

# ascend

centre for support & development

a magazine for ministry



in the midst  
of change

# NAVIGATING THE CHANGE

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:

[ascend.churchofscotland.org.uk/mdc](https://ascend.churchofscotland.org.uk/mdc)

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

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](https://www.churchofscotland.org.uk/ascend)



## CONTENTS

<b>EMPOWERING LEADERS</b> The team at Fullarton ConneXions tells us what works for them	6
<b>ON THE RIGHT LINES</b> Sally-Anne Dunn looks at ministry and line-management	14
<b>THE LONG READ</b> What nine years working with church teams has taught Verene Nicolas	17
<b>BIBLE REFLECTION</b> Roger Sturrock takes inspiration from the sport of curling	23
<b>ENHANCED COMMON SENSE</b> Practical ideas for building strong teams through honesty and awareness	26
<b>PATH OF RENEWAL</b> Liz Crumlish throws away the rule book to attend to the Spirit of God	32
<b>PRESBYTERY FOCUS</b> A presbytery so new it hasn't yet been named	34
<b>WHO'S WHO</b> Essential contact details for the Faith Nurture Forum	36

**Commissioning Editor:**  
Kay Cathcart

**Editors:**  
Helen Silvis & Susan Mansfield

**Design:**  
Chris Flexen

**Photography:**  
Andrew O'Brien  
John Young

**Contributors:**  
Verene Nicolas  
Susan Mansfield  
Liz Crumlish  
Team at Fullarton church in Irvine  
Roger Sturrock  
Ruth Harvey  
Abdul Rahim  
Fiona Gardner  
Sally-Anne Dunn  
Dave Kendall  
Crystal Cryer  
Pete Grieg  
Rosie Frew  
Laura Crawford  
Stuart Davidson  
Sonia Blakesley  
John Christie

Ascend is a programme of the Faith Nurture Forum.

**Programme Leaders:**  
Gabby Dench & Kay Cathcart

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

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

To send comments to the Editor please mark email or letter:  
FAO Ascend Editor.

# HELLO

Welcome to the spring edition of our Ascend magazine. In the planning stages of this edition no one could have predicted that the world would look as it does now. Our day to day lives have changed beyond recognition and this is a unique season in ministry. The time delay between my writing this and your receiving it will have brought further change.

We also know there is time at the moment for reading, reflecting, praying and preparing for the future. We wanted to bring this magazine to you for the days yet to come.

After a season of isolation, we will want to draw together to look to the future. How will we do that? What kind of change lies beyond this time? Our church was already grappling with all kinds of change and more will come our way.

As well as those areas of change that are outwith our control there is also the kind we choose, like the team at Fullarton Church in Irvine who see potential all around them and long to be change-makers. It's not without challenge, and each person shares honestly their experience of team life.

It is clear that working together is increasingly important for our church. Whether it's the potential of hub-style ministry, seasons of being an interim moderator or identifying and building healthy volunteer teams within our congregations, many of the skills required and challenges experienced are similar.

Verene Nicolas has wonderful insight into how teams function and, perhaps more importantly, how we each behave as part of a team. Her challenge both to understand and communicate our shared purpose, so that the teams we lead can gather around this vision and grapple with it, will be timely for many.

The Place for Hope team bring us really practical advice on how to strengthen our team work. Roger Sturrock's reminder that learning to work well with others is not optional inspires us to bring our best and look for it in others.

As always, we want the Ascend team to grow and develop to help respond to these needs. Please be in touch via [ascend@churchofscotland.org.uk](mailto:ascend@churchofscotland.org.uk) or [pastoralsupport@churchofscotland.org.uk](mailto:pastoralsupport@churchofscotland.org.uk) to let us know the help you need.



*K Cathcart*

**KAY CATHCART**  
Education & Training Secretary

## BULLETINS

### PASTORAL SUPERVISION - FUNDING NOW AVAILABLE

Did you know we can fund pastoral supervision up to £240 annually?

*"I come away with my sense of purpose renewed and my enthusiasm for what I do reinvigorated"*



### 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."*

Coaching is a support service which can be provided via video platforms such as Zoom, Skype and FaceTime. Its focus is to help with a specific issue by helping those in ministry realise and marshal their innate resources. It has been shown to contribute to maintaining and developing resilience. Some of our panel of coaches are shown on the Ascend website and help will be given in identifying a suitable match for the person and the issue by submitting a request to the Ascend administrator as indicated at the foot of the coaching tab.

[ascend.churchofscotland.org.uk/services/coaching](https://ascend.churchofscotland.org.uk/services/coaching)



### STAFFING UPDATES

Angus Mathieson has been appointed to the role of Interim Head of Faith Nurture. Clare Milrine, Project Officer with Ascend, is now on maternity leave.

### 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 and conditions apply.

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

# EMPOWERING LEADERS AT FULLARTON

Four years ago Fullarton Parish Church embarked on a journey of change. **Susan Mansfield** spoke to seven of their key team members to find out what they have learned.

## Introduction

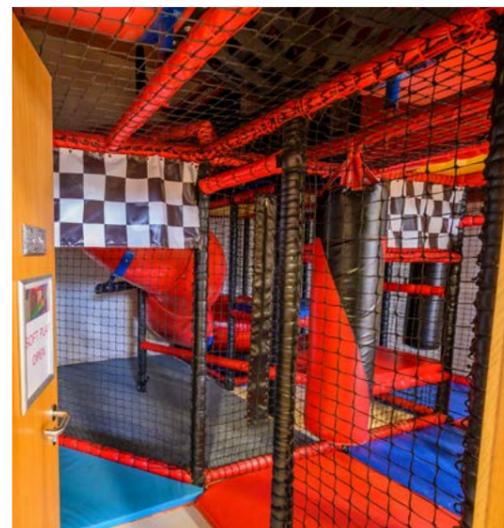
After a major building project, Fullarton Parish Church in Irvine opened Fullarton ConneXions. Now, the church works in and from the heart of a building complex offering a range of community facilities.

Fullarton ConneXions is a social enterprise with room hire, conference facilities, a cafe and a range of activity spaces, supported by full and part-time staff and a large number of volunteers.

Rev Neil Urquhart, who has been minister there for 30 years says teamwork is the key to success.

"Fullarton ConneXions is the outreaching arms of Fullarton church," he says. "Teams are critical to what we do. Without good working teams, it's just impossible."

But all roads still lead back to the church. "A fifth of our volunteers don't have any church connection," Neil says. "It's about becoming open, so people can move from ConneXions 'serving cause' into a caring community, and find Christ the Team Leader who unites us with his Church."



## We asked seven Fullarton team members for their insights on teamwork.

**Joan Campbell** - volunteer

"A big part of what we try to do is encourage discipleship. We have different groups in the church to help people grow their faith, and there's a track for growing team leaders, where people can then be encouraged to take other roles in the church.

"Having a vision is important. The Bible says in Proverbs that if you have no vision the people perish. The vision has to come from the top, and then be embraced, accepted and fleshed out by people at the grass roots level. The benefit of team is that everyone is working in different ways fitting into the same vision."



**Dorothy Urquhart** - Neil's wife, volunteer

"I was heavily involved in the building project for Fullarton ConneXions, and when the building was finished we needed a person to run it. I became the co-ordinator, and almost immediately that took off and became a full-time job. Eighteen months later, when I was on my knees as a volunteer, we got funding to pay our job-share co-ordinators, Ashley and Esther, so I stepped back and became their line manager.

"We've taken part in programmes which have really enhanced our teamwork: Learning Communities, which was offered by the Church of Scotland to teams in Priority Areas, and Teaminar, at Queen's Park Baptist Church in Glasgow last year. The common denominator is about building community in your team in order to reach out beyond your team.

"We took that to heart and implemented a number of things. All the paid staff have taken part in Myers-Briggs personality assessments, to help us understand one another better. We've learned a lot about how to conduct meetings. One thing that really stuck with me is that conflict is a good thing: bring the conflict into the meeting. 'Meeting silence equals corridor violence'—if you don't deal with these things openly, there will be problems later. But if you have a team where people trust one another, you can have the conflict and work it through."

**Esther Vaughan** - ConneXions co-ordinator

"Tea break—that's the biggest thing. People see us having tea and coffee and they think, 'They're not doing much' but that's the core of our work. God is in the fellowship. Results then come naturally because the team feels connected, we've got each other's backs, there's vulnerability and trust. You've only got that if you spend time together.

"We spend a lot of effort on connection time. It's in the volunteer and staff policy to take connection time, it's at the heart of what we do. That has made a massive difference in terms of preventing burnout for staff and volunteers. That's not only when you get to know people, it's when spiritual conversations happen."

*"People see us having tea and coffee and they think, 'They're not doing much' but that's the core of our work. God is in the fellowship. Results then come naturally because the team feels connected, we've got each other's backs, there's vulnerability and trust. You've only got that if you spend time together."*

**Esther Vaughan**



**Stuart Forsyth** - sports development worker

"A lot of what we do depends on volunteers. When people volunteer their time, you have to be sensitive. When you get the last-minute phone call, 'I can't make it tonight', you need to be gracious. We've managed to find some pots of funding to pay people for sessional hours, and that's been a big help. I also think it's important to invest in the volunteers. It's not just about you getting an extra pair of hands. The volunteers are learning skills and getting experience that looks great on a CV. We've had people go on to get jobs because of the experience they've gained with us as volunteers.

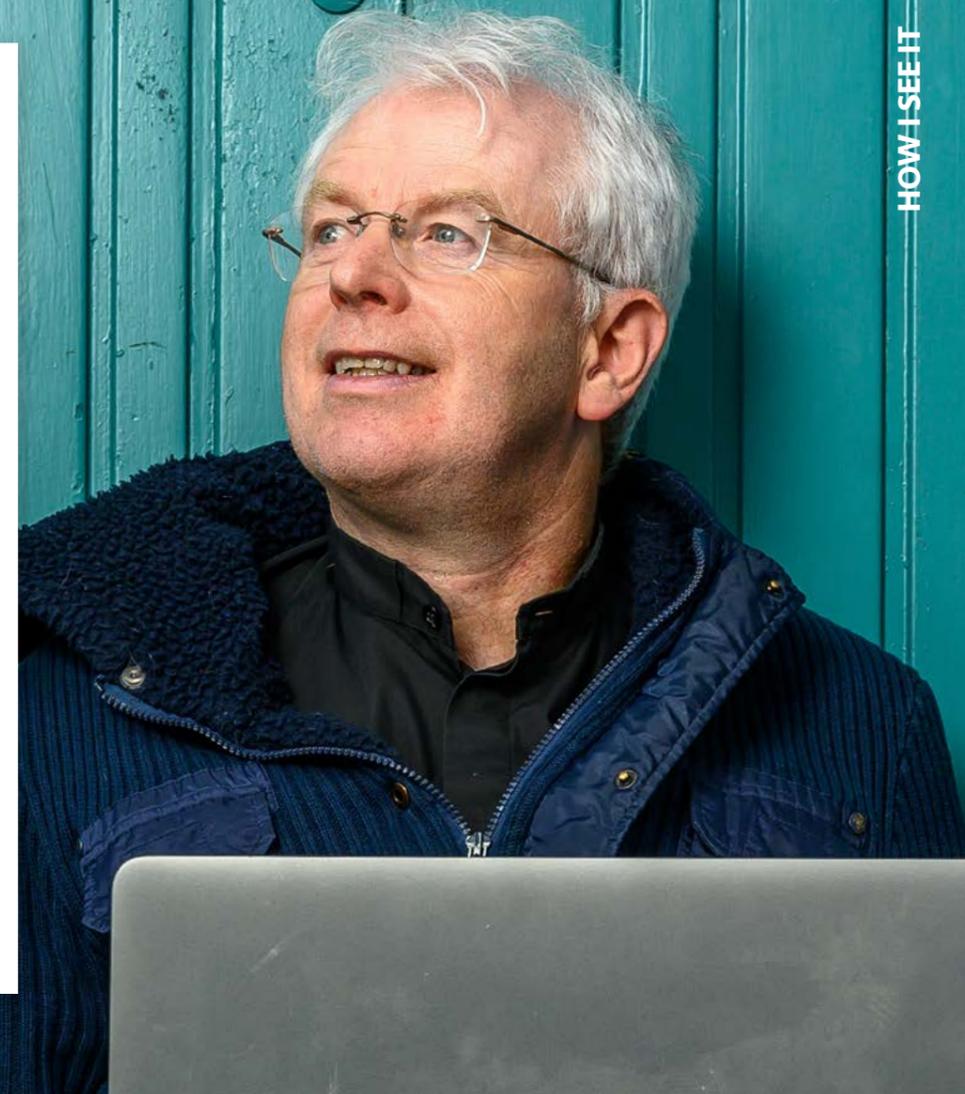
"I've been in youth work for 14 years and it can be an isolating role. Churches in general are notorious for saying, 'Let's get somebody in to do youth work and let them get on with it.' When I meet with the rest of the team, I can see the bigger picture—what the other staff members and volunteers are up to—I have a sense of how it all fits together"

**Neil Urquhart** - minister

"I see my role more and more as a line manager, to support, nurture, grow, mentor and facilitate. I'm not visiting lots of folk in the congregation, I'm not doing a lot of stuff that ministers do. I see my role as acting as a catalyst for the congregation to be the body of Christ.

"We're moving away from the model of the minister doing it all. The pastoral team deals with most of the pastoral care of the congregation, others share in leading services, leading worship. I'm very much in the business of apprenticing people, growing and freeing leaders to be the best leaders they can be.

"My priority is to care for those who are leaders, those who are going to be caring for others, and build them up."

**Claire Young** - volunteer

"Sometimes there can be a lack of understanding about what team is. When I joined the church, I said, 'How can I serve?' and I was asked to go on the door team—they welcome people at the door, take the collection, count the money. Nobody asked my name, introduced me to other members of the team, or explained things. I went to count the money and got ticked off for the way I did it. Nobody said, 'How are you getting on? Would you like to remain on the team?'"

"There has to be some method of giving feedback to leaders. How can we be held accountable in ways that are loving, kind, reflect the love of Jesus? Often people see the team as being the job you have to do, but building a team takes more time, more effort than just doing the job.

"I think there can be a misapprehension that by having a team the minister is going to do less, whereas if they're going to have a good team, they're going to have to make contact with a whole lot more people at greater depth. That's more work, not less.

"I think there is a difficulty in that we're all still part of a very hierarchical system—kirk session, presbytery, and so on—we're almost having to run parallel teams. Sometimes it feels as if we're using our energy to maintain these structures that are no longer relevant."

**Ashley Vaughan** - ConneXions co-ordinator (Ashley and his wife Esther job-share the post)

"Trust is really important: having a team you can trust, and where the members of the team trust each other—the volunteers trust the members of staff, and the members of staff trust the volunteers. We work hard to maintain a huge amount of trust.

"Some of our volunteers are quite vulnerable, but they get a lot of benefits from volunteering, particularly if they are isolated, have mental health or addiction issues. It's time away from everyday life, a place of belonging, dignity, where they are valued, safe and secure.

"For us, there are operational and admin things we have to do but there are a lot of interruptions. It can be a real tightrope, getting done the things we have to do and looking after the pastoral side. You have to think on your feet, be flexible."





**Owain Jones**  
The United Church of Bute

## Growing through ministry

One man looks back on 38 years in ministry and notices where he found sources of strength and resilience

A call to ministry interrogates you. “Why me?” we ask. God only knows. But me it is. Have I the strengths? Where will I find resilience? Well, looking back...

Strengths and weaknesses are *me in different contexts*. Often they’re the same thing. I’m the opposite of a control freak. I cherish my creative freedom, and assume that others do too. I trust people to develop their contribution to its full fruition, then bring it. I hate micromanagement.

Which sounds great. Except that it freaks some people out.

Years ago, I found myself in an oddly dysfunctional context. The people involved were richly gifted, deeply creative individuals, yet we were stuck, lost in a miasma of misunderstanding. Was it me? I sought help from 121.

What did I need? “Counselling supervision,” I said, unhesitatingly. “Have you someone in mind?” “Yes. I trust her completely.” “She’s good?” “The best! But... she’s an atheist.” “Set it up and tell her to bill us.”

We discovered that people were looking for a style of leadership they *thought* they needed. It wasn’t. What was needed was something that helped undo the damage that control-freakery (which we all know is abundant in the church!) had done. Unreal and incoherent expectations—both from congregations and ministers—stunts creativity and makes individuals terrified of their own imaginations. This needs healing, and guided therapeutic pastoral leading.

Turns out I could do that! The clinical professionalism of a friend let me understand, and be, myself. The Church of Scotland facilitated that.

But there are contexts in which strengths become real liabilities. Bonhoeffer is profoundly right. If you can’t love and accept the people around you where the Church is visible, the game’s a bogey. I’m a conciliator; where people didn’t want to be conciliated, I couldn’t function. It felt like failure. It was agony, grief and mourning to leave people I loved—and I loved all of them—but they needed someone else.

As I’ve heard so many ministers say, it was a congregation that helped me heal, after that.

You’ll see that I haven’t mentioned presbyteries yet. The Presbytery of Argyll is a context of support and real love, grounded in ‘discerning the Body’; however, previous experience of presbyteries as nurturers of resilience lies, let’s say, on a very broad spectrum indeed.

But I always found incredibly supportive ministers and elders within all the presbyteries I’ve been a part of. Better, they’ve found me. They noticed when I needed support.

Once, when I felt utterly unsupported elsewhere, resilience came from the profoundly loving support of a (wounded, which isn’t irrelevant) congregation.

Ordained 38 years now, I keep saying to new ministers: “Protect yourself. Bits of the structure are falling down. You need to wear a hard hat. The institution and the Body aren’t the same thing. The Body, not the institution, is life in Christ.” We learn to live by plans and goals. Institutions plan for their own survival.

I had the trauma of trying to convey that to someone who’d converted hurt from the institution into alienation from the Body. I failed. Failure to reconcile, especially when you become demonised by association, is incredibly painful. It’s grief for the death of part of who you thought you were. Individuals who knew supported me.

Books nourish the soul, injecting resilience. The last, unfinished book that Sir Edwin Hoskyns and Noel Davey wrote together, just called *Crucifixion-Resurrection*, explores the faith’s central truth: our hope isn’t survival, but resurrection. Death isn’t ‘nothing at all’, it’s a big deal.

Faith’s resilience is radical. It’s ultimately grounded in crucifixion-resurrection. We die with Christ, and our life is hidden with him. We’re more than conquerors. Some days it’s really good to reflect on that. ✓

Educated at St Andrews, **Owain Jones** was ordained in Wales, where he also lectured in Old Testament, Hebrew and Aramaic in the Divinity Faculty of the University of Wales. He returned to the Church of Scotland in 1987 and is currently the Minister of the United Church of Bute. You’ll hear him occasionally on *Thought for the Day*, or the Radio 4 *Daily Service*. He is married with two children.

“Unreal and incoherent expectations, from congregations and ministers, stunts creativity and makes individuals terrified of their own imaginations.”



# On the right lines

Sooner or later, most ministers become line managers, though few are trained for the role. **Sally-Anne Dunn** describes the new training being offered by the Church of Scotland

In every career there comes a point when, as a result of being technically skilled in your profession – be it carpentry, currency trading or cardiac surgery – you are promoted into a management role. In ministry, this often comes as soon as you take on your first charge.

In the summer of 2019, a new appraisal programme was launched for Ministries Development Staff (MDS). The aim was to create a space for an MDS and their manager

**“This is essential training. Please don’t wing it. You need guidance to do this well, for yourself, the MDS, and the wider church.”**

Line Management Training participant

to have a meaningful conversation about the work done during the year and what they were hoping to achieve in the next year.

Through developing the process, we recognised that, whilst ministers have a myriad of skills, line management isn’t always one of them. Without some fundamental line management skills, a coaching-type conversation about work might not be as productive as it could be.

We were hearing from both MDS and their managers that there hadn’t been much offered by way of line management training, and we wanted to address some of the challenges that come with managing and leading a blended team of local employees, MDS and volunteers.

There are numerous tools for people management out there, and a quick Google search will give you just under half a billion results in a split second, which isn’t particularly helpful! We wanted to offer training which would be helpful and appropriate for the specific context of working in ministry.

Working with HR colleagues, we designed and delivered training sessions in Glasgow, Edinburgh, Aberdeen and Perth, reflecting where the majority of MDS are based. Over half of those who signed up told us that they had been line

managers for a while and that they had learned informally on the job, rather than having any formal training.

We focused on some of the tangible, practical tools of line management – clarity of roles, setting goals and expectations, and the importance of regular catch-ups and meetings. We’d heard that sometimes congregations didn’t understand the breadth of the work that MDS are involved in, and having regular opportunities to feed that back would help to highlight the work being done.

One participant in the training said this:  
“This is essential training. Please don’t wing it; it is too important to proceed [simply] on the basis of your own gifts and skill-set. You need guidance to do this well, for yourself, the MDS, and congregation/wider church.”

In addition, during 2019, we ran some training sessions for teams using DISC, a behaviour assessment tool. This is about learning how each team member tends to behave with a view to improving communication between members as a result of understanding each other better.

The MDS appraisal process was completed in September with a superb response rate. As well as feedback that MDS really valued the opportunity to talk about all they’d achieved, they commented that they benefitted from the space to talk about their direction for the upcoming year and to gain clarity on the goals and objectives of the congregation. ✨

**Sally-Anne Dunn** joined the Church of Scotland in 2018 as learning and development adviser after a period of working as a freelance HR consultant and coach. Prior to that, she was an HR business partner in the city of London, working with many line managers to support them in some of the challenges they faced in managing their teams. She says she loves a juicy physical challenge and enjoys cycling adventures.

Anyone who would like to take part in line management training should contact:

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

# *are we there yet?*

## *building church teams that work*

**Verene Nicolas** has been working with Church of Scotland teams for the last nine years. She tells Susan Mansfield about the challenges facing our church family and how to overcome them.

**A meeting with six participants is guaranteed to generate at least seven opinions. Where two or three are gathered, there will be an impassioned argument about the colour of the new church carpet. What we say in jest is often a wry reflection of the truth. There are many advantages in working together, but no one ever said it was easy.**

Verene Nicolas has worked as a trainer in teamwork and nonviolent communication for more than 20 years, and has worked with teams in the Church of Scotland since 2011. While there are challenges along the way, she believes that learning to work with others is a journey which takes us to the heart of who we are and one which, at its best, presents us with a new understanding of what it means to be the people of God.

Teamwork is a daily experience for increasing numbers of people in the Church of Scotland. Vacant parishes and a shortage of ministers, an emphasis on equipping lay people and new structures such as hub ministries all require more and more staff and volunteers in churches to work as part of teams.

Verene says it's important to acknowledge that this is a major cultural shift. The transition from the traditional parish minister towards a team-based model requires a significant shift in thinking and competencies. Moreover the training of ministers has not tended to include management or teamwork skills, and offering any such skills development for those in ministry, presbyteries or kirk sessions is a very recent phenomenon.

It would be a mistake to think that the skills needed to work well in a team are instinctive, or a matter of common sense, Verene says. When we rub up against other people, we discover the rough edges within ourselves. "We don't learn by osmosis how to become a team. It's an art. It requires a lot of attention to details and learning new skills and habits."

Teamwork is challenging because it takes us to the heart of who we are. Our reactions to other people are

### THE LONG READ

*"When we rub up against other people, we discover the rough edges within ourselves. We don't learn by osmosis how to become a team. It's an art. It requires a lot of attention to details and learning new skills and habits."*



formed by a lifetime of experience and learned behaviour. Unlike our ancestors, for whom collaboration was a matter of life and death, we now live in a culture which favours individualism.

Verene says: "We might ask why we so often end up in situations where there is tension and conflict in the church family. In my understanding, the main reason is because we have developed what I call unhelpful habits of the heart and of the mind. There's a default mode of reacting in situations of stress and conflict that gets in the way of working well together. We judge, we self-blame, we project our own judgements on to other people and our hearts are constrained by defence mechanisms.

"Very few of us have grown up in families and in a society where we have 100 per cent trust that we matter as individuals. Family dynamics are often compounded with difficulties at school and we all end up with a fair amount of inner fragility. And so when we are in a church community, and there isn't a culture where it's safe to be yourself, to express yourself honestly and not be criticised, it is very difficult. We have been trained either to shut up, to silence what really matters to us, or to say it in a way that's very aggressive and will be difficult to receive. It's a fight or flight response."

Of course, the journey of self-awareness and of working through one's past experiences, is lifelong. But there are approaches we can learn, individually and collectively, which can help us work together more effectively. Verene says: "We can't change a culture by changing individuals. That takes too long. We can only change cultures by working on the collective, by making new agreements, and experimenting with new ways of working together."

### A CLEAR VISION

Verene believes good teamwork begins with a strong shared vision and sense of purpose, as well as clearly articulated shared values, but has found this to be less common in the Church than we might expect. "I find that, for many teams, that question is very unclear and difficult to resolve, and for a congregation even more so. It's a question that tends not to be asked. There is a lack of clarity about what the team—or the congregation—is called to be, what God's calling is for us now, in these times, in this parish. Without a purpose, without a clear mission, how do we orientate our decisions, how do we orientate our sense of where we are travelling together?"

"For me that question is even more critical when the Church is facing difficult times. How are we still relevant? Why are we here? What is God's calling for the Church in these times? It's a completely different answer from when the Presbyterian Church first began."

Until we can grasp our profound calling as the people of God, we will simply be like any other organisation. Verene says: "We are very good at engaging, making teas and welcoming refugees, engaging in nonviolent direct action against Trident

and gathering money for Christian Aid, and I'm absolutely not criticising any of that. However, for me, this is the easy part of being Church. The hard part of being Church is to create a community that is hospitable to the soul."

### MAKING DECISIONS

The Presbyterian tradition is often praised for its flat, non-hierarchical structure and democratic approach to decision-making. But Verene has doubts about how well this plays out in parish life. "I think that's a story distinct from the reality," she says. "I think there are still a lot of authority-based structures within the Church. In some of the parishes in which I've worked, it's very clear that people know they do not have decision-making power in a number of areas. If people don't feel that they have full ownership of how they are going to make their church thrive, then we have a model where there is some kind of authority higher up deciding for people below."

Decisions which are imposed from above will alienate people, but so will decisions based on a majority vote (as the current political situation demonstrates all too well). "In a vote, there are winners and there are losers. It takes a lot of energy to win. It takes a huge amount of energy to have lost. It creates resentment, it leaks trust, and it leads to a loss of diversity; it leaves too many people behind. It's a loss for the decision not to be enriched by the views of the minority, and it creates schism and disengagement. We can't afford to lose the wisdom that is contained in every single person's soul."

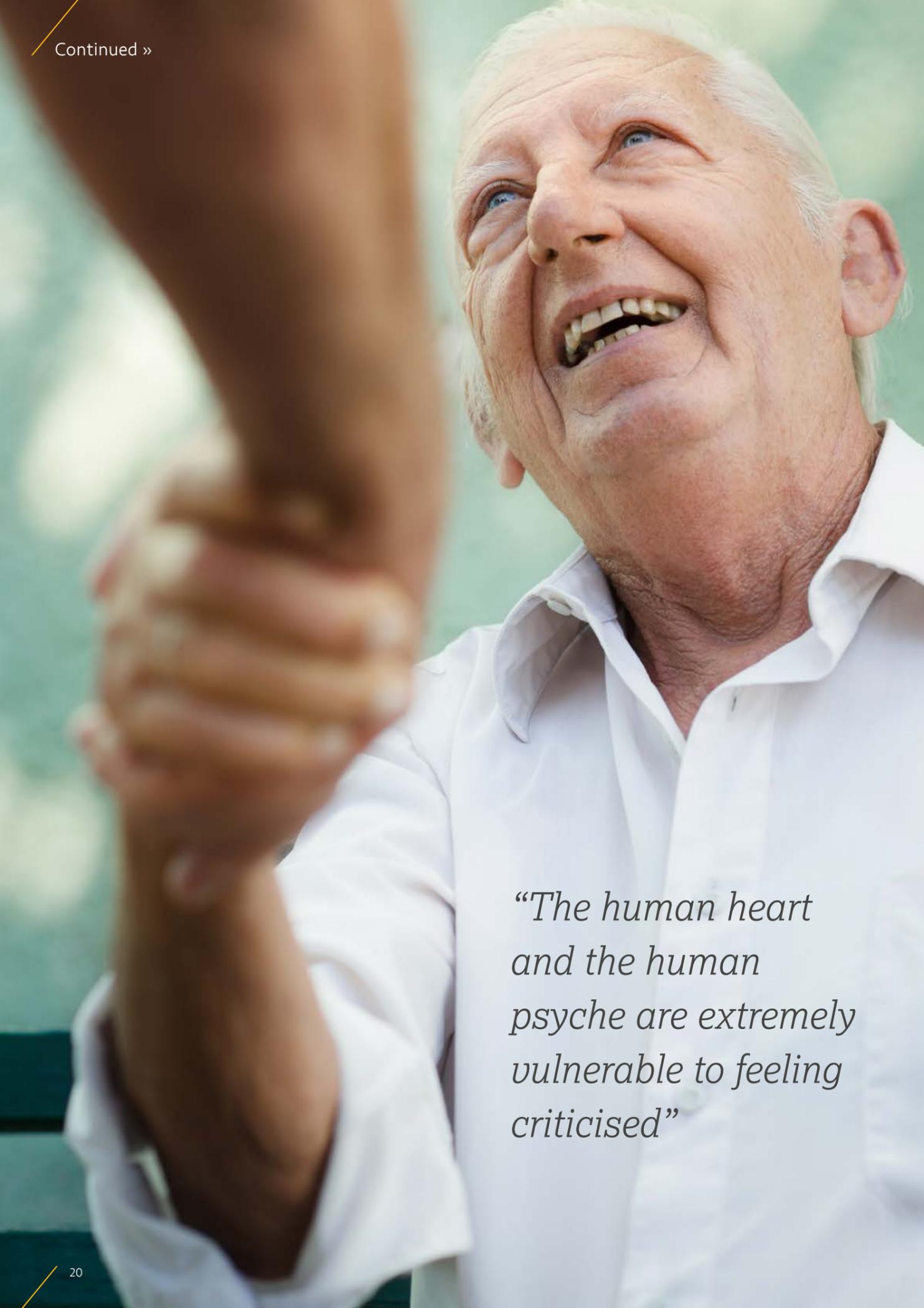
She says an alternative model of decision-making, which takes time to listen and understand all the viewpoints being expressed, can transform the way a decision is received. "We need to train ourselves and profoundly change our way of apprehending one another's views—to slow down, to listen, to have our ears tuned to hear the reasons why people think in a particular way. If we have the capacity to ask 'what is really mattering to them that I may have commonality with?' we can look at possible third options. 'You want this, I want that. Here is what matters to both of us. What can we do?'"

"It's a model where people feel much more a part of it, where they can trust that their views are taken into consideration. Their view might not be the one adopted: there's a difference between trusting that my view matters and that it's been heard, and my favourite option being the one that wins at the end of the day.

"But if people feel, at an intuitive level, that their voice is heard, they often relax in trying out something new, or stretch into something they really wouldn't like to see happen. They know, consciously or unconsciously, that their views have impacted the decision."

### FEEDBACK

Verene believes that understanding the power dynamics in Church is crucial to enabling teamwork. "How we use power is really critical to understand in promoting collaboration," she says. "And there is very little reflection in the Church as



*“The human heart and the human psyche are extremely vulnerable to feeling criticised”*



to what we understand by power and how we use it. There is no critical understanding of the power that the minister has, for example, and whether or not there is accountability. That creates a lot of holes in the capacity of people to work well together because straight away there is an inequality of power.”

An important way in which to address this inequality, which doesn't require a shift to a different leadership model, is to put in place a system of feedback by which members of a team can offer feedback to a leader, and the leader can hear and respond to their comments. A team agrees together on a framework for making and receiving feedback: how it's done, how often, and how the person receiving the feedback will be supported.

“The problem is feedback can be very harsh to take,” Verene says. “The human heart and the human psyche are extremely vulnerable to feeling criticised, and to feeling that they don't matter, and that makes it very, very hard for people to accept constructive feedback and to receive that as a gift for growth and learning. People need to be trained and equipped to give the feedback in a way that can be truly a gift—a gift to the

person themselves in their leadership capacity, but a gift for the group too.”

But there also needs to be an understanding of what feedback is, she says. “It isn't necessarily a demand on a person to change or to do something. It's a way of saying: ‘You're doing something which is not working very well for me, I wanted to let you know it is having a particular impact on me and on the community, and maybe there is a particular request that you do something differently as a result.’ The person receiving that might need to weigh that up against other priorities. They might or might not choose to make a change.

“What's critical is that people know you've heard them, you've heard the impact of your actions on them and taken that on board and you've made a decision as to what to do about it, and then you can continue to engage them in dialogue. It's about trust. It's about knowing my voice counts, that what lives within me has got a conduit for expression and that it is taken seriously. It's safe to speak out without being punished.”

**CONFLICT**

It's also important to revisit our understanding of conflict, which is something many fear and will try to avoid at all costs. "Conflict is inevitable," Verene says. "It's a fact of life because we are different, we have different opinions. In the Church we have little understanding about how we are going to engage with conflict, and people are not really trained in how to handle it."

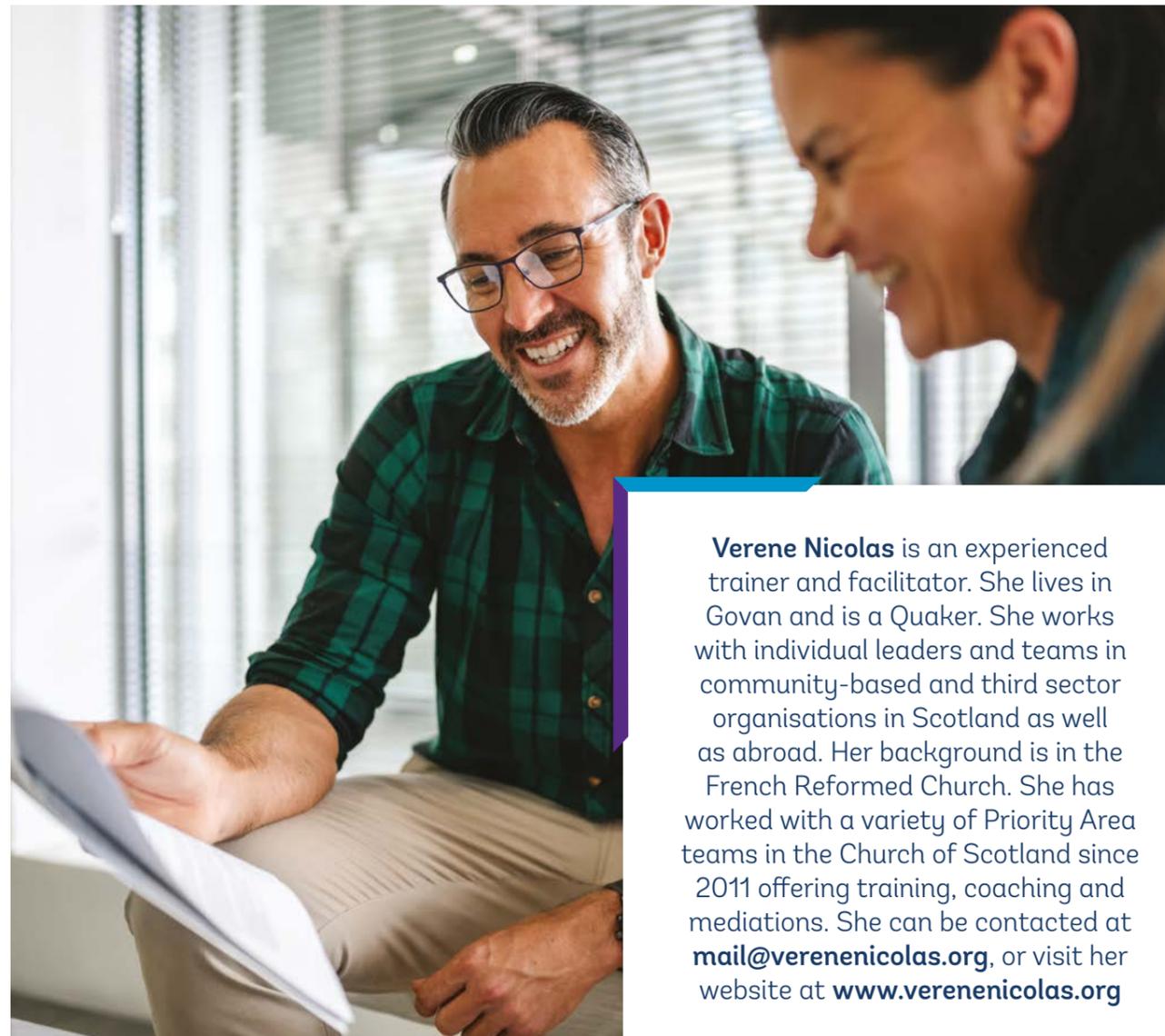
"Because we are traumatised to different degrees about our sense of mattering and belonging, the conflict re-ignites that early trauma and we get very scared, very guarded, very defensive. Most of us are not capable of embracing conflict, holding the emotional charge with compassion, and then moving into listening and dialogue and creatively thinking of new solutions."

It's important, she says, not to see conflict as something to be afraid of, or to suppress it when it arises. "Conflict is a gift to the people in conflict or to the community. It's just a piece of information, a piece of feedback that something's not working for somebody, or for the group as a whole. Therefore, if we shift our outlook from conflict being scary and something to avoid at all costs to conflict being a gift

which we need to embrace, everything changes. Why would we run away from a gift?

"It's through conflict that we reveal the richness of who we are, the differences in our personalities and ways of being. The diversity of our being is revealed through conflict, as well as through our gifts, our service, our actions. Actually, it's revealed in the biggest way through conflict, because that's where we express most vulnerably who we are inside—the masks fall down, we stop pretending or trying to be nice. We just need to learn what to do with it, how to build a structure in which it can be held and addressed."

A team that can work through conflict and come out the other side is one in which members can be real with one another, where people can feel safe, can allow themselves to be vulnerable, and can find space in which to grow into the best of themselves. And this, in turn, is a community which can open its doors and its heart to a hurting world. A pipe dream? Perhaps. Perhaps also a hopeful model for the family of God. ✨



**Verene Nicolas** is an experienced trainer and facilitator. She lives in Govan and is a Quaker. She works with individual leaders and teams in community-based and third sector organisations in Scotland as well as abroad. Her background is in the French Reformed Church. She has worked with a variety of Priority Area teams in the Church of Scotland since 2011 offering training, coaching and mediations. She can be contacted at [mail@verenenicolas.org](mailto:mail@verenenicolas.org), or visit her website at [www.verenenicolas.org](http://www.verenenicolas.org)



**Roger Sturrock**  
Wellington and Kelvinside  
Hillhead churches, Glasgow

# A kirk built with living stones

**Roger Sturrock** reflects on the biblical call to teamwork — even if it means rubbing off a few rough edges

One of my winter pursuits is to play in a curling team at Braehead arena in Glasgow. In curling, you play in a team of four, with the most experienced curler being the team's 'Skip'. The object of the game is to get your team's stones into the 'House' with the winning team's stones being closest to the central ring.

To be successful, individual players must work together and two team members will sweep the stone of the player throwing so it travels in the right direction and at the optimal speed. This often demands vigorous sweeping of the ice and the issuing of commands from the Skip as to when to start and stop sweeping. The player throwing must aim for the position indicated by the Skip so the stone glides

to the place required. Often the strategy is to knock one stone off another to get the desired outcome.

In some ways, curling is a good analogy for the church. The apostle Peter calls

Christians 'living stones' (1 Peter 2:4-5) to be built into a spiritual house and the apostle Paul reminds us that Jesus is the cornerstone of the church (Eph 2: 20-21). If stones are to lose their rough edges, they need to rub against each other. In the church, we need to relate well to one another and metaphorically smooth off our sometimes awkward shapes!

“There is no space for a power dynamic in the church — apart from the power which belongs to the Holy Spirit!”

In order to grow as a church, we need each other: some will be Skips, others are facilitators (the sweepers), all of us are part of Gospel ministry. All members of the church 'team' are equally important.

Working in a team can be difficult. Each member has to recognise his or her own strengths and weaknesses, learning how to work together in order to complement the gifts of others. There is no place for factionalism or 'I am right and therefore everyone else must be wrong.' thinking.

Paul reminds the Corinthian church that quarrelling about the greatest leader is counterproductive: "So let no one boast about human leaders. For all things are yours, whether Paul or Apollos or Cephas... you belong to Christ and Christ belongs to God." (1 Cor 3: 21-23) It is our relationship with Christ that matters and his supreme example of humility is a paradigm for our church relationships.

Beware of false humility — the kind famously displayed by Uriah Heep in Charles Dickens' David Copperfield: "When I was quite a young boy," said Uriah, "I got to know what umbleness did, and I took to it. I ate umble pie with an appetite. I stopped at the umble point of my learning, and says I, "Hard hard!" When you offered to teach me Latin, I knew better. "People like to be above you," says father, "keep yourself down." I am very umble to the present moment, Master Copperfield, but I've got a little power!"

Uriah Heep wanted David Copperfield to know that, despite his lowly origins, he held the reigns of power in their relationship. Unfortunately, the struggle for power in churches is not uncommon and invariably leads to a breakdown in relationships. There is no place for a power dynamic in the church — apart from the power which belongs to the Holy Spirit!

When I was training for the Ordained Local Ministry, I spent nine months at Glasgow Cathedral under the tutelage of the late Rev Dr Laurence Whitley. He was a superb teacher, always the first to encourage as well as to give helpful criticism. As a 'rookie' minister, I felt a valued part of the ministry team.

Teamwork has to be the future for ministry in the Kirk. The concept of a one-person-ministry is now outdated and the Church of England has noticed growth particularly where there is a team ministry of ordained and lay people. The key feature of a successful team is for individual team members to 'fit in with each other, because of your common reverence for Christ.' (Eph 5:21, J.B. Phillips translation)

To use Peter's analogy of the 'living stones' we can only build the church if the living stones fit in with each other. Let us ask our Lord to give us the humility and grace to fit in with each other and build something new on the foundation of our Lord Jesus Christ. 



**Roger Sturrock** is Assisting Minister (OLM) at Wellington and Kelvinside Hillhead churches, Glasgow. After a long career in medicine, as a Professor of Rheumatology at Glasgow University, Roger studied for a Bachelor of Divinity on retirement and was ordained in June 2014.

Ruth Harvey and Abdul Rahim from Place for Hope offer some practical hints on building groups which communicate well

# Enhanced common sense

**Good groups bring peace. Of course, the opposite can also be true. 'Crucify him!' was the violent collective voice of one group of good individuals. So what are the dynamics that build good groups?**

In *The Different Drum*, Scott Peck defines true community as a group of people who have developed the following characteristics:

- inclusivity, commitment and consensus
- a sense of realism
- the ability to be contemplative and self-aware
- feelings of safety in all members
- the ability for members to experiment with new types of behaviours
- the ability to fight gracefully
- a place where all members are leaders
- a spirit of peace

An impressive list, perhaps — but possibly some of these characteristics are already present in many groups, networks or meetings you belong to. And the list of characteristics also resonates with Paul's gifts of the Spirit.

Bruce Tuckman walks us through the five stages in the lives of groups: forming, storming, norming, performing and adjourning (or mourning). They show just how easily groups can fall apart when things don't work out as desired, and how creatively the pieces can be picked up as we learn through the 'storm' of disagreement. A sixth stage, 'reforming', can add a focus on hope or resurrection beyond grief and loss.

In Place for Hope we work with groups of people struggling to communicate well. Failing to do so can lead to confusion, disagreement, even conflict. Sometimes the dynamics within and between groups can become so entrenched that they define the culture of our churches. Here are some of the things we have learned:

Generating a **shared working agreement** in the 'cool of the moment' affirms the desired tone of talking, quality of listening, level of confidentiality and the culture of conversation. It can support a group when communication breaks down or differences of opinion turn sour. It is for all in the group to keep one another to account on this, not for the expectations to fall on any one person to 'police' it.

Agreeing to **bring concerns directly** to the group or relevant individual sounds like common sense. But it can be challenging, and it often feels safer to share concerns with a third party, maybe in the car park after a meeting. Try to resist 'car park talk' — encourage everyone to find the space within a group meeting to share concerns compassionately and directly with the relevant people.

A **psychological contract** is an assumption, or norm, about how people are expected to behave which has become habitual, although it is never stated overtly. It '...is highly subjective, not explicit, not written down and yet exerts a strong influence on behaviour precisely because it captures what people really believe they will get in return for what they give.' (Guest, 2002). Notice if there is an unspoken expectation about who will open up/close the meeting room, lead the group, make the coffee/tea, always/never speak

Delegates at a recent Place for Hope event



“Try to resist 'car park talk' – encourage everyone to find the space within a group meeting to share concerns compassionately”



first, and what assumptions there might be about what will be given in return.

A person's **rank, role or privilege** can affect the dynamic of a group. Rank is described as the sum total of a person's power and privileges at any given moment. It can be inherited or acquired, is not constant and can change from moment to moment in a particular situation. Notice and share assumptions made on the basis of a person's rank in a group.

We often talk about group work being 'enhanced common sense'. Yet it is precisely when tensions rise that we forget some of the most basic skills of living together.

Take heart from Jesus' commitment in Matthew 18: "Where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them." And from movements such as Base Christian Communities which brought about radical action for peace by living well together – in groups. ✓

### Resources

*The Different Drum: Community Making and Peace*, M. Scott Peck, Touchstone, 1998

*Life Together*, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, SCM Press (various editions)

Place for Hope accompanies and equips people and faith communities so that all might reach their potential to be peacemakers who navigate conflict well. For more information on group work and conflict training, visit [www.placeforhope.org.uk/training](http://www.placeforhope.org.uk/training)  
**Ruth Harvey** is the director of Place for Hope, a Church of Scotland minister and a Quaker. **Abdul Rahim** is the training manager for Place for Hope. Both are mediation practitioners.

**Rev Fiona Gardner** describes how telling a very personal story taught her an important lesson about being vulnerable

# LOVESONG FOR A WOUNDED WARRIOR



In ministry, I spend so much time listening to others, and it is such a privilege to listen to another human being tell their story. I feel as if I am on holy ground, and I seek to be prayerful and compassionate and to take care in how I respond to another human being. Everyone has a story to tell, however messy or inspiring or sad — often a mixture of all three!

Yet, I confess that when it comes to my turn to tell my story, I am often quiet; at best, I selectively mention a few bits and pieces. Then my heart starts pounding and I feel fearful. In

*“We can only share what our faith means to us if we have the courage to be honest and even vulnerable, so we can reveal a little more of the things that are really upon our hearts.”*

church life, I often have felt judged or marginalised just for being myself, never mind speaking about it. There can be so many theological groups and cliques, often it is much easier not to speak, just to retreat inside yourself.

However, I have been challenged to the core over this way of self-protection and disappearing — God often lovingly does this! My husband Colin died in April 2018 after a long illness. He was a veteran, and battled with so many issues of identity, trauma and ill health, physically, psychologically and spiritually — and he wrote about some of these struggles. He wanted his writings to be published, and it seems like my last loving honouring of his memory to do this posthumously.

To make sense of his writings, I have had to write too, to provide a narrative for the fragments, and now I find myself telling something of our story as a family. Daring to do this, to have the courage to speak, to be authentic, is one of the scariest things I have ever done.

Trying to communicate something of our story, which is just like so many others, has reminded me that, in the Christian family, there may be times when we need to be authentic and vulnerable because this is where we find growth and freedom. Yes, we need to be wise, because knowing how to trust takes discernment and being hurt or let down is so

painful. We face choppy waters in the church today; we are under strain, and there are many changes and challenges, so the temptation is to be more closed.

The reason we want to honour Jesus, however, is because of the grace and mercy he shows us when we are broken, because of the healing power of his Spirit that he sends upon us to bind up our wounds. In the darkest night, he is the One who holds us up and carries us when we can't go any further. God the Father calls us his beloved children; when we just want to cry, he gathers us to himself.

We are part of a Christian community called to pray for one another, to encourage one another, to rejoice with those who rejoice and to weep with those who weep. We seek to share with others the difference that faith in Jesus Christ has made in our lives, so that others can come to faith. That is our purpose. I come from a non-church background; I only came to faith because another human being shared their faith story with me, and I am so grateful.

We can only share what our faith means to us if we have the courage to be honest and, at times, even vulnerable, so we can reveal a little more of the things that are really upon our hearts. As a church, even in times of challenge, may we have courage to tell

our faith stories to one another, even if it is just so we can lament together, or sit with our questions and admit that we don't have the answers.

May we find inspiration and renewal in remembering how big and loving and steadfast our God is. Instead of facing judgment and accusations from others, may each story be honoured as precious, so that every person might be encouraged to tell their story in their own time, however impossible it might seem. Our individual lives would be both challenged and enriched by this, with relationships in our church family becoming stronger and deeper, so that Christ's love can flow more freely through his church and out into the world.

In whatever season that might be best, may we each be vulnerable enough to tell our stories. “Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ forgave you.” (Ephesians 4:32) 🍌



Anniesland, Glasgow

**Rev Fiona Gardner** has been a parish minister since 1997 and is currently minister of Temple-Anniesland Church in Glasgow. *Lovesong For A Wounded Warrior*, by Fiona and Colin Gardner, is published by Handsel Press.

# A movement, not a programme

**Rev Liz Crumlish** explains the principles behind Path of Renewal, and how ministers and congregations can benefit



**“A mind-set change is involved that makes friends with being rather than doing, with listening rather than speaking and that invests in a few rather than the many”**

The name Path of Renewal comes from the work of William Bridges, who describes the life-cycle of organisations as involving various stages of growth and maturation. In his book *Managing Transition: Making the Most of Change*, Bridges identifies a point at which the organisation or institution begins to close in on itself and must regenerate if it is to remain vital. He calls this process of regeneration the Path of Renewal.

This journey involves revisiting the dreaming and planning in which the institution invested in its early stages. For the church, that involves studying the life of Jesus, the disciples and the early church to recover principles important to the mission of God and then adapting those principles to engage with God's mission in our communities and culture today.

Taking on the role of Path of Renewal co-ordinator at the project's inception in 2015, I was excited by the opportunity to accompany ministers and congregations through transition — the psychological response to change. Working in a large urban parish, among people I loved, I was aware that, on the whole, the congregation's expectations were

being realised. However, the fact remained that, apart from school chaplaincy and parish funerals, there was little impact on the community around and beyond the church doors — and there was very little time or space to attend to that.

In Path of Renewal, I saw an opportunity to reflect with others on how to be church in a rapidly changing culture, to discern the mission of God in all our different contexts and work out how we were being called to join in the work of God's Kingdom beyond the ordinances of religion that we currently provided. It was an opportunity to grapple with the question: what might I lay down in order to make room for God?

While most of us accept that change is inevitable, we rarely acknowledge the highly charged emotional responses to the losses which can be part of change. Indeed, as I prepared to help others grapple with transition, I was unprepared for the way that the changes I faced in demitting my charge to follow a new call would mirror the transitions being faced by others on the pilot. I was being called to leave congregation, home and community.

It took time to gain some equilibrium and get to a place where I realised that, though I no longer had the status of a parish minister, becoming instead an employee of what was Ministries Council and minister without charge, who I am in Christ, beloved of God, remained unchanged.

Pastoral supervision and spiritual direction, which have enabled me to build up resilience in over 25 years of ministry, became all the more crucial for thriving in this new territory. Maintaining a Rule of Life and practising self-care was vital in being able to navigate institutional structures that sometimes mitigate against wellbeing. I still wonder if we would require resilience to the same extent if our structures were more accommodating — but that's a whole other discussion!

Attending to spiritual practices was built in to Path of Renewal teaching from the outset. In order to discern God's will and purpose, we must maintain a deep connection with God, making time to renew and nourish that connection. Practising a Rule of Life is also essential — as we accompany others in their discernment of God's will and purpose for their lives, we have to live out what we are encouraging in others.

Ministers engaged in Path of Renewal are held accountable, in learning communities and in one-to-one mentoring, for their Rule of Life and for responding to what God reveals in discernment. And they, in turn, introduce accountability to those in whom they invest in their congregations and communities. That accountability has been welcomed, as has the value of journeying together as part of a national project.

Many of the congregations which took part in the pilot scheme had already taken steps on a missional journey, but there is immense value in continuing that together. The overnight conferences provided as part of Path of Renewal explore elements of theology, missional church, change management, adaptive learning and the like. But there is always space for connection and fellowship and the cultivation of an environment in which participants can be courageous and vulnerable with one another as they learn and grow together. Ministers, in particular, spoke of the collegiality they experienced in the intimacy of exploring ministry together — a novel experience for some.

The tag-line adopted in Path of Renewal is #AMovementNotAProgramme. There is no canon to which we can point, except that of Scripture, which lays out a course that will lead to kingdom growth in communities. Rather, a mind-set change is involved that makes friends with being rather than doing, with listening rather than speaking and that invests in a few rather than the many. In that, we follow Jesus' example of spending time in God's presence and drawing others into the work both of discernment and of Kingdom building.

Probably the most difficult aspect of Path of Renewal, for ministers, is the letting go required to make space for discernment, particularly as ministry today makes more and more demands. Creating space, however, allows us to

identify and encourage others on whom the call of God is also placed. It is vital to attend to our awareness of the call of God on our lives, enabling that awareness in others, and to be alert to the Spirit of God weaving a sometimes messy way through our communities. That enables us to be risk-takers and to learn from what doesn't work.

Path of Renewal seeks to strengthen the church by attending to the Spirit of God at work, building and sustaining flourishing individuals and communities, and responding to God's invitation to be involved in the mission of God today. ✨

## **Path of Renewal launched with five desired outcomes:**

- Ministers equipped to lead through transition and in missional churches.
- Vibrant, growing congregations with a missional focus and a team approach to ministry.
- The development of new local leadership.
- The development of a proven approach to transitioning churches from which others will benefit.
- Some who become involved as leaders at a local congregational level will subsequently sense a call to Ministry of Word and Sacrament within the national church.

## **It is focused on developing missional churches, with three key characteristics:**

- vibrant, attractive worshipping communities
- who are forming people in faith
- connected with their wider communities

## **In terms of outcome these are designed to lead to:**

- a growth in numbers
- a deepening commitment to Christ
- a growing impact on the community

Read the stories and reflections of those who have taken part on [www.pathofrenewal.blogspot.com](http://www.pathofrenewal.blogspot.com)

# ON BOTH SIDES OF THE CLYDE

Laura Crawford profiles a presbytery so new it doesn't yet have an official name

*"The body is not made up of one part but of many" – 1 Cor 12:14*

It may be a presbytery which doesn't yet exist, nor — at the time of writing — does it have an official name but, behind the scenes, extensive work is underway to establish a united presbytery containing Dumbarton alongside Greenock and Paisley.

As a result of the Kirk's presbytery reform plan, a collaborative team made up of members of both presbyteries has formed to fuse together their complex structures in a way which works for everyone. Once united, they will serve 79 congregations, 49 ordained ministers and five vacant charges on both sides of the Clyde.

With a projected date of 1 September for the inauguration of the new presbytery, Very Rev John Christie, presbytery clerk for Dumbarton, is hopeful that they will meet the challenge.

"Both presbyteries met separately and each agreed, virtually unanimously, to the union. There were no votes against and only four people abstained," he said.

"We recognise the key role Rev Dr George Whyte, principal clerk of the Church of Scotland, held in facilitating the initial discussions."

A joint negotiating team of 10 people — five from each presbytery — will work together to prepare a draft Basis of Union. This will include a proposed name for the new presbytery along with a committee structure and a meeting schedule, and will identify mission areas. The draft will also include descriptions of the kinds of paid roles that would enhance the mission of the presbytery.

As with any change on this scale, there have been challenges in recognising why the changes are needed. "However, discussions have been open and friendly and meetings have been constructive and positive," John said. "Neither presbytery came to the table with pre-stated conditions."

They are, of course, not the only team across the Kirk who are carefully untangling well-established structures. The Church of Scotland has a total of 46 presbyteries at present: 43 in Scotland, the Presbytery of England, International Presbytery and Jerusalem. The General Assembly of 2019 agreed to reduce 45 presbyteries (excluding Jerusalem) to around 12 over the coming years.

Mr Christie believes that 'recognising that there has to be give and take' is the most important lesson he has learned.

As for other lessons to share, he recommends 'collaboration with colleagues in other presbyteries — sometimes formally, sometimes informally'; 'recognising when doors are closing and when they're opening', and 'sharing thoughts and ideas in a spirit of trust and transparency, with integrity and honesty'.

Going forward, Mr Christie, speaking on behalf of his team, sees the process as evolving and positive: "We feel better placed to respond, adjust and be proactive as a new united presbytery, as well as being resourced to lead the church into the future."

At its heart, presbytery reform is about meeting the needs of a diverse and ever-changing church, and supporting local congregations in their ministry and mission. Perhaps we all have something to learn from the new presbytery teams emerging across the Kirk. ✂

## Pioneer ministry

Rev Stuart Davidson, one of the Kirk's five centrally-funded pioneer ministers, has taken his work outwith the four walls of church into the Priority Area community in Ferguslie Park and north Paisley. It is hoped his role will help connect local people with church. In June 2018, he opened a drop-in service to offer help to drug users. His role is due to continue until December 2021.

## The Wynd Centre

The Wynd Centre is an outreach project set up by Oakshaw Trinity Church in Paisley to provide counselling services. Mainly thanks to a grant from the Kirk's Go For It Fund, they have been able to fund a counselling service for children. Around 30-40 qualified volunteer counsellors provide almost 9,000 hours of counselling annually.

## Ordination

Dr Sonia Blakesley, who spent 23 years working as a GP, was ordained and inducted as minister of St Mark's Oldhall Parish Church in Ralston, Paisley, on 23 January. Whilst in training, her placements included Burnside Blairbeth Church in Rutherglen, the Tinto parishes in South Lanarkshire and Cranhill Parish Church in Glasgow.

## Gold Eco Award

Lomond Parish Church spent eight years working towards a Gold award late last year with Eco-Congregation Scotland. Steps included embedding environmental issues in worship, preparing a reflective walk for RSPB Loch Lomond, efforts to reduce the congregation's carbon footprint, community allotments in the church grounds, energy efficiency measures, eco fairs and much more. The church scored particularly highly in the area of spiritual living and making connections between the Christian faith and environmental concerns.

# 60 SECONDS

with  
*Dave Kendall*

**Name:** Dave Kendall

**Role:** Chief Officer of the Church of Scotland, since 1 November 2019

**Education:** I have a scientific background and hold a degree in chemistry, specialising in radiochemistry.

**Relationship status:** Thirty-three years married to Sue, who works as a special needs assistant in a primary school.

**Family:** We have two amazing children, Thomas and Emma, who are twins. People still ask us if they are identical, even though Thomas is 6 ft 2in and Em is about 5 ft 3in tall. Thomas is a chartered accountant and Emma is an HR business partner. We also have two smashing miniature Schnauzers, Tilly and Angus.

**First job:** I did lots of vacation jobs when I was at uni — postman, sweet and drink factories, haulage company. My first proper job was at a power station, which led to a lifetime engaged in the power industry.

**My faith:** I was brought up in the Church of England where my parents were very active. My dad sadly passed away many years ago, but my mum remains a huge inspiration to me and is still active in her own church in Newcastle at the age of nearly 93. I joined the Church of Scotland when work brought me to East Kilbride. I am an elder, worship leader and on various committees at the West Kirk, East Kilbride.

**My life before this role:** My career in the power industry brought fantastic opportunities in commissioning, engineering, operations, facility management and many senior management roles. I have also led on many projects including change management and training. My last role was as a director in a research centre at the University of Strathclyde, working between academia and industry to bring innovative technologies to the workplace. I thought that would be my last role, but God works in mysterious ways...

**I'm delighted...** and privileged to be the Chief Officer of the Church of Scotland. I could never have imagined ending up in such a fantastic role where I can help my own church to tackle the major issues we face. I cannot think of anything that is of more significance than the task that we face in our church and love the fact that I have a contribution to make.



**My superpower is...** a combination of resilience and unrelenting optimism! People always comment on my positivity and good humour. An important part of my role in the Church is to create the right environment for people to feel appreciated and good about coming to work.

**I love my work because...** it is so varied — every day is different. I spend most of my time working with and supporting people, which gives me the greatest buzz, and that is at the heart of what we have to do as a church.

**My biggest challenge...** is to slow down and relax — I am always on the go. I'm a lot better on holiday than I used to be, but you won't find me sunbathing very often!

**I'd rather be...** in a heavy rock band. I love music and have always promised myself that one day I would be able to play the electric guitar really well.

**People don't know...** that I volunteer at a charity called Skills Exchange SCIO, where I am currently chairman. Our mission is to help young people and adults in South Lanarkshire on their journey towards the world of work by providing advice, guidance, training, qualifications and support.

# WHO IS WHO?

## *We find ourselves in strange and unprecedented times...*

Having recently been appointed as Interim Convener of the Faith Nurture Forum I was asked to write a few words of introduction for this edition of Ascend. With all that has happened in these last few weeks my original has been torn up and I've started again...



We find ourselves in strange and unprecedented times. We have had to rise to new challenges; we have had to think and act creatively as we wrestle with how to be a caring church community in these days of fear and restriction; we have had to balance looking after ourselves in our particular situations with caring for others; our faith has been tested. We place our hope and trust in Jesus Christ, our constant, the same yesterday, today and forever.

The new Faith Nurture Forum has a huge remit. In these times of structural and cultural change in the church we had just begun looking at our priorities for the year ahead. That work has been superseded. The future will be a very different place. We will need to reassess prayerfully and realistically alongside the Assembly Trustees.

These are difficult times. Please be assured of the support of our staff. All are working from home. Many have been furloughed. Our 'Who's Who' will help you to know the people you can approach for help in the coming days.

As a Forum we would ask for patience and understanding as we navigate this unique situation. We look forward to the time when this is but a period upon which we reflect and from which we learn.

**Rosie Frew** – Interim Convener of Faith Nurture

Find more information on the membership of the Forums here:

[www.churchofscotland.org.uk/news-and-events/news/2020/kirk-announces-membership-of-new-forums](http://www.churchofscotland.org.uk/news-and-events/news/2020/kirk-announces-membership-of-new-forums)

## *Faith Nurture Forum*

**Angus Mathieson** - Interim Head of Faith Nurture  
Email: [amathieson@churchofscotland.org.uk](mailto:amathieson@churchofscotland.org.uk)

**Craig Renton** – Depute Head of Faith Nurture  
Craig has oversight of MDS and is the person to contact if you have questions around pensions, visa and/or UK Border Agency matters, Registration of Ministry and financial matters.  
Email: [crenton@churchofscotland.org.uk](mailto:crenton@churchofscotland.org.uk)

**Kay Cathcart** – Education and Training Secretary and Co-lead on Ascend  
Contact Kay with any questions or concerns regarding Ministry Training or Ascend related enquiries.  
Email: [kcathcart@churchofscotland.org.uk](mailto:kcathcart@churchofscotland.org.uk)

**Lezley Stewart** – Recruitment and Support Secretary  
General questions about the wide areas of recruitment and support including ill health and retirement matters.  
Email: [lstewart@churchofscotland.org.uk](mailto:lstewart@churchofscotland.org.uk)

**Daran Golby** – Partnerships and Development Secretary  
The person to contact with church law questions and any questions you may have about presbytery planning and your rights, questions about interim and transition ministry.  
Email: [dgolby@churchofscotland.org.uk](mailto:dgolby@churchofscotland.org.uk)

**Gillian Coghlan** – Finance Manager  
The person to contact with questions about loans.  
Email: [gcoghlan@churchofscotland.org.uk](mailto:gcoghlan@churchofscotland.org.uk)

**Karin Anderson** – Finance Assistant  
The person to contact for other finance questions such as removal enquiries, mileage and expense claims.  
Email: [kanderson@churchofscotland.org.uk](mailto:kanderson@churchofscotland.org.uk)

**Gabby Dench** – Pastoral Support Manager and Co-lead on Ascend  
The person to ask about support options and Ascend related enquiries.  
Email: [gdench@churchofscotland.org.uk](mailto:gdench@churchofscotland.org.uk)

**Lynne Hood\*** – Administrator  
Person to approach if you have questions about locums and the diaconate and MDS.  
Email: [lhood@churchofscotland.org.uk](mailto:lhood@churchofscotland.org.uk)

**Alison Stewart** – Senior Administrator  
Person to send sick notes to, questions about pulpit supply, compassionate leave, MDC enquiries, questions about pastoral support.  
Email: [alison.stewart@churchofscotland.org.uk](mailto:alison.stewart@churchofscotland.org.uk)

**Katie Bradley\*** – Business Change Training Officer  
Contact for candidates and queries regarding formation supervision and candidate finance  
Email: [kbradley@churchofscotland.org.uk](mailto:kbradley@churchofscotland.org.uk)

**Matt Ward** – Training Officer  
Contact for candidates, probationers and ministers in the first five years  
Email: [matthew.ward@churchofscotland.org.uk](mailto:matthew.ward@churchofscotland.org.uk)

**Sheila Macrae** – Support Assistant  
Contact for updating personal details such as address, telephone numbers  
Email: [smacrae@churchofscotland.org.uk](mailto:smacrae@churchofscotland.org.uk)

**Nicky Nicholls\*** – Administrator  
Contact for enquires regarding Church of Scotland email addresses, the registration of ministries committee and log books  
Email: [nnicholls@churchofscotland.org.uk](mailto:nnicholls@churchofscotland.org.uk)

**Lesley Hamilton-Messer** – Church Without Walls Team Leader  
Contact for information about new ways of doing church, and mission development  
Email: [lhamilton-messer@churchofscotland.org.uk](mailto:lhamilton-messer@churchofscotland.org.uk)

**David McCarthy\*** – Fresh Expressions Development Worker  
The person to contact for information about Fresh Expressions in the Church of Scotland  
Email: [dmccarthy@churchofscotland.org.uk](mailto:dmccarthy@churchofscotland.org.uk)

**Phil Mellstrom** – Worship Development Worker  
Contact for enquires regarding worship development and weekly worship  
Email: [pmellstrom@churchofscotland.org.uk](mailto:pmellstrom@churchofscotland.org.uk)

**Ron Clarke\*** – Congregational Learning Team Leader  
Contact for learning and development resourcing for areas incl. creating and deepening discipleship, eldership, children and young people ministry  
Email: [rhclarke@churchofscotland.org.uk](mailto:rhclarke@churchofscotland.org.uk)

**David Williams** – Seeds for Change Fund  
Contact for enquires about Seeds For Change Fund  
Email: [dwilliams@churchofscotland.org.uk](mailto:dwilliams@churchofscotland.org.uk)

**General enquiries:**  
Email: [faithnurture@churchofscotland.org.uk](mailto:faithnurture@churchofscotland.org.uk)

\*currently furloughed.



*Lord God of the Three in One and One in Three  
We thank you for the way you show us how to love,  
how to prefer the other,  
how to work together in unity.  
The Father lifts up the Son,  
the Son points to the Father,  
and the Spirit draws all to the Father and the Son.  
And on it goes –  
in a beautiful, intricate dance of love and unity.*

*Lord Jesus, you said the greatest commandment  
was to love God and love the other.  
You said the world would know you by our love for one another.  
We confess today that this has often not been the case.  
We have allowed hurry and weariness and frustration,  
anger, personal preference and opinion,  
fear, differences and negative words,  
tasks, goals and deadlines  
to fill the space between us in our teams.*

*Father God, forgive us.  
Lord Jesus, open our eyes to see one another  
the way that you see each one of us.  
Holy Spirit, soften our fearful hearts  
and let them burn with the same desire for unity  
that burned within the heart of Jesus our Saviour.  
Teach us how to live and work like Jesus –  
where relationships are prioritised over task  
and we choose to be joyfully interruptible.  
May our tongues choose kindness and encouragement become the norm.  
And may our teams and workplaces transform into places of community  
where the love, grace and joy of the Holy Trinity  
become visible to a world desperately looking for a family of hope.*

*Amen.*

Crystal Cryer  
National Coordinator, 24/7 Prayer Scotland

# Essential Info

## Faith Nurture Forum

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

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

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

For support information please visit  
[www.churchofscotland.org.uk/ascend](http://www.churchofscotland.org.uk/ascend)

## Communications Department

Out of hours: 07854 783 539

## Law Department

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

*Search 'law' under Resources at Ascend Online.*

## Safeguarding Department

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

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

## Housing and Loan Fund

Email: [hbett@churchofscotland.org.uk](mailto: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:*

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



The Church of Scotland

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

Scottish Charity Number: SC0 11353