The Scots Kirk Paris

Church of Scotland and climate change

Climate change has been a talking point for some time now but never more so than this summer. Forest fires have been raging in many countries, rivers and lakes are drying up in some areas whereas in others severe flooding has left many people destitute and has even cost lives. The oceans are warming and the entire ecosystem is being disrupted. And we as human beings are going to have to adapt our ways of life in the face of increasingly frequent periods of intense heat.

The General Assembly has set a target of 2030 for the Church of Scotland to be a net zero carbon emission organization. One of the first steps was taken by the Investors Trust which has disposed of all its shares in oil and gas companies.

Congregations throughout Scotland are being asked to consider ways in which they can reduce their carbon footprint. The Church of Scotland website contains a wealth of information and advice on this topic.

Although outside Scotland, we, as an eco-congregation, can and should play a part in helping to reduce carbon emissions. If you have any ideas to share, let us know and you will be given a platform at one of our Sunday services (or even in the newsletter)!

But to start with, why not calculate your own carbon footprint? Be prepared for some surprises!

A word from Laurence, our Interim Moderator

Warm greetings…can there be any other kind these days?

I never take it for granted…the amazing fact that so many wonderful people work so hard, with dedication and commitment to support and promote, to encourage and sustain the work of the Church – be that in Paris, Geneva, or back in Scotland!

Faithful men and women, make things happen, move things forward – and though they may have challenges of their own to deal with in their life, they make sure that the church is resourced, and that the jobs that need to be done, are done. It is truly humbling.

And, they make sure, too, that the worship rings out across their community week after week, reminding those who sometimes forget, that the love of God is ours to know…and the call to love him and serve him comes to every single one of us.

So, when I think about all those people in all those congregations, Paris no less than anyone else, doing the work, keeping things moving, filling the gaps, exploring the possibilities, rising to the challenges, week after week, I am humbled and encouraged, full of appreciation - and not a little wonder – as I see the miracle of the faithful people of God, who through all kinds of circumstances, make sure that they seek first the Kingdom of God, conscious of our mission, and our call to mission.

Talking about which, a little footnote.

Let me tell you about one of the most successful “missionaries” within my last congregation - someone who would have been very surprised to see himself in that role.

After many years of not being able to be at church because of work commitments, he started coming along….found it meant something precious and touched something deep in him…so he brought his wife along – and she found herself similarly glad to be there, helped and blessed in the experience. No big programmes, no campaigns or crusades!

One person brings another person…Mission!

Simple!

Love to you all

Laurence

IP mission project

The IP mission project for this year is the Tent of Nations in Bethlehem, Palestine.

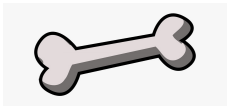
Since the beginning of the Covid-19 pandemic, the Tent of Nations Farm has endured continual attacks on their land resulting in destruction of terraced fields, infrastructure, and trees. They also must continuously respond to intense legal attempts to confiscate their land and endure physical attacks from a group of misguided Palestinian neighbors. The destruction of the past 2.5 years has been devastating, “placing us back to the time when we first began Tent of Nations in 2001,” Daoud says. “The road ahead is long, but we journey it together.”

The long awaited date for the final hearing on the re-registration of the family farm has been postponed again by the Israeli civil authorities; this time indefinitely. After 32 years of a legal battle to acknowledge their ownership of the farm through an unjust legal system the Nassar family continues to pray and hope that it will be settled in the near future.

Despite all this, the Nassars are again hosting many international visitors and volunteers who come to help out with cultivating the land - planting new trees of hope. These volunteers go home to spread the message of faith, hope and love, having experienced it themselves, and invite more people to accompany the Tent of Nations on its long journey for justice.

The IP will be running a campaign to sponsor the planting of new olive trees so from Bags of Hope we will be moving to Trees of Hope! But more about this initiative later in the year!

PS next time we come to Paris we’ll need to find someone to look after Fergus, our new dog! He’s a big fella!

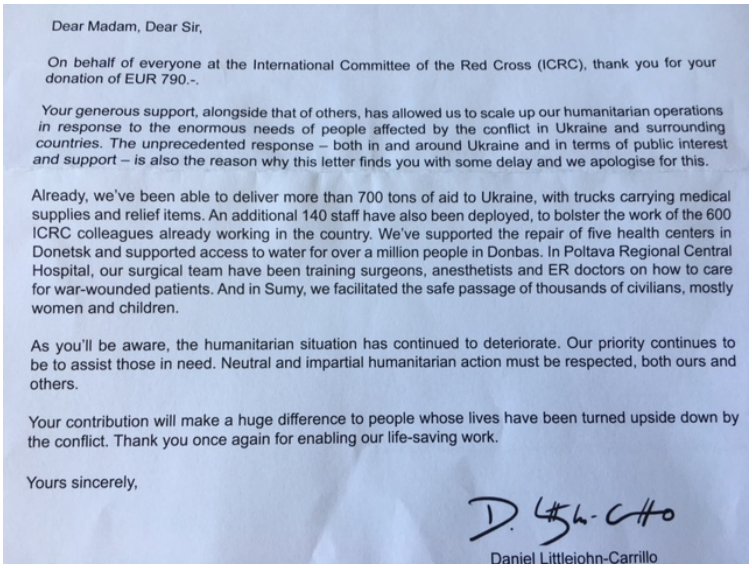


Thank you SKP!

Our appeal for Ukraine earlier this year raised the sum of 790 euros which we donated to the International Red Cross some months back.

A couple of weeks ago we received this thank you letter which came with apologies for the delay in contacting us. However, as you can see from the letter, this was due to the overwhelming response to the ICRC's appeal.

We are delighted to have played a small part in the relief effort and continue to keep Ukraine and its people in our prayers.



Dear Madam, Dear Sir,

On behalf of everyone at the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), thank you for your donation of EUR 790.-.

Your generous support, alongside that of others, has allowed us to scale up our humanitarian operations in response to the enormous needs of people affected by the conflict in Ukraine and surrounding countries. The unprecedented response – both in and around Ukraine and in terms of public interest and support – is also the reason why this letter finds you with some delay and we apologise for this.

Already, we've been able to deliver more than 700 tons of aid to Ukraine, with trucks carrying medical supplies and relief items. An additional 140 staff have also been deployed, to bolster the work of the 600 ICRC colleagues already working in the country. We've supported the repair of five health centers in Donetsk and supported access to water for over a million people in Donbas. In Poltava Regional Central Hospital, our surgical team have been training surgeons, anesthetists and ER doctors on how to care for war-wounded patients. And in Sumy, we facilitated the safe passage of thousands of civilians, mostly women and children.

As you'll be aware, the humanitarian situation has continued to deteriorate. Our priority continues to be to assist those in need. Neutral and impartial humanitarian action must be respected, both ours and others.

Your contribution will make a huge difference to people whose lives have been turned upside down by the conflict. Thank you once again for enabling our life-saving work.

Yours sincerely,

Daniel Littlejohn-Carrillo

"*I am gravely concerned for the safety of communities in Ukraine. Our message to the parties to the conflict is clear: uphold International Humanitarian Law, protect civilians and essential services*". Peter Maurer, President, ICRC.

"*The international armed conflict in Ukraine is fueling a devastating humanitarian crisis that is affecting the lives of millions of people. We have worked in Ukraine since 2014 and since 24 February, we have massively scaled up our response to meet the rising needs.*

We have some 700 staff working in 10 locations across Ukraine to deliver relief items to the displaced, provide medicines and supplies to health care facilities, restore water supply for millions of people, and other lifesaving activities" (ICRC website).

Find out more about the work of the ICRC.

And now a word from Doug, our locum

Dear Sisters and Brothers of the SKP family,

It is a joy and a privilege to be here with you in Paris for a few weeks. I knew two things before I came – these were likely to be hot weeks, as Europe baked in a succession of heat waves (and worried about climate change) – and they might be quiet weeks in church, as Parisians escaped to cooler locations for les grandes vacances. I have worked and preached in many smaller congregations over the years and I have learned that you never know who will show up on any given Sunday. Crucially, because we believe that God shows up, we are called to approach worship with an air of hopeful expectation. There will be a Word for us, individually and together, if we have ears to hear. There will also be others there for us to meet, who may need a word of welcome or friendship or encouragement from us, or us from them.

I have been in SKP before (my picture is on the notice board at the back of the International Presbytery group photo – standing with the other tall people!) but it remains striking to walk through this area of central Paris, crowded with high-fashion boutiques and glamorous brands, whose creativity and style may delight us but whose role as symbols of wealth and status also trouble us. What could God mean by placing our modest building there among all of these?

The Sunday scripture readings have been powerful in August – Jeremiah and Jesus talking about how we sometimes need to make choices and take sides; Jeremiah and Jesus asking us to think about what we see as we look out at the world and who we see when we look at the people we meet everyday.

I know that congregations across the International Presbytery are facing challenging times and uncertain futures. But the history of SKP is one of having lived through terrible adversity and of a witness to Jesus Christ having endured. So we may pray today – Keep us in your will, Lord - show us how to move forward in faith; open our eyes to see this place and its people in the light of your love, strengthen us to make the choices which you are asking us to make.

Thank you for your welcome and kindness.

God bless you,

Doug

An ecumenical prayer for peace

Living God,

Creator and giver of life to all people:

We ask that you would hear our prayer for peace amongst the nations

And for ending of conflict in Ukraine.

Lord, in your mercy,

Hear our prayer.

Living God,

Who shall judge between the nations:

We ask that that you would lead the nations in the paths of peace

And that the dividing wall of hostility would be broken down.

Lord, in your mercy,

Hear our prayer.

Living God,

Who has inspired faith across the ages:

Grant peace in the midst of war

And bring harmony to the commonwealth of nations.

Lord, in your mercy,

Hear our prayer.

Living God,

Who gave his only Son that we might have life:

We ask that you would pour out your Holy Spirit

And inspire in us hope that peace will be renewed.

Lord, in your mercy,

Hear our prayer.

Church of Scotland

Getting to know you

In last month's issue we read about Gamelieh and the numerous homeless people she helps in Paris. Now it's time to get to know Gamelieh herself better!

Gamelieh, can you tell us something about yourself?

Even though my mother sent me to Sunday School, by chance I asked her if I was christened. To my huge surprise she said emphatically "No!" and I was shocked and I asked her why and she said that she wanted me to make that decision myself when I was grown up. This reply upset me very much because I will always believe that babies should be christened and start life with God no matter what they go on to think. This initial neglect on her part meant that I was christened at 17 years old.

The English sweets called "Maltesers" in their red box were always offered at Sunday school. Whenever I see them now it brings back happy memories.....

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

I started coming to the Scots Kirk over 12/13 years ago when Alan Miller was minister.

I came because I had been forced to resign from Export work and as I was a workaholic to keep the small company going I not only lost my work but also the equivalent of "family" not having any friends or family (as I am an orphan). I was at a very low point in my life and I remembered a particular friend from when I lived in New York called Kathleen who was Scottish.... I saw an ad in the Fusac magazine for the Scots Kirk at the beginning of the week and during that week in the run up to Sunday two things in particular pushed me to attend the service at the Scots Kirk. I read by chance an article in the "World of Interiors" magazine about some stately home that had prepared a bedroom for Mary Queen of Scots to stay on her journey up to Scotland but she never came to stay. However, they left the bedroom as it was and it is an added tourist attraction even though she never slept there! Later on in the week I went up to the Bibliothèque Nationale and in the metro for that stop it was totally deserted and devoid of people except for a lone Scottish man wearing a kilt playing the bagpipes. I thought it was very odd that he would be playing there and it struck me as strange as in all the times before and after I have never seen a bagpipe player there ever again. In consequence of all these "Scottish" reminders I did make an effort to attend the Scots Kirk and continued to do so.

Alain Miller told me that the Scots Kirk was my spiritual home which was a great comfort as I cried through many of his services because I was suffering from post traumatic shock.

Do you have any hobbies?

Recycling all sorts of things...

What is your vision for our congregation?

I have a hard enough time with my own vision for myself, and take one day at a time.

Our post-holiday barbecue will be held on **4th September**. We have two new volunteers to cook the sausages and hamburgers which, as always, will be provided by the SKP. A big thank you to Peter and Gabriel! Contributions of salads, crisps, fruit etc. will be most welcome as will offers of help before and after the meal. Looking forward to seeing as many of you as possible!