



## **T**he times they are a changin' - again !

**I** well remember using this little phrase during the midst of the season we've been venturing through with the shadow of Covid-19 over us.

**Emerging, God willing, from the darkness of such a season we once again find ourselves venturing through a significant season of change and transition and this coming from two main areas affecting the life of our congregations in Dalmeny and Queensferry. Over recent months we have made reference to such changes in our Sunday services however I wanted to put it in print so we all had access to information about the new season we are entering into.**

**The two areas creating such a season of change are firstly in the staffing around the church and secondly in the proposals being discussed as part of a new Presbytery Plan.**

### **Staffing changes**

In our Ministry team, **Jill Meek, our Children and Families Worker** was anticipating that her Presbytery funded role would come to an end on 1st October this year. This meant that Jill began to seek direction over what God would call her and her husband Craig into next. The result is that Jill will be completing her contract with us at the end of June and returning to the States, providentially to the same post she left to come and join us some 5 years ago! Jill will be a big miss to us all as she not only has made her mark amongst our children and families but also throughout our live streaming services during

Covid in which she featured weekly and always in a creative and inspiring way. Jill's final Sunday at Dalmeny Kirk will be on the 29 May and at Queensferry on the 5 June. Do pray for Jill and Craig as they step out on the next adventure in their life and ministries.

Next up, on Friday the 19<sup>th</sup> August we will bid farewell to our **Church Secretary, Esther Conner**, after a quarter of a century of amazing service to our church - discreet, efficient, warm always in her welcome and a carrier of a mountain of information and insight not just about the life of the church but also the community of Queensferry and its people. What a gap there will be in the heart of our church life as Esther enters into the exciting season known as retirement. Thanks to Esther for her ministry amongst us and our prayers and good wishes go to Esther and Brian at this new season in life.

Speaking of retirement, earlier this month Lesley and I attended the pre-retirement conference organised by the Church of Scotland – this in anticipation of **my own retirement on 31st January 2023**. Normally folks would opt to go for a retirement date at their 66<sup>th</sup> birthday which, for myself would be at the beginning of December. Given the proximity to Christmas and also the prospect of seeing an agreement reached with the new Presbytery Plan at the end of December I have decided to defer my retirement until the end of January.

Such an extension will allow me some time to prepare both myself and the congregations for the future and to this end I am proposing to take some Study leave under the Church of Scotland scheme in the area of Spiritual Direction and Accompaniment. This will I hope equip me in these areas as I would be keen to exercise such a ministry upon entering retirement and given that as congregations we are about to enter a significant season of transition I would hope to offer the insights from my Study Leave during my final months in office.

During the weeks when I'll be on such study I'm grateful to the Rev Ann Inglis who has offered to provide Pastoral cover and I'm also grateful to the folks currently undergoing training in leading worship who will be leading our services under the guidance and inspiration of Ann. With the introduction to my studies taking place during a week in June there will be two weeks in July and some 4 weeks in September. A final week to write it all up in October should enable the insights gleaned to be shared within the congregations towards the end of the year.

As I intimated some months back the Kirk Session agreed to extend the contract for **Rev Ann Inglis, our Associate Minister**, by a further year until 28th February 2023.

Come the beginning of February a new interim Moderator will be appointed by the Presbytery to oversee, with the Kirk Session(s), the journey through the vacancy period.

At the beginning of March a new Locum minister will be appointed by the Kirk Session(s) whose role will be to provide pastoral and worship leadership during the vacancy period.

One final piece in the jigsaw of our staffing relates to the conclusion of **Derek Munn's Probationary period** with us. Derek, assuming all goes well with his final review later in June, is awaiting news of where his Ordination will take place and what the next steps in ministry will be.

Whilst the changes that are due as outlined above may leave us at the moment with a sense of loss and anxiety about how things will go forward, I am pleased to say that already plans are well underway to ensure not only continuity but also some new developments in the ministry staffing team serving across our congregations.

Our **Children and Family worker** post has already been out to advert and there are groups currently working on the details for a new **Church Secretary /Administrator** post, a new **Pastoral Team leader** post fully funded by the Tor Foundation on a part time basis for the next three years and also a similarly funded post for a **Café Manager** to help develop the ministry of the café at Dalmeny Kirk.

Do pray that in all such changes God will lead us to the people being called and chosen.

## **Presbytery Plan Changes**

As we have indicated at our services over recent months there are to be some far reaching changes in the way the church operates across the Presbytery of Edinburgh and West Lothian, indeed across the whole of the Church of Scotland. The way that such changes will be seen locally is through the creation of a new Presbytery Plan - a plan far reaching and radical in its impact. It will be a rare thing for any church both across Edinburgh and Scotland not to be affected by it.

At its heart, the Presbytery Plan is a call to mission and as you'll be aware we are exploring something of what that means through the themes at our Sunday morning services in May as we reflect upon the 5 Marks of Mission. At its extremities the plan is a call for us to think deeply about how we understand and see church.

No longer constrained and contained by our limited boundaries we're being invited to a greater, wider and deeper fellowship with congregations that previously were known as the 'them' where we were the 'Us'.

Across Edinburgh Presbytery, now joined up with West Lothian, every congregation is facing a change in the way they both see themselves, govern themselves and exist in themselves. The call is for us to work in a number of unions of congregations and then the unions are called to work in Mission Districts. How this all impacts us here is that we have been set within the Borders Mission District - this includes 6 parishes which the plan, as originally proposed, looked to create 3 parishes. A union between Kirkliston and Ratho, a union between Balerno and Currie and the 3rd new parish, a union between Dalmeny and Queensferry.

In this new Parish, Dalmeny and Queensferry, the proposal is that there will be 1 Nationally funded post of a minister of word and sacrament, and this along with any additional posts that we feel can be provided for locally.

You will no doubt recognise that we already have a linkage between Dalmeny & Queensferry, churches in which we share a ministry team, and so much more. This should serve us well as we move forward into the future. In addition to this new relationship, we are also being invited into discussions with parishes on the other side of the border with the likes of Abercorn, Winchburgh, Broxburn, etc. This, with the aim of sharing in ministry and mission in areas and communities very similar to our own.

Over the last few weeks the Kirk Sessions of Dalmeny and Queensferry have met with representatives of the Presbytery and they have invited us to consider forging closer and more formal ties with Kirkliston. The nature of this is currently being explored and we will keep you advised of the direction of travel planned.

The aim over the coming months is to discuss and negotiate with the newly formed Presbytery Development Group what the final version of the plan will look like come October this year when we hope a final plan will be agreed by 31st December this year.

We are at an early stage in our discussions however your prayers for our Kirk Sessions and those of our neighbouring parishes would be greatly appreciated as we begin to engage in the planning process.