

## Ecumenical links

Over the years Deacons have represented the Church of Scotland in larger Ecumenical gatherings both within the United Kingdom and beyond. There are strong links with the Diaconal Association of the Church of England, the Methodist Diaconal Order and the Deaconesses within the Presbyterian Church in Ireland. The Diaconate of the Church of Scotland is a member of World DIAKONIA. This is an organisation for Deacons, set up after the Second World War to build bridges and to bring about reconciliation and healing. Another link in through a group called KAIRE which has a meeting every two years bringing together Lutheran, Roman Catholic, Baptist, Reformed and Orthodox women for spiritual experience and retreat.

## Work and Worship

Deacons usually work as part of a team and may regularly be involved in leading worship. This means they have to be people who know how to co-operate with others in a common task. They are always looking for the potential in others and seeking ways to help them fulfil it. Many people today choose not to worship on a Sunday morning. Deacons will be called on to work in partnership to devise new patterns for the worshipping life of the Church. They will strive to enable those with whom they come into contact to see the gospel as something relevant to their life and work. As bridge builders between Church and community, Deacons seek ways to enable the community at large to celebrate the presence of God, both in the ordinary and in the crucial transitional points of life.

## Balfron Edition

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# Balfron linked with Fintry

Interim Ministry Update

No 1, December 2011



From time to time I would like to give some information about what is happening in the life of the congregation from the perspective of Interim Ministry – and this Update is the first issue! There are 3 things I would like to mention.

1. **Congregational Café Discussion.** On Wednesday 25<sup>th</sup> January at 7 pm in the Church Rooms, we are having a congregational conference to which you are all invited. This will be a Congregational Café Discussion – the format is that we meet round tables, and enjoy tea and coffee while we talk! The Presbytery of Stirling has asked us to turn our minds to some questions about the life of our congregation under the heading ‘Our Vision, Our Focus’. Every congregation has to discuss these questions in order to help Presbytery consider what is known as the ‘Presbytery Plan’. This plan will give the shape of the Presbytery over the coming years – how many churches & congregations there will be and where they will be located. At this meeting – we will also consider the Aims and Objectives of Interim Ministry, because that document - which is available in the vestibule of the Church - covers many of the same issues and by addressing them, it will help us plan for the future. You are all very warmly welcome to this important meeting. Please come and help us find the next step in our life as a congregation together.

2. **A Deacon to work with us.** When I worked in Castlemilk I was part of a staff team of two – myself and a Church of Scotland Deacon, Karen Hamilton, who was appointed to work with me over the period of Interim Ministry there. The new minister in Castlemilk will be inducted on January 11<sup>th</sup> and on that day my involvement there comes to an end, but Karen’s appointment also comes to an end. The Ministries Council who employ Karen have suggested that she comes and works with us here in Balfron and Fintry. Both Kirk Sessions have considered the matter and given their agreement. Karen also has agreed



to come and I am delighted! She will formally start work with us on 12<sup>th</sup> January. There will be no financial commitment on us and Karen will be here until the end of 2012 unless she is needed somewhere else or another long term appointment becomes available. We still need to do some work on a job description but I would envisage that Karen would be involved primarily in pastoral work, and offering listening, encouragement and support. On the following pages I have copied some information from the Church of Scotland website describing the work of a Deacon and I hope you find that of interest in helping to understand something of Karen's role and work with us. We look forward to welcoming her when she joins us at worship on 15<sup>th</sup> January.

3. **E100 Study Series.** In the vestibule you will find a leaflet that goes by the title E100. Please pick up a leaflet and take it home with you. It contains a reading plan of 100 bible passages – labelled the essential 100 bible passages! E100 is a challenge to us all to read these passages – 50 from the Old Testament and 50 from the New Testament. I have decided that I am going to use this reading plan as the basis for Sunday sermons starting



on 8<sup>th</sup> January and keeping going over a 20 week period. The challenge – should you choose to accept it – is to read each week the 5 passages that will form the basis of the Sunday sermon. If you have read the passages, the sermon should

make a lot more sense! The leaflet gives you the readings for each week. The first section we tackle is entitled 'In the Beginning' and that will be the title of my sermon of 8<sup>th</sup> January. I am very aware that this might not be easy for everyone – especially those who already have a bible reading plan - but it would be incredibly exciting if we were able to rise to the challenge. I must say I am looking forward in a personal way to the challenge of these weekly sermons and I hope you might feel able to join me by playing your part in it. Anyone who wishes to purchase a Study Guide costing £5 please add your name to the list in the Vestibule.

### **DIACONAL MINISTRY (from the Church of Scotland Website)**

Since its inception in 1887, the Diaconate has held a special place not only within the Church but also in the communities of Scotland at large. Originally an office for women within the Church, the Diaconate is now open to all. Like

Ministers of Word and Sacrament and Elders, Deacons are ordained to their life-long office and are part of the Courts of the Church. Deacons offer a ministry that is complementary to the ministry of Word and Sacrament. Their work is primarily focused on care and compassion for the poor and oppressed, and seeking social justice for all. It is characterised by loving service and usually takes place in the context of a larger team. Deacons are enablers, who strive to bring out in others the gifts they have to offer to the Church and the community at large.

### **Diaconal Ministry in the Community**

Deacons are rooted both in the congregation and the community. As such, they are able to challenge the worshipping congregation on issues concerning the community – issues such as poverty, housing, education and social exclusion. Deacons are free to do this because they are released from some of the obligations placed on the Parish Minister. Many Deacons are employed as Parish and Presbytery Workers – offering pastoral care in the community, and working with specific groups such as young people (often in schools) or with families. In many places they are called upon to conduct funerals and offer bereavement support. Deacons are able to conduct weddings. Deacons can also serve the community through work in various types of Chaplaincy and other recognised diaconal appointments.

### **Caring, Teaching and Encouraging**

Deacons meet people in all of life's circumstances and in all kinds of places. Their role as carers is rooted in the wider pastoral ministry of the whole people of God, and often has a specific focus in the crisis points of people's lives. Deacons are involved in many aspects of teaching programmes in Church and the community and through their involvement in issues of social justice, Deacons often take on the role of encouragers, standing alongside those who feel the isolation and loneliness of struggling against oppressive systems and people. Increasingly Deacons are being sought to work in Priority Areas Parishes – Scotland's poorest communities. Deacons may also engage in a prophetic role towards the Church arising out of their experience in such demanding community situations. Through their work with young people and children some Deacons may work alongside people with special needs, offering assurance that they have an equal place in society and much to contribute to it.

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