers to display a higher degree of resilience within the ministries to which God may have called them. We can't do much to change either levels of extraversion or levels of emotionality, so we need to respect the extent to which people are predisposed to be vulnerable to burnout or poor work-related psychological health.

“The most important thing to take forward from the research is the importance of self awareness, for those working in ministry to understand how they work, how they respond to others around them, and how this affects their ability to be resilient to all that life and ministry throws at a person.”

He suggested that an effective way to enhance self awareness would be to offer psychological type workshops during initial ministerial training and continuing ministerial education, but that such workshops must be operated by 'staff fully conversant with the theology of individual differences and with the broader contexts of personality psychology, as well as with an in-depth understanding of psychological type theory and the relevant related research'.

He suggested that psychological type analysis be carried out at the earliest stages of an application to ministry. “This is not to screen people out. In some ways, it's to the benefit of candidates, because I suspect that the routine processes that churches use to select may unconsciously discriminate against some individual differences. So it's partly for equality and fairness to the candidates, but it also puts [the church] in a position to enable those people better to deal with the level of risk that they might experience.

“It recognises that when people are selected for ministry training, they may benefit from formational processes that take into account who they are. And that profile will follow people through training and through ministry, not to prejudice them but to enable them. It might mean that when people are being interviewed for a post, they are conscious of who they are, and how who they are fits them well or fits them ill for that particular post. Churches are often full of square pegs in round holes.”

He concluded: “I don't think self awareness is something you can teach, but I do think it's stuff you can discover. But you only discover if you trust the process and switch off the mobile phone. The journey of inward discovery is not self indulgent. I want to justify that as a realistic activity for Christian people to do.”

The Francis Psychological

Type Scales in Ministry

- Both male and female ministers serving within the Church of Scotland prefer introversion over extraversion. Introverted ministers may be energised by many aspects of ministry such as private study and preparation, one-to-one encounters in counselling and spiritual direction, silent prayer and reflection, and focusing deeply on interior spiritual issues.

On the other hand, introverted ministers may be drained by many other aspects of ministry, such as attending social events, speaking in public (especially without preparation), talking with strangers as part of evangelism or parish visiting, and assuming a high profile within the parish.

Since many aspects of the clerical profession tend to require an extraverted approach to life, introverted ministers may need to be properly prepared during their initial ministerial training and during their continuing ministerial education to develop effective coping strategies that enable them both to fulfil extraverted expectations and then afterwards to create the personal space necessary to re-energise.

- Almost as many male and female ministers serving in the Church of Scotland prefer intuition over sensing, a much high proportion of intuitive types than found in the population as a whole. Intuitive ministers may be energised by many aspects of ministry, such as the opportunity to speculate about meanings and possibilities in Scripture, drawing inspiration from the symbols and teachings of the church, welcoming change and experimentation in liturgy, and developing a vision for the future of their church.

On the other hand, intuitive ministers may be drained by other aspects of ministry, such as the value placed on tradition, encountering resistance to change, the need to focus on practical realities, and the importance of details and accuracy in church administration.

Since many aspects of the clerical profession tend to require a sensing approach to life, intuitive ministers may need to be properly prepared during their initial ministerial training and during their continuing ministerial education to develop their less-preferred sensing function and to appreciate how sensing types perceive their environment.

- Both male and female ministers serving within the Church of Scotland prefer feeling over thinking. Ministers who prefer feeling may be energised by many aspects of ministry such as spending time caring for others through visiting, counselling or pastoral care, needing to support and empathise with those in need, and the importance of interpersonal values in Christian teaching, such as love, harmony, peace, and compassion.

On the other hand, ministers who prefer feeling may be drained by other aspects of ministry, such as having to look at problems objectively and logically, the need to make tough decisions which affect other people's lives, the need to be critical when necessary, and parish management.

Since many aspects of the clerical profession tend to require the detached and impartial stance characteristic of a thinking approach to life, ministers who prefer feeling may need to be properly prepared during their initial ministerial training and during their continuing ministerial education to develop their less-preferred thinking function and to appreciate how thinking types evaluate their environment.

- Both male and female ministers serving within the Church of Scotland prefer judging over perceiving. Ministers who prefer judging may be energised by many aspects of ministry, such as the need for organisation both in their own lives and in the life of their parishes, arranging services and events well in advance, maintaining efficient administrative systems, and managing local affairs.

On the other hand, judging types may be drained by other aspects of ministry such as the need to think on their feet, responding effectively to unanticipated crises, and adapting to changing situations.

Since many aspects of ministry tend to require the flexibility, spontaneity and responsiveness characteristic of a perceiving approach to life, ministers who prefer judging may need to be properly prepared during their initial ministerial training and during their continuing ministerial education to develop their less-preferred perceiving attitude toward the outer world and to develop strategies which enable them to function confidently in situations for which they have not had time to prepare in advance.

Three Reasons to be cheerful

Professor Leslie Francis talks about the Bright Trinity, three factors associated with greater wellbeing which can be developed and enhanced

“ Higher levels of satisfaction in ministry were significantly associated with all three factors of the Bright Trinity. Each of these three areas is distinctive and worth closer attention and investment”

In the last issue of Ascend, Professor Leslie Francis wrote about the Dark Triad, three sub-clinical pathologies – narcissism, machievellianism and psychopathy – which psychologists have identified as having a potential impact on wellbeing, both that of the individual concerned and of those around them.

However, while working with a colleague on a study of clergy wellbeing in Italy, he started to consider whether or not the Dark Triad might have a flipside. He went on to identify three factors – purpose in life, emotional intelligence and religious commitment (the ‘Bright Trinity’) – which were tested in the Italian study. It was found that all could be predictors of positive psychological wellbeing.

What’s also important is that they can also be developed to further enhance resilience and wellbeing. Prof

Francis says: “Higher levels of satisfaction in ministry were significantly associated with all three factors of the Bright Trinity. Intervention can enhance them, and therefore this is something that the Church might be interested in looking at if enhancing these things reduces burnout. Each of these three areas is distinctive and worth closer attention and investment.”

Purpose in life, as a psychological concept, was pioneered by psychiatrist and holocaust survivor Viktor Frankl. Frankl was a pioneer of logotherapy, a school of psychotherapy which takes as its founding principle the idea that the primary driving force in human beings is to find meaning in life. Put simply, Frankl believed that, in times of stress, people who see meaning and purpose survive.

Prof Francis says: “The discovery of purpose and meaning is something different from satisfaction in work. Purpose and meaning is at the heart of the individual’s life, not the heart of the individual’s work. Frankl’s basic contention is that the essence of human strength to face

difficult situations is the 'will to meaning'.

"Empirical studies have demonstrated a strong relationship between a sense of meaning or purpose in life and psychological and physical wellbeing. The sense of meaning or purpose in life is associated with a wide range of positive outcomes such as stable mood, less psychological distress, more proactive and sociable behaviour, and favourable attitudes towards life and the self."

The positive connection between religion and purpose in life is well documented. Logotherapy is now being used as a major therapeutic tool for working with burnt out clergy in some countries.

Emotional Intelligence (EI or EQ) has been the subject of many popular psychology books in recent years. In the world of psychological research, it is debated because it is difficult to measure, and definitions vary. Nevertheless, there are clear indications that people with high EQ are less likely to experience burnout.

Prof Francis says: "Emotional intelligence is an intelligent understanding of one's own emotional reactions and the ability to manage them, and the understanding of

the emotional reactions of others and the ability to deal with them. It has been employed in research within a range of occupational settings and has been found to predict individual differences in work performance and in occupational health and wellbeing."

EQ has been included in four studies of religious leaders in different denominations in the UK and Ireland, and the data from the study of Church of Scotland ministers produced very similar results. Developing EQ is something any minister can do, either individually or by working with a mentor or supervisor, to enhance their own resilience.

The third quality in the Bright Trinity is religious commitment. Prof Francis says: "Believe it or not, clergy who stay motivated by the faith that brought them into the ministry will do better [in terms of resilience and wellbeing] than those who are no longer motivated by it. Likewise, someone who has lost their conviction – they might say lost their faith – could experience higher levels of emotional exhaustion.

"It's also something that intervention can work with, but the issue has to be identified and faced first." 

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A toolkit for the journey

Rev Joanne Hood was part of the group who developed Path of Renewal. Now she reflects on what it means to be on the PoR journey with her own congregation

In 2013 I was part of a group who travelled to Canada to meet pastors who were trying to embrace the idea of being a missional church rather than an institutional church. We were aiming to create something at home, sensitive to the Church of Scotland context, which would allow individual congregations, ministers and kirk sessions to listen to how God was leading them.

Path of Renewal captured my imagination from the beginning. It's like a toolkit – you can use what is appropriate for any given moment in your journey as a congregation. It involves asking people to discuss what God is calling them into in their specific context. The flexibility is built in – it has to be when you're trying to discern what God is up to and where the Spirit is moving.

“It's an interesting thing to ask people to do, to be seriously intentional about trying to discover God's will”

When we sent out the letters about the pilot programme, my church couldn't apply because I was one of the decision-makers. I've been talking about it in church ever since, so maybe it's not surprising that, when the second tranche came along (starting in January 2018), Hamilton St John's expressed a desire to be part of it. I stood down from the panel so there would be no conflict of interest. Happily, we were accepted!

Path of Renewal came along at a really interesting time for us. The vast majority of our parish is the town centre of Hamilton: retail and businesses, night-time economy, employers, employees, shoppers. How do you be a parish church to that? St John's has been trying to answer that question for a long, long time.

In 1970, the church built a cafe, which was ground-breaking at the time, to be part of the brand new town centre. The cafe still operates – with some of the same volunteers – however footfall in the town centre has fallen. We are now trying to work out what comes next. How can we be a parish church to the town in the 21st century when the town centre itself is in dire straits? Part of Path of Renewal is the encouragement to experiment, and this has helped us come up with some new ideas.

Church members bought in to Path of Renewal early on. Ministers take part in two residential conferences and work with a mentor and a peer support group, and there are also two day conferences for the minister and a group of church members. They've enjoyed interacting with different congregations and hearing what other people are thinking and discovering in a supportive, collegiate spirit.

We've seen progress in terms of things we're doing, and also in terms of individuals' personal relationships with God. It's an interesting thing to ask people to do, to be seriously intentional about trying to discover God's will. In a Path of Renewal group you're encouraged to have spiritual practice when you meet, so we decided that every time we meet we will start in the same way: we share the high point and the

low point of the week, read a passage from the Bible and reflect on that, say the Lord's Prayer and light a candle. It's deepening our discipleship and our relationship with God.

It is also helping people cope with the fact that they know things have to change. They know they are not necessarily going to like all the changes that are part of church life going forward, and we might have to try a bunch of things before we find the right thing, but they have a greater capacity to cope with that. It's amazing what can be accomplished with people in church – they are capable of far more than they realise. ✨

Path of Renewal is currently recruiting more participants to join the movement – contact Rev Liz Crumlish, Path of Renewal Coordinator,
ecrumlish@churchofscotland.org.uk

Read the stories and reflections of those who have taken part on
www.pathofrenewal.blogspot.com



Labyrinth Garden, Hamilton.

THE USES OF PSYCHOTHERAPY

Rev Iain Telfer explores ways in which psychotherapy can support those in ministry

Few would disagree that resilience is key to a person's sense of health and wellbeing. Having spent the last 18 years working as an NHS healthcare chaplain, one of the greatest privileges of my role was being able to offer support to staff across all departments, professions and grades in what is, arguably, one of the most stressful of working environments.

NHS staff work with pressures of perennial savings and unfilled vacancies on a daily basis. As is the case in ministry, there is the expectation that already hard-pressed workers will fill the gaps. Added to that, if it is part of your job to provide emotional support to people whose reserves of strength and emotion might feel unbearably low, there is a personal cost that requires you not to neglect your own welfare. Sound familiar?

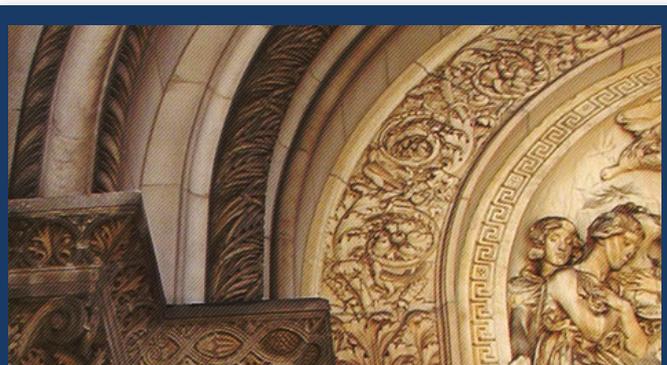
It was not until I was about to leave parish ministry that I first became aware of something called professional (or pastoral) supervision. It is a basic requirement in healthcare chaplaincy in order to fulfill essential competencies and codes of conduct. I have often wondered how I survived the parish without it. I remain thankful to the kirk session in my second charge, whose ministry support group tried to understand the pressures of ministry and fostered the kind of mutual respect and trust that enabled constructive criticism as well as praise.

“Through the insights into human nature psychotherapy has given me, I have felt better equipped to support other people through their darker moments”

Although I am in no doubt I would have benefitted enormously from good pastoral supervision over 24 years in parish ministry, I am equally sure it would not have been the most appropriate place for dealing with the repercussions of one critical moment. This was when I realised that a pastoral situation in which I had become significantly involved had begun to stir some deep personal issues that were to require serious exploration, in more depth than would be possible in the context of supervision.

First, I sought the confidence of a trusted colleague whose immediate acceptance of my dilemma was hugely affirming. He asked if I had ever engaged in psychotherapy, and suggested it might be something worth thinking about. He also mentioned that The Guntrip Trust, which offers financial support to people in religious vocations who wish to have psychotherapy or counselling, would probably be sympathetic to assisting with therapist fees.

To cut a long story short, I have been in and out of psychotherapy for the last 24 years, finding there a capacity to nurture the resilience to deal with my own demons. At the same time, through the insights into human nature it has given me, I have felt better equipped to support other people through their darker moments.



For further information about The Guntrip Trust, please see www.guntriptrust.com

Jane Milton expresses the benefit of psychotherapy succinctly in a booklet titled *Making Sense of Psychotherapy and Psychoanalysis* (published by the British Psychoanalytic Council and MIND in 2007, updated 2014):

“Psychotherapy involves conversations with a listener who is trained to help you make sense of, and try to change, things that are troubling you. It is something you take an active working part in, rather than something you are just prescribed or given, such as medication.

“Unlike a cognitive or behaviour therapist, the person-centred or client-centred therapist won't produce a plan or structure to the sessions, but will encourage you to talk freely about things that are troubling you. He or she will be warm, responsive and non-judgmental, encouraging you to be as open as possible, and to face and come to terms with difficult memories, feelings and fears. He or she is trained to help you to make sense of things in your life and to think about things in new ways, so that you can move on.”

Ascend supports the provision of counselling for all those in recognised ministries within the Church of Scotland. If you would like to find out more about Psychotherapy or counselling options please contact Gabby Dench on:

gdench@churchofscotland.org.uk

Iain J M Telfer was minister at Westerton Fairlie Memorial Parish Church, Bearsden, and St Andrew's Parish Church, Inverurie. Latterly, he was NHS healthcare chaplain at The Royal Infirmary of Edinburgh. He is now retired and is chairman of The Guntrip Trust.

Prof Leslie J Francis, author of the Church's survey on Resilience and Wellbeing in Ministry, looks at how the Jesus of Mark's Gospel taught resilience to his disciples

Jesus' school of resilience

The Jesus of Mark's Gospel calls a small group of followers into his school of intentional discipleship. Within the school of discipleship, the Jesus of Mark's Gospel equips this small group to share in his mission and ministry with commitment and with resilience.

The strategy Jesus employed within that school of discipleship embraced two clear theological methods. Both methods were vividly displayed in Capernaum as soon as Jesus had called the first four disciples (Peter and Andrew, James and John) away from the shore and away from their boats.

There, in Capernaum, Jesus took Peter and Andrew, James and John straight into the synagogue, the place in which skills in theology are taught, practised, and grasped (Mark 1: 21-28).

“Come with me by yourselves, to some lonely place where you can rest quietly”

Jesus was shaping his disciples to hear the Word of God, to hear the Scriptures, and to hear God speak through the tradition. This was the first theological method (scriptural theology).

But Jesus was also shaping his disciples to see the works of God, to see and to witness the reign of God in God's world, as the man who had been possessed and repressed was now liberated and set free. This was the second theological method (empirical theology): seeing, recording, analysing and interpreting signs of God's reign.

These two traditions concerning theology rooted in Scripture and in empirical sciences also stood at the heart of the Church of Scotland's survey concerning wellbeing and resilience in ministry. The survey was established in light of a strong theology of individual differences rooted in Genesis 1:27. Such a theology respects differences and variety among those made in the image of God and called by God into ministry. Not all ministers look alike; not all ministers express and experience ministry in the same way; not all ministers shape resilience in the same way.

The survey was conducted in the spirit of empirical theology and in response to the dominical command to go and to observe the sower (Mark 4: 3-12). The survey concerning wellbeing and resilience in ministry was designed to differentiate among the four soils: the path, rocky ground, the field of thistles, and the good soil that brought forth the harvest, thirty-fold, sixty-fold, and one hundred-fold.



Careful analysis of the detailed data provided by 505 ministers drew attention to the validity of the theory of wellbeing that psychologists describe as ‘the balanced affect model of wellbeing’. The balanced affect model maintains that positive affect (good feelings) and negative affect (bad feelings) are not opposite poles of one continuum, but two separate affective systems. This means that negative affect (say, emotional exhaustion) can be offset by positive affect (say, the sense of achieving something worthwhile).

“they had no leisure even to eat, so many were coming and going”

The data provided by the 505 ministers confirmed that levels of emotional exhaustion were quite high among ministers, but whether or not high levels of emotional exhaustion led to burnout depended, to some extent, on the stock of positive affect (the sense of achieving something worthwhile).

The balanced affect model provides some helpful clues about how the Church might support the wellbeing and resilience of ministers. The very nature of the job means that it is emotionally exhausting, and if ministers are properly in touch with their feelings they will be affected by this. It is not that easy for the Church to remove the causes of emotional exhaustion. On the other hand, there might be a lot that the Church can do to help ministers to build up and protect their stock of positive affect.

The Jesus of Mark’s Gospel seems not only to have shaped his school of discipleship to equip his followers with the theological tools that they needed, rooted within the Scriptures and the traditions and within the close observation of the signs of God’s reign in God’s world. He also seems

to have shaped his school of discipleship not to protect his followers from negative affect but to build up their stock of positive affect.

Mark chapter 6 provides a good illustration of this approach in practice. On their missionary journey, the disciples seem to have had a mixed reception. On the one hand, there were signs of success as they drove out devils and cured sick people by anointing them with oil (v. 13). On the other hand, they experienced such rejection and pain that they shook the dust from their feet (v. 12).

This is costly stuff, but more costly still must have been hearing the news of how John the Baptist – the one sent to prepare the way – had been decapitated by Herod (vv. 14-29). Even more costly still must have been the constant pressures resulting in the way that ‘they had no leisure even to eat, so many were coming and going’ (v. 31).

It was into this environment, redolent in emotional exhaustion, that the Jesus of Mark’s Gospel introduced his first major exercise in building resilience capacity. “Come with me by yourselves, to some lonely place where you can rest quietly,” said Jesus (v. 31), for already his followers were off-loading and debriefing as they reported to Jesus ‘all that they had done and taught’ (v. 30).

In accordance with all the best practices of confidential mentoring, we shall never know for sure what conversation went on in that boat, but what we do know is that after this exercise in building resilience capacity, the disciples emerged from the boat re-energised and equipped to distribute food to ‘five thousand men’ (v. 44) and to gather ‘twelve great basketfuls of scraps’ (v. 43). Such evidence is at least consistent with the way in which the balanced affect model of resilience works in practice. 

Living through changing times



Craig Renton
Depute Council Secretary

These are inspiring times for our Church. This year's General Assembly has been referred to as the most important of the 21st century.

In our world, Ministries Council will soon cease to exist. The four current Councils will become two agencies and we are working together to form two bodies that serve the Church at every level and put the focus on the local.

In the midst of what the professionals might determine as 'organisational recalibration' we in Ministries Council are experiencing our own 'radical' changes. Our new Education and Training Secretary (Kay Cathcart) joined

“We are embracing the opportunities these changes present and as the Acting Council Secretary I am inspired by what I see from the team.”

us on 15th July to fill the post vacated back in November 2018 when David Plews left. Other key and long-serving staff moved on (John Thomson and Moira Whyte); our Finance Manager (Elaine Macadie) is on maternity leave and our Council Secretary (Rev Jayne Scott) has also departed. We are embracing the opportunities these changes present and as the Acting Council Secretary I am inspired by what I see from the team. There is anxiety –

the Special Commission implementation will lead to a reduction in the head count here in the National Offices so that is to be expected – but the overwhelming feeling is of a hunger to deliver. We recognise that change is necessary, that it is long overdue and therefore it is widely welcomed because our team wants to enable you serving Christ on the front line to do so to the very best of your abilities.

And so we appreciate the challenge that faces our Church and the changes that lie ahead for us all but we are not intimidated because we do not face these alone. We have one another, our brothers and sisters in Christ, and we have the Lord who stands with us and gives us strength.

Thank you for all that you do and remember that we are here to support and enable that work in any way we can. 

**“But the Lord
stood with me and
gave me strength”
– 2 Timothy 4:17**

Rev Duncan MacPherson tells Susan Mansfield how a personal experience of burnout inspired him to learn more about resilience.

REFLECTIONS ON RESILIENCE



Sometimes the toughest lesson about resilience in ministry comes when you find you don't have as much of it as you thought. That's what happened to Rev Duncan MacPherson, minister of Hilton Parish Church in Inverness. In August 2012, while at the helm of an active, growing congregation, he was diagnosed with Chronic Fatigue Syndrome. He was off work for six months and took two years to recover his energy fully.

"In many respects, I thought I was very resilient," he says, thoughtfully. "I had been in ministry for 18 years, with all the ups and downs that brings in terms of pressures, stresses, challenges. I was pretty shocked when I ended up in an experience which some people would call burnout."

During a period of study leave in 2013, he decided to spend some time reflecting on his experience and reading around the subject of resilience. "I thought it would be useful, on a personal level, to think a bit more deliberately about it,

addressing what was a pretty major life experience for me, thinking about what I have learned, and what might be useful markers in not letting it happen again."

He read a number of books on the subject published by the Alban Institute based in Durham, North Carolina, which has conducted research into pastoral resilience and clergy self-care, and books in Eugene Peterson's Pastoral series. He is no expert on ministerial resilience, he says, but he recognised from the books a number of insights which resonated with his own experience.

"One of the things that really struck me is that I thought the danger of burnout would be greater in the early part of ministry, whereas research suggests you will be in more danger ten years in because you now have more responsibility. The size of your ministry expands and you end up with more things that are stressful or challenging."

That was true in Duncan's experience. When he arrived at Hilton in 1994, it was a dwindling congregation with an uncertain future. But he saw potential for change, working to grow the congregation numerically and spiritually, refurbish buildings and start new programmes. Some years later, the congregation was three times the size and running a busy church centre. Duncan found himself managing a team, which brought a whole new set of demands.

"I had imagined that after a few years of building teams and employing full-time staff to lead these teams, my life would become easier. In fact, my experience was the exact opposite! The levels of stress involved in leading a congregation and a team of full-time workers was very high. I would recommend any minister, especially if you have to manage full-time staff as part of your work, to go on a management training course. Team ministry can be fantastic but it can also be pretty awful, and one of the key elements is good management."

"I would recommend any minister, especially if you have to manage full-time staff as part of your work, to go on a management training course. Team ministry can be fantastic but it can also be pretty awful, and one of the key elements is good management."

His illness led him to reflect on areas such as Emotional Intelligence (EQ), an increased awareness of your own emotions and personality and how this affects how you work with others. "I learned that, by nature, I'm a conflict-avoider. Often that gets you into trouble; I don't think you ever solve the issue by hiding and it has probably caused quite a lot of stress for me. One of the areas of development in EQ centres around appropriate assertiveness, and it has been helpful to work on that."

It is also vital to have appropriate professional support, such as pastoral supervision, which is offered by the Church of Scotland through Ascend. One book Duncan read, *Leadership on the Line* by Ron Heifetz and Marty Linsky, makes a helpful distinction between 'allies' (often those who work beside you and share many of your values, but can also bound by other loyalties or agendas) and 'confidants' (often outside of your immediate context, who have no conflicting loyalties and can offer a safe place to share experiences).

"It's quite challenging as a minister to find a safe space to talk out what is happening in your life and ministry. You don't have a line manager or colleagues at your side each day, and the complex web of relationships within a congregation can make personal disclosures very risky. In practice, the lack of safe people to share with meant that I became increasingly isolated and my stress levels went through the roof. In recent years, I have found it hugely beneficial to have pastoral supervision. I think if this relationship had been in place 10

years ago, I would not have gone through the trauma of illness and exhaustion."

Through his reading, he also reflected on some of the changes he had made in his own life following his illness. "Most people in our churches have a life that is like a three-legged stool, they have their spiritual life, their professional life and their family life. For ministers, these three elements can easily merge into one — your whole life is immersed in church. When you are sitting on a one-legged stool, it takes a lot more concentration and energy."

He emphasised the importance of having friendships and interests outside the congregation and making time for leisure and exercise. After reading Eugene Peterson's *Working the Angles*, he began to think differently about the idea of Sabbath rest. Duncan says: "I began to take the idea more seriously, not so much a day of religious observance but

rather a day to simply remove myself from circulation. On Sunday evening, for 24 hours, I completely switch off from all social media and disconnect from the internet."

Another related area, he says, is the importance of tending to one's own spiritual life. It's about finding the right resources

for you — for a Duncan that meant a combination of the contemplative (the daily offices of the Northumbria Community), fellowship (a Renovare group; which focuses on spiritual formation) and celebration (annual visits to Greenbelt). "I think that's one major responsibility and the top priority, how you keep yourself healthy in terms of your own relationship with God — how to shape your life in a way to enable that relationship which is core throughout." /

If you would like to find out more about supervision please visit www.ascend.co.uk/supervision

If you are interested in exploring EQ further please contact Gabby Dench gdench@churchofscotland.org.uk

EMPOWERING THE WHOLE TEAM

Rich Robinson revisits Paul's 'blueprint' for the church in Ephesians and finds a new framework for looking at the ministry of all believers

Imagine having to write, type or text with only your weaker hand; or play football with only five players against a full team of 11; or tie your shoe laces with only two of your five fingers. It would be hard work, wouldn't it?

Or imagine if those around you expected you to be the best-equipped, most skilled and knowledgeable person, every time in every area, holding every responsibility. That would be draining and demoralising, wouldn't it?

More often than not, in the church, we hold the expectation that the minister will do everything. Rather than equipping every member for ministry, we are trying to tie our shoe laces with only one, maybe two fingers. We are working on reduced leadership capacity while simultaneously expecting too much of our ministers, and we are all too aware of the stress, burnout, frustration and disappointment this creates.

As we look at the book of Ephesians, we are privileged to see Paul's 'blueprint' for the church, his 'best learning'. Embedded in this wonderful book are some important keys for us as disciples and leaders and for the church. Though it was written a long time ago, these are timely words for us today: for our churches, for our leaders, for our culture.

In Ephesians 4:1-16, Paul talks about laying the foundation of unity (v.1-6), embracing and empowering the gift of diversity within the body of believers (v.7-11), and exhorting them to pursue the prize for us to grow into maturity and Christlikeness (v.12-16). So often, as we look at the church, we see a stretched, divided and unreconciled community (not the unity we see in verses 1-6); a uniform, formulaic structure run by 'the professionals' (not the diversity and inclusivity we see in verses 7-11); and a community attempting to manage the present and survive what's ahead (not one focused on the prize of maturity which we see in verses 11-16).

In Ephesians 4, Paul talks about five dynamics at work – apostolic, prophetic, evangelistic, shepherding, and teaching (APEST). Often the systems and structures within the church prioritise just two of those – the teaching and shepherding. How might we utilise all five dynamics? Often we are over-

reliant on one minister. How might we access and empower the priesthood of all believers?

The stresses and strains of ministry are real, heavy and cumulative. If ministers are to flourish, they must be released to lead in the way they are shaped, wired and gifted by God. And the people of God must be mobilised to find their place and play their part. The liberating news of APEST is the release from the loneliness, isolation, pressure, and friendlessness of trying to 'go it alone' in leadership.

In Ephesians, Paul is writing to a network of households, not a small group of theologically trained leaders. He is laying a foundation of unity and then exhorting each person to play their part, for them to move towards the prize – maturity and Christlikeness.

Wouldn't it be wonderful if our communities were Christlike?

Wouldn't it be wonderful if our people were growing in Christlikeness?

Wouldn't it be wonderful if our ministers were growing in Christlikeness?

Wouldn't it be wonderful if people who engaged with our communities met Christ through our words and deeds?

Paul says these APEST gifts are given to equip God's people – to serve them, shape them, to refine them, to empower them, to upskill them. And this word 'equip' can be translated also as 'perfect', 'heal' and 'align', amongst other words. Paul is not just referring to a functional definition of 'equip' (skills for a 'task'), and this equipping is not for 'personal development' but for the community as a whole to prosper. This flies in the face of our individualist and consumerist culture (how does this benefit me?) and speaks of community, sacrifice and love (how can I serve others so we grow together?).

APEST gifts are not titles, nor are they boxes to put people in.

“These gifts are given to equip God’s people – to serve them, shape them, to refine them, to empower them, to upskill them.”

APOSTLE



PROPHET



EVANGELIST



SHEPHERD



TEACHER

The APEST framework helps each member of the congregation find their place and play their part. The minister does not need to be the expert and example in everything – this was never God’s intention. Instead, different members of the congregation can serve the body in specific God-given ways. In doing so, each person enables those around them to become more mature, more like Christ.

There will be people within your congregation who will champion, express and invest a specific APEST preference for the good of the whole body. As ministers, we need to look for those within our congregations. These are some of the key expressions of each of the APEST:

Apostolic – Pioneering work that focuses on extending the mission of God and moving forward the work of the church

Prophetic – Creative and prayerful work that focuses on the heart of God and a life of justice

Evangelistic – Connecting and communicating the message of God to others

Shepherding – Creating, deepening and strengthening community, and championing human flourishing

Teaching – Bringing understanding and integration of ideas and concepts to the whole body

Helping everyone, ministers included, to find their place and play their part – in the way God has wired them – will lead to more sustainable and fruitful ministry. Releasing greater potential in congregations will create a greater depth of grace, a larger leadership pool, a more sustainable community life and a shared journey towards maturity. God gave the church APEST so that the body of Christ may be built up and attain the fullness of Christ. ✎



Rich Robinson
Director, 5Q Collective

Rich Robinson is the director of 5Q Collective and leads Catalyse Change, which provides training and coaching for church leaders and other organisations to equip and enable them around discipleship, leadership, mission and multiplication. Over the past 10 years he has led pioneering work

using 3dm tools and training across Europe, Australasia and Canada. He lives in Edinburgh where he works for Cairn, a ministry working with churches in the celtic lands, training them to recapture discipleship and mission at the heart of their culture and practice. Rich was previously on staff at St Thomas’ Church, Sheffield, for 12 years as missional communities team leader.

For more information see www.5qcentral.com,
www.catalysechange.org.

APEST Conference



19 – 20 NOVEMBER 2019, EDINBURGH

This November we look forward to welcoming Alan Hirsch who, along with Rich Robinson, will lead us in a two-day conference unpacking the importance of the five-fold APEST ministry in Ephesians 4. The Apostle Paul says that Christ has given within the church, the body of Christ, ‘some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be shepherds and teachers’.

Throughout the Christendom era of the Church we have tended to function primarily in a Shepherd/Teacher mode, this being to the detriment of the ministry function of the apostle, the prophet and the evangelist. Unfortunately as a church today we find ourselves in uncharted territory; Christendom is long gone but yet we continue to focus and put the emphasis on the Shepherd/Teacher model of ministry.

Each of us is gifted in different ways, and whether you are an Apostle, Prophet, Evangelist, Shepherd or Teacher, this conference will help you to uncover the gifts and passions that go along with each ministry, and start to understand how all five might be woven together for the benefit of the church.

Ephesians 4:11-13 “So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.”

Included in the programme:

- Lunch and light refreshments
- APEST Personal Vocational Assessment
- A copy of “Activating 5Q” by Alan Hirsch & Jessie Cruickshank
- Facilitated learning programme

This conference being a partnership event between Ascend, Priority Areas and Path of Renewal.

www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/enabling-vibrant-teams-tickets-75279088781

ascend



The Church of Scotland

SOUL CARE WORKSHOPS IN CENTRAL EDINBURGH

Individual Saturday workshops 1.30-4.00pm offered by *Reflective Spaces*; for those who tend their own soul or who care for others spiritual well-being

1 February 2020: The Dynamic Ignation Exercises

An introduction to the dynamic of the Ignation spiritual exercises, with input, guided reflection and interactive 'stations' opening up an overview of the exercises' themes. For those who are simply curious, those who would like to revisit their experience of making the Exercises, and those who offer them and would like to practice some visual and creative ways into the material. With Elizabeth White.

25 April 2020: Exploring Spiritual Abuse

What is spiritual abuse? What are the key characteristics? What impact does the experience of spiritual abuse have on people's lives?

Using current research, discussion and plenary, this workshop will help 'soul care' practitioners to consider the definitions and implications of these questions for their work.

Brief pointers may be given for accompanying those who have experienced abuse, but the main emphasis will be on what we need to be aware of as we hold safe, sacred space or others in one-to-one settings. With Anne Solomon who works in spirituality and psychology.

Bookings £25

www.reflectivespaces.org.uk/soul-care-workshops

Email: elizabeth@reflectivespaces.org.uk

ABERDEEN PRESBYTERY

Big changes are afoot in the Presbytery of Aberdeen. With plans underway to form a new Presbytery of Aberdeen and Shetland, it is both a challenging and exciting time for local churches. This new model of shared ministry is part of the Radical Action Plan approved by this year's General Assembly and, it is hoped, will inspire other presbyteries across Scotland to take similar steps.

Throughout the presbytery, which stretches across 71 square miles in the North East of Scotland, there are 34 congregations and around 227,560 people served by 26 ordained ministers.

Last autumn, the presbyteries of Aberdeen and Shetland announced they would be exploring the benefits of coming together as one larger presbytery, and much work has already been

"For we are co-workers in God's service; you are God's field, God's building." – 1 Corinthians

done to make this happen. A team of 10 people have been working closely with church members in Shetland to bring about a seamless transition – comparing and contrasting their ways of working and trying to adopt best practices that make sense for both groups. During the recent months, the Aberdeen team have made trips up to Shetland and invested in video-conferencing to both enable fluid communication and solidify friendships.

Lessons have been learned along the way, prompting the team to have a fresh look at how they do things and inspiring changes in the Aberdeen Presbytery that were long overdue, says depute presbytery clerk, Cheryl Brankin. Part of the learning curve has been simply allowing adjustments to 'bed in' and making tweaks where needed, she explains. "We shouldn't expect to get everything right first time, and when we don't, we shouldn't see it as failure."

Still to be achieved this year, however, is the agreement of a radical plan for the Aberdeen Presbytery – one that looks forward with both confidence and realism, and releases resources for new forms of church and mission in local communities. The presbytery is embracing the Radical Action Plan agreed by this year's General Assembly and is keen to keep moving forward quickly, looking on Shetland's 10-year plan as inspiration for how to make difficult decisions.

"In many ways, they have inspired us to seek to produce a much more radical 10-year plan," Cheryl adds.

The feeling in the presbytery is 'positive' about dealing with these challenges. The agreement of the radical plan will involve lots of discussion and debate, and will be no mean feat, but everyone involved is motivated by the prospect of deeper and increased collaboration between congregations, and renewal through new patterns of ministry as well as changes in building use. All in all, Cheryl sees a 'bright future' for the new presbytery, "but, as with any union, we know that there will be challenges along the way."

The creation of the new Presbytery of Aberdeen and Shetland is due in June 2020, and will be informed by the Aberdeen Presbytery plan and buildings survey which are both ongoing. 

Laura
Crawford
Communications
Officer

NOTABLE

1. Expanding deaf ministry

Rev Mary Whittaker, who is the only Deaf minister across the Church, was inducted as minister to the deaf congregation of St John's Church in Aberdeen and the North Region of Scotland last December. Her new parish covers thousands of square miles from Perth to Shetland and Aberdeen to the Outer Hebrides and Skye. In July, Mary abseiled down the Forth Rail Bridge and raised £745 for Outfit Moray.

2. Aberdeen city-wide prayer gatherings

On the last Friday of every month, a city-wide ecumenical prayer gathering is held to support and encourage participation in existing prayer meetings in the city. The gatherings take place in different venues and times each month, and have been ongoing for the past four years. It has been an opportunity for local Kirks and independent churches in Aberdeen to get to know each other, with a strong focus on welcoming and supporting Syrian refugees.

3. The Urugero Project

The congregation of High Church Hilton raised £900 towards the work of the Urugero Project, which helps genocide survivors in Rwanda. Their minister and Presbytery Moderator, Rev Hutton Steel, and his family visited Rwanda in July to present the gift, speak with the group and learn how their Christian faith has sustained them despite losing family members during the 1994 genocide.

4. Improving communications

A part-time communications officer is being recruited by the presbytery to help improve internal communications during the transitions, as well as enhancing engagement with external organisations within the much-extended presbytery bounds.

60 SECONDS

with
Mark Evans DCS

Name: Mark Evans DCS

Deacon since: 19 October 1988

Job: Head of Spiritual Care and Bereavement Lead for NHS Fife

Education: Pirniehall Primary School, Edinburgh and Ainslie Park High School, Edinburgh; Certificate in Diaconal Ministry at St Colm's College; RGN at North Lothian College of Nursing; BSc in Nursing and Health at Napier University; Masters in Healthcare Chaplaincy at Glasgow University.

Relationship status: Married to David for 15 years (we've been together for 27).

Family: Too many to mention! We enjoy spending time with our grandchildren.

First job: I went to St Colm's when I was 17. My first job after that was as a community care worker, working with homeless men. I had a special interest in homeless men with HIV, which is why I went on to do nursing.

My faith: Faith was important to my family and they always encouraged and supported me, but nobody was a big church attender — except me. I started going to church at about eight years old and I've never known anything else. I never thought about doing anything except work for the Church.

My life before ministry: I've never done a job that was not a ministry. After training as an RGN, I worked as a nurse for a few years, then I went back into a parish working with children and young people. After my nursing degree, specialising in adolescent mental health and end-of-life care, I moved into hospital chaplaincy.

My call to ministry: I'd always assumed that I would be a minister, but during my year at Colm's I realised that deaconesses — as they were then — had been some of the most important influences on my faith. The Church still wanted me to become a Minister of Word and Sacrament, but I had a strong and clear calling to the diaconate. I wanted to help people, be with people, stand beside them, to be with the poorest and most marginalised in society and that's where most deacons at the time were serving. Although men have been admitted to the diaconate since 1979, I was the first male candidate and one of the first to be commissioned (ordained).



I'm delighted.... that I've just been made the first male president of the Diaconate of the Church of Scotland. I think it's important for people to recognise the work that deacons do as chaplains in hospitals, prisons, with seafarers, or working in social work or teaching, and the theology that informs what we do.

My superpower is... My family and friends who ground me, and the example of Christ that energises and motivates me.

I love chaplaincy because... of the privilege and honour of sharing with people in their tears, laughter and joy, and being accepted and welcomed. We get to meet people at some of their lowest and most vulnerable points, and they willingly invite us to share their pain.

My biggest challenge is... My first challenge is to balance the demands of the health service with the expectations of the Church. My second is getting the Church to recognise the importance of the diaconate. There is a lot of talk about radical plans, collaborating, standing on the margins, finding new ways of being church. My hope is that the Church would rediscover the radical, collaborative nature of diaconal ministry which is prophetic and apostolic.

I'd rather be... Enjoying a good Pinot Gris by the waterfront at the Silver Fern in Brown's Bay, New Zealand, with my two brothers who live there.

People don't know... I sing in Edinburgh Gay Men's Chorus. We do everything from classical to pop to opera to musical theatre — we've even sung at the Edinburgh International Festival.

WHO IS WHO?



**GABBY
DENCH**

Gabby Dench is our Pastoral Support Manager. Gabby is passionate about providing care for “caregivers” and firmly believes in the importance of both listening, and being heard. Gabby co-leads on Ascend.

gdench@churchofscotland.org.uk



**ELEANOR
MCMAHON**

Eleanor is the vice-convenor responsible for education and support. As an interim minister, she supports congregations travelling in times of challenge and change.

emcmahon@churchofscotland.org.uk



**KAY
CATHCART**

Kay Cathcart is our new Education & Training Secretary, bringing strategic oversight to all education and training programmes within the church which prepare and develop all those exercising a recognised ministry. Kay co-leads on Ascend.

kcathcart@churchofscotland.org.uk



**CRAIG
RENTON**

Craig Renton is our Depute Council Secretary with line management responsibility for the Council's various functions.

crenton@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



**LEZLEY
STEWART**

Lezley Stewart 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. Lezley is an ordained Minister.

lstewart@churchofscotland.org.uk



**CLARE
MILRINE**

Clare Milrine is Ascend's Project Officer. Her focus is on project management strategy, planning, scheduling and oversight of various sub-projects and contracts.

cmilrine@churchofscotland.org.uk



**SUSAN
MANSFIELD**

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*O God, you have been the help and strength of your people in all times and places.
In every moment of every day you watch over us and protect us.
Your love surrounds us on every side, and we worship you.
Very little of what happens in our lives is what we would choose,
And you alone know what lies before us.
Nevertheless, we are not afraid because you are our Father,
And we dare to believe that in your will is our peace.*

*Yet, O God, your will makes great demands of us, while the trials and temptations of life threaten to overwhelm us. We are weak and frail and often become tired and weary.
Still, we are glad we are not invited to face our challenges and difficulties alone.
We thank you that Jesus is the companion and helper of all whose work is heavy.
Help us remember his courage in the face of all he suffered, his steadiness of purpose in remaining faithful to his life's work, and his humble dependence upon you.
As we share in his sorrows, let us learn the secrets of his endurance and strength.
And let us receive his invitation to come and rest, to walk and work with him and learn the unforced rhythms of grace so that we might begin to live lightly and freely.*

*Come, O God, and be our help and strength, keep us steadfast and sustain our will.
Give us a strong sense of your presence within us and around us.
Be our guide through all that appears unclear and uncertain.
Be our guard against all that would threaten and endanger us.
Let us glimpse our lives in time as they appear in your eternity.
Let us face whatever you send with the help you will provide.
According to your grace, give us greater patience in hope and greater faithfulness in love that we may face every challenge with courage.
And gladden our hearts with the gift of your peace, through Jesus Christ, our Lord.*

Amen

Rev Dr Kenneth S. Jeffrey
Senior Lecturer Church History, Kings College

Inspired by John Baillie, *A Diary of Private Prayer* (Edinburgh, 1935)

Rev Dr Kenneth S. Jeffrey is senior lecturer in church history at Kings College, University of Aberdeen. He was ordained in 2002 and served as minister of the Parish Church of Cupar Old and St Michael of Tarvit in Fife for almost 12 years. In 2014 he was appointed as the new director of the Centre for Ministry Studies at Aberdeen University.

Essential Info

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Search 'law' under Resources at Ascend Online.

Safeguarding Department

Tel: 0131 240 2256

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Safeguarding is about preventing harm and abuse and making a timely and appropriate response if it occurs.

Housing and Loan Fund

Email: hbett@churchofscotland.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 can include provision of a house to rent or 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: lhood@churchofscotland.org.uk



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