

THE SCOTS KIRK PARIS

Easter at SKP



We begin our Easter celebrations with our **Good Friday service at 7 pm on 7th April**. All are welcome to come and contemplate on the crucifixion of Jesus and his death at Calvary. Why do we call it "good Friday"? The word "good" is used in the Middle English (c. 1300) sense of "pious, holy, sacred". Another example of this is when we refer to the Bible as "the Good Book".

Our **Easter Sunday service** will take place at **11 am on 9th April**. We will be celebrating Communion on this special occasion and look forward to seeing you as we rejoice in Christ's resurrection and his promise of everlasting life to all who believe in him.

It is also our intention to have a retiring offering for the International Presbytery project in Palestine. If you need to be reminded of this, you can read about it in the [October 2022 newsletter](#).

Ten euros will allow the Nassar family to plant a new olive tree on their land which is still under threat of confiscation by the Israeli authorities.

We hope to see as many of you as possible for these two very important dates in the Christian calendar. All are welcome!

Christ is risen - He is risen indeed. Alleluia!

A word from Laurence, our Interim Moderator



Warmest greetings to everyone!

They may seem not to have too much in common...Bermuda and Budapest...Rome and Rotterdam...Bochum, Germany and Brussels, Belgium...Paris and Malta...Lausanne and Lisbon...Amsterdam...Geneva and Colombo...a colourful tapestry of languages, cultures, histories and economies...

But, one thing they do all have in common is that there is a Church of Scotland there!

Through accidents of history various, outreaches several and the ministry of individuals many - these are the congregations who make up the Presbytery of International Charges...offering worship and fellowship in the English language, in the Presbyterian style, across Europe and beyond.

It was a joy to spend time with Valerie and Denis and representatives from all the congregations as they met in Brussels at the beginning of the month and shared their stories...stories of faith, service, vision, effort, energy and mission.

Against the backcloth of a much-changed world, each of these congregations was trying to find ways to serve God better, care for people more: to make disciples, inspire new leaders, strengthen faith.

And they were all finding it tough!

No matter whose story we heard, similar stress-points emerged: the same kinds of hurdles had to be overcome.

And no one had a "silver bullet" that would fill the church with young people, recover the ground lost since lockdowns various: no magic solutions emerged to the relentless erosions of secularism, the new ways of communicating, the different social patterns of family life...the commitment-phobic times...that make the "good old days, the glory days, the halcyon days" seem more and more distant and remote.

However, in all those conversations, discussions and searchings, within all the churches of our Presbytery, one thing was clear...we may all face the same problems...but we all place our trust in the same God, follow the same

Stewardship campaign



Our stewardship campaign at the end of last year was a resounding success. Who better than the treasurer to sum it up:

"...We are pleased to tell you that there was a positive reaction to our letter and the church received 15 significant donations in euros and in pounds sterling for a total amount of €7,035. This has ensured that in 2022 there will be a small profit which will be added to the reserves for the future. The response by members to make their offering by regular monthly bank transfer was also encouraging. Five members have started to give their offerings this way for a total of €510 per month and two members have increased their offerings by €50. This amount of €560 per month will increase annual income by €6,720".

The treasurer has stressed many times that regular giving by bank transfer gives us more visibility and allows us to plan for the future. Our monthly expenses (electricity, internet, lift maintenance, fire protection, toilet pump maintenance etc.) continue to run in the background despite the number of people in the congregation. Our improved financial situation has resulted in the SKP being given permission to call a part-time associate minister under the linking with Brussels. Of course it is essential that we maintain (and even improve) this level of giving and we cannot thank you enough for whatever contribution you can make to the SKP.

Lord, preach the same Gospel and are obedient to the same call to mission.

There is no loss of confidence in the core message of the faith...Rather, there is a quiet certainty, based on observation and experience, that men and women still feel the need to be forgiven, to be loved and to be enfolded by grace.

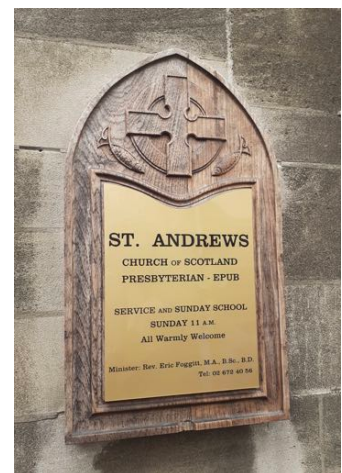
For all our distances and differences...these are the realities that define us...unite us and invite us...dare us...to be Christ's men and women.

Love as always,

Laurence

International presbytery meeting

Laurence has really said it all about the March meeting of the International Presbytery in Brussels. This meeting was of special significance for Scott and me (Valerie Prieur) since our two congregations are set to be linked under the Presbytery Plan. Scott and I were in the fortunate position of being able to talk to Eric Foggit, minister in Brussels who will be the minister of the linked charge, and members of the Brussels congregation. Eric is hoping to come to Paris in the near future to meet as many of us as possible. Arrangements for this have yet to be made.



The business was dealt with smoothly and there was nothing particularly difficult to discuss. One of the things we did talk about was the need to have two in-person presbytery meetings a year. There is good reason to meet just once from a financial and ecological point of view but the overwhelming opinion seemed to be that the fellowship we experience at IP meetings is essential. It is true that we discover that we all have the same problems and it is so helpful to be able to thrash them out face to face, even if we can't solve them completely. The final decision has been postponed until October to give everyone time to weigh up the pros and cons.

Presbyteries throughout Scotland and beyond are expected to be self-financing by 2025 so we also discussed how to cut our costs to avoid increasing presbytery dues. The finance committee has a lot of work to do! If you would like more information about the IP meeting and the other topics on the agenda, feel free to contact Scott or myself. It's an intense weekend but we manage to fit in some fun as well!

And a word from John, our locum...

What can I say that any one of your several locum ministers haven't said already? I could say (and mean it) how good it is to be here with you. That my first impressions of the Scot's Kirk are favourable. That my experience so far has been very positive, and several of your office bearers are proving to be genial hosts. But, as I say, it's probably all been said before. Truth be told I see this time together in France's capital with its many attractions for art lovers such as myself to be an opportunity not just to visit the museums and art galleries and brush up on my French, but to exchange thoughts with you honestly and frankly which we might hope will prove of mutual benefit and help guide us through this period of radical change in the church. At least the Scots Kirk is not being threatened with closure unlike so many churches back in Scotland, my own among them, which later this year celebrates its 200th anniversary.



Nobody wants this and nobody likes too much change. There is more than a grain of truth in the story of the locum minister who was asked to take services in an unfamiliar church and was greeted by the session clerk who informed him that he had held this post for fifty years. "Well," said the locum minister, "you must have seen many changes in the past fifty years?" "I have that," said the session clerk, "and I've been against every one of them." In much the same vein, I had an office bearer a few years ago whose motto seemed to be 'if it ain't broke, don't fix it!' I didn't agree with him then and I don't agree with him now. We need to be pro-active. If it 'ain't broke' then fix it anyway!

The time has come for Scotland's Kirk to re-focus, move on, and to move forward, if for no other reason than the acute shortage of ministers of Word and Sacrament. We must together find new ways of being the church and doing what the church has always tried to do at its very best as "servants of the rest."

Letting go

All of us, in some way or another and at some point in our lives, get caught up in a whirlwind of multi-tasking, decision-making and the general frenzy and worry of daily life. We fret about so many details of our lives, some things we can do something about and other things we can do nothing about. Dorothy Mure draws our attention to this blog on the Sanctuary First website which spoke to her and will surely speak to many among us even if we're not jetting around the world!

Read the blog [here](#).



"Sanctuary First is an online worshipping community of the Church of Scotland (a charity registered in Scotland, charity no. SC051969). We are passionate about helping individuals into a deeper Christian discipleship journey through daily prayer and bible study. We especially welcome those who have for what ever reason become disconnected from traditional church attendance, but who nonetheless wish to be recognised as committed Christians and to grow in their faith".

Visit the Sanctuary First [website](#).

**Trust in the Lord with all your heart
and lean not on your own understanding;
in all your ways submit to him,
and he will make your paths straight.**

Proverbs 3:5-6

Getting to know you

Scott MacSween is a name that crops up regularly in the newsletter. But many of us have never met him. Who is he? Where is he? Read on to find out!

Scott, can you tell us something about yourself?

I am married to Sasha and we have two children, Alex (18) and Penny (16). Alex is in his first year at Edinburgh University and Penny is at boarding school close to Glasgow. I am from the UK, I grew up in England in a Scottish family, my mum was from Morayshire near Inverness and my dad is from Harris in the Outer Hebrides. Sasha has Scottish/Swedish/English family roots but she grew up in France and South Africa. So you might say that we are a culturally mixed family.

We live in Aix-en-Provence in the south of France and we have been there for 3 years, although not intentionally - we moved just before Covid lockdowns and ended up staying there while Alex finished his schooling.

At the Scots Kirk Paris, I am an Elder and member of the Board, and I am also an Elder on the International Presbytery along with Valerie. SKP is fortunate that considering the size of our congregation, we have two elders attending Presbytery where many of the important decisions are made.

I work for the International Rescue Committee, a large refugee charity. I am part of the Global HR team, which is based in New York but I work remotely, travelling to NY a few times a year to meet my colleagues.

When and why did you start coming to the Scots Kirk in Paris?

We moved to France from Amsterdam in 2004 and we came to the Scots Kirk Paris in late 2004 on a weekend break in Paris from Le Mans where we were living. My earliest memory of SKP, apart from a very warm welcome, was my young son - now 18 - being loud and disruptive in the service and Dorothy Nitsche producing some colouring crayons from her handbag which he played with very happily and very quietly until the end of the service!

In 2011, we moved to Kenya with my job at the time, with World Vision, a Christian charity, and when we returned to Paris in 2016, we were very happy to return to the SKP.

After another 2 years back in Kenya and a year in India, we moved back to France in late 2019 to Aix-en-Provence. I started my discernment process for ministry training around that time so I

haven't been able to make it to Paris as often as I would have liked. I am sure that this will change as I move forward in my training.

Do you have any hobbies?

I like to run and walk and we have a 2-year-old beagle (Jack) who is full of energy and needs a lot of exercise because he likes to eat (to put it politely in case he reads this newsletter!)

I have recently started skiing again after a 6-year break and forgotten how much I enjoyed the peace of the mountains and the exercise in the fresh, cold air. I love to travel and enjoy meeting people from very different cultures and trying to find things we have in common. This is why I love our connection with the Taizé community and why I want to build these connections with SKP. Many of us, myself included, have been fortunate to meet people from different backgrounds and languages simply because of where we live, but the same is not true for many young people growing up in the most deprived areas in Scotland - they can't imagine a different outcome for their lives beyond what they see around them.

I am also training for Ordained Local Ministry with the Church of Scotland. The training is a combination of academic studies in theology, studied online through the University of Aberdeen, and also 2-3 years of practical experience of leading worship and preaching. Ordained Local Ministry (OLM) is an unpaid form of ordained ministry, but the training is intense and very similar to Full Time training, and candidates for both OLM and Full Time have lots of overlap with each other. The training is designed to give candidates as much exposure as possible to other congregations and styles of worship, and I'm realising that there is a lot of diversity in the Church of Scotland.

I am now halfway through the second of two placements, which I am doing with St George's Tron in Glasgow. SGT is a lovely, welcoming and diverse congregation in an old, but refurbished church in the centre of Glasgow (I know, you could describe SKP in this way too!). SGT is a café church with a strong focus on city centre mission, close working relationships with a number of Christian mission groups and the café is open



during the week as a social enterprise and it is very popular with city centre shoppers and workers.

My first placement was with a Church of England parish/chaplaincy in Aix, Marseille and the Luberon which exposed me to a very different form of liturgy and worship, so I have been very fortunate to see such different forms of church and community. I hope to lead worship in SKP sometime in the next few months.

What is your vision for our congregation?

We are entering an entirely new era for SKP. I think that we will have to think and pray about what kind of church we want to be in future. There are some really exciting things happening in the Church of Scotland in Scotland itself, so we need to decide whether we want to try something slightly different, or keep the more traditional styles of worship, or something in between.

As I think about having attended SKP during 3 full-time C of S ministries and many locums, one thing is very clear to me. The church belongs to us, the congregation, not to whichever minister

happens to be preaching. Ministers will come and go and only the congregation remains, so it's up to the congregation (led by the elders) to decide what sort of church we want to be.

If we don't care about what happens, what songs we sing, what activities we do, then we only have ourselves to blame when church becomes boring. And church can become boring if we let it.

Why couldn't we have coffee before church, instead of after the service? Why not sing or pray in French from time to time? Why not have a short worship on Sunday afternoon at 4pm instead of always Sunday mornings at 11am? I would be willing to try some of these things. But would you?

These are actually very small changes if you think about what we could change if we were to be bolder still, but they could make a big difference in how our church 'feels'. We have to be willing to try new things to see what works for us, because we are unlike any other congregation in the Church of Scotland, and unlike any other church in France. There is nothing like 'our' church, the SKP.

AGM of the Board of the Association de la Church of Scotland

Our church is registered in France as a not for profit organization (*association loi 1901*). Everyone in the congregation is automatically a member of the *association*. Within the *association* there is the Board which in our case comprises all the elders *de facto* plus a number of elected members. The current office bearers are Andrew Craig (chairman), Douglas Anderson (treasurer) and Louise Anderson (secretary). We are required to hold an AGM by 30th June every year to report on the activities of the association (in effect the SKP) and present the annual accounts.

Board members are elected for one year and can re-stand for election indefinitely. Members of the *association* (congregation) wishing to join the Board can make their interest known and be put forward for election at the next AGM.

This is precisely what happened at our 19th March AGM when Nicola Davis was elected. Nicola was a member of the Board in the past but had to step down for family and work reasons. We are



delighted to welcome her back and are looking forward to her fresh input and new ideas!

Since lockdown we have been holding our Board meetings on Zoom, usually on the first Wednesday of the month. If you have anything you think the

Board should be discussing, have a word with one of the members (see the [January newsletter](#)) and we will add your topic to the agenda.

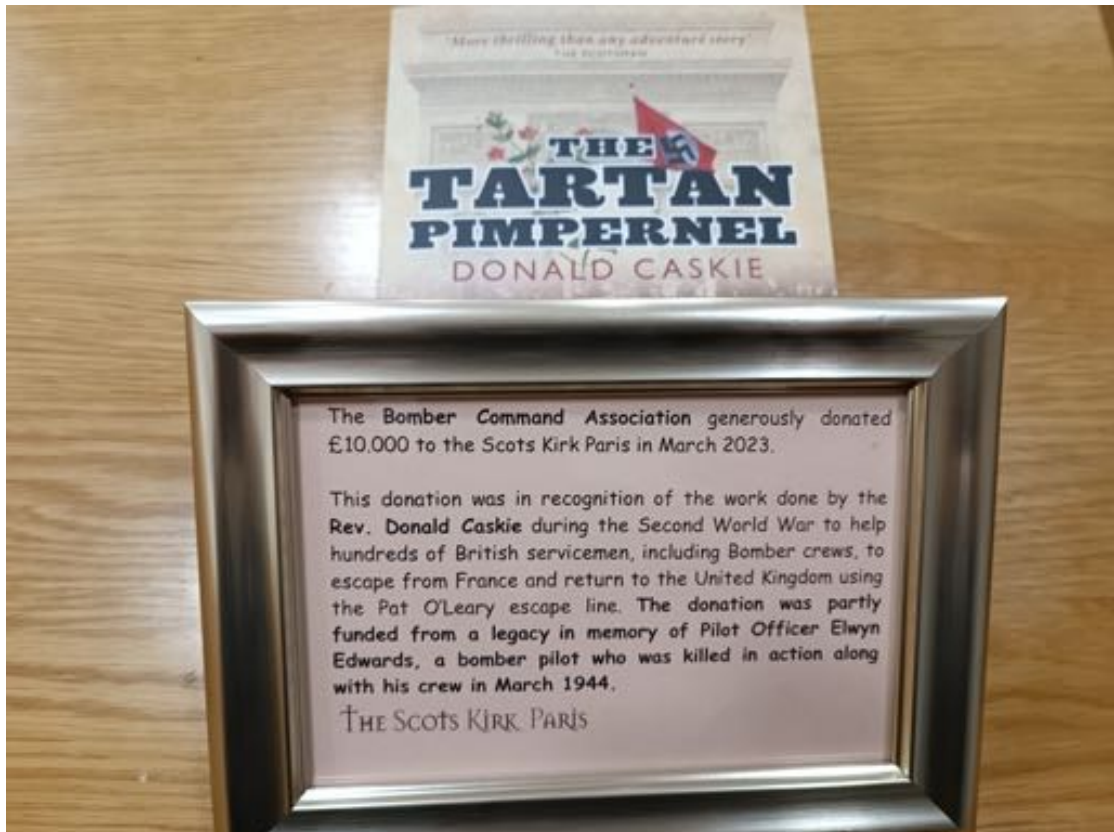
The Board is not to be confused with the Kirk Session which comprises the elders only and deals with pastoral, spiritual and worship-related matters. The Kirk Session is the lowest court of the church (after the General Assembly and the Presbytery).

REMINDER: The [Bags of Hope](#) project will be ending on Easter Sunday. Bags are available in the vestry for any items you might still wish to donate. A huge thank you to the congregation for making this simple project such a success and for helping to bring some light into the lives of just some of the homeless men in Paris. You will, of course, continue to have the opportunity to place food and hygiene items in the basket which can be found at the entrance to the sanctuary every Sunday morning.



Looking to the past and to the future

The Scots Kirk Paris has received an unexpected and very generous donation of £10,000 from the RAF Bomber Command Association; we have, of course, expressed our gratitude in writing but given the connection with Donald Caskie, the Board decided that there should also be some form of permanent recognition of this important sum in our Caskie cabinet. Thank you Douglas for preparing the frame and Derek for taking the photo.



This is an unexpected windfall for the SKP and puts our finances on an even firmer footing. But, it might be nice to share some of it! Why "looking to the future"? More about this in the next issue of the newsletter!

Click [here](#) to find out more about Bomber Command.

Contributions welcome!

Perhaps there is something you would like to see in a future newsletter? Perhaps you would like to be the subject of the "Getting to know you feature"? Perhaps you have a favorite Bible passage to share? Please don't hesitate to get in touch; all contributions are welcome!

Many thanks to all who have contributed already through articles, suggestions, photos etc. And apologies if any of you felt you were being nagged! 😊

And welcome Mrs Munro!

We look forward to welcoming John's wife Lillian this week. She has been in Edinburgh looking after the lovely dog in the photo on page 3 but is taking a couple of weeks to come to Paris with the family.

Let's hope things have quietened down a bit and that the Munros manage to get some quality family time in this beautiful city despite the unrest we are experiencing. 🙌