

**Worship at Home—24 January 2021**

**Rev Easter Smart**



Photographed by Emily, Jean Dick's Granddaughter



It is with great sadness that  
we have to intimate the death  
of

Mrs Pat Murray  
80 Weavers Knowe Crescent

Pat's funeral will take place  
on Monday 1 February at  
Warriston Lorimer Chapel at  
12 pm

Please pray for the family

**Opening Call To Worship**

God of love, through Christ you said to us: "You did not choose me but I chose you."

You seek us, you invite us to receive your friendship and abide in it.

Teach us to respond more deeply to this invitation, and grow in a life that is ever more complete.  
Be with us where we are as we worship you who unites us by the power of your spirit into one people.

## Prayer

God of all time and space, You were with Your people of old. You are with us now.  
You have promised to be with us until the end of time.  
We give You thanks, that in Your presence we are not alone.  
Your love has held us from seed to personhood.  
Your grace has infiltrated our lives, never letting us go  
Your hope leads us on, encouraging us to find You in ever new and ever surprising ways.  
We confess that sometimes we lose faith and trust.  
We look at our lives and our world and don't like what we see.  
We are impatient, ungrateful and angry. There doesn't seem to be a clear plan.  
Our ideas come unstuck and we question if there is any purpose to anything.  
In this time of worship, remind us of Your promise never to leave us or forsake us.  
Help us to trust Your promise that You will be with us.  
Teach us again about the power and wisdom of Your love.  
We ask this in Jesus name and we ask you to hear us share the prayer he taught us to pray

Our Father, who art in heaven; hallowed be thy name.  
Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.  
Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.  
Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.  
For thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory, for ever.

Amen.

## SCRIPTURES

### Mark 1: 14-20

#### Jesus Announces the Good News

After John was put in prison, Jesus went into Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God. "The time has come," he said. "The kingdom of God has come near. Repent and believe the good news!"

#### Jesus Calls His First Disciples

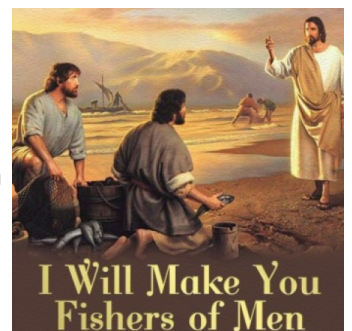
As Jesus walked beside the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and his brother Andrew casting a net into the lake, for they were fishermen. "Come, follow me," Jesus said, "and I will send you out to fish for people." At once they left their nets and followed him.

When he had gone a little farther, he saw James son of Zebedee and his brother John in a boat, preparing their nets. Without delay he called them, and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired men and followed him.

Moses said to God, "Suppose I go to the Israelites and say to them, 'The God of your fathers has sent me to you,' and they ask me, 'What is his name?' Then what shall I tell them?"

God said to Moses, "I am who I am. This is what you are to say to the Israelites: 'I am has sent me to you.'"

God also said to Moses, "Say to the Israelites, 'The Lord, the God of your fathers—the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob—has sent me to you.' This is my name forever, the name you shall call me from generation to generation."



## Sermon

*Loving God, grant peace and hope today, and may the words of our mouths and the meditation of our hearts be acceptable to you. Amen*

I remember seeing a film a long time ago called “The Right Stuff,” based on the book by Thomas Wolfe about the aeronautical engineers and test pilots who were being competitively trained and groomed for the United States Space programme. The story follows the lives of men like Chuck Yeager, Alan Shepard, John Glenn all hoping to be chosen for the great monumental challenge of being the first Men from America to get to Space.

In today’s scripture Jesus is also choosing a few good men. As we heard:

*One day, as Jesus was walking along the shores of the Sea of Galilee, when he saw Simon and his brother Andrew fishing with nets. Jesus called out to them, “Come, follow me! And I will make you fishermen for the souls of men.” They left their nets and went along with him. A little further up the beach, he saw Zebedee’s sons, James and John in a boat. He called them, too and immediately they left their father in the boat with the hired men and went with him.”*

In the words of Eric Ritz, this was a pretty interesting way of recruiting. There were no fitness tests, no help-wanted ads, no head-hunters, no paperwork or *curriculum vitae*. Some of the most mystical and moving moments of Jesus ministry take place at the seashore and this is no exception. Jesus called them and they followed. It wasn’t a lengthy speech he gave, yet something about his presence, and his few words, spoke to their minds and hearts. He was offering an invitation to begin an adventure of great significance, the chance to make a difference—to change lives. And so they took that leap of faith. They left their fishing nets to embark on a life of discipleship with Jesus.

Something about the power and authenticity of Jesus words drew them to him and they followed. The power of words to capture our imaginations has certainly been in the forefront of our news lately. Trump’s rhetoric about a stolen election and the need to overturn it, inciting an angry mob to storm the Capital in DC were in sharp contrast with the Inaugural words of Biden and his commitment to heal and unite.

The morning before I watched the inauguration, Anna Magnusson gave the prayer for today on Radio 4. She commented that what and how we communicate matters. She said, “Off the top of my head, I can remember words from only two US Presidential inaugural speeches. John F Kennedy’s ‘Ask not what your country can do for you—ask what you can do for your country’; and Donald Trump’s, ‘From this day forward it’s going to be only America first—America first!’ She noted how Words can inflame, and they can inspire. They can hurt, or comfort. But she says, whether in daily life, or government, only good words hand-in-hand with good actions can make a lasting difference. People encouraged by words of cheer and honesty—driven by their hopes, and not their fears—can move mountains, and see themselves in their neighbour.



Anna Magnusson

It is surely not a lot to expect leaders of western democratic nations to be honest and to tell the truth. I think one of the crises almost running parallel to the Pandemic and, worsened by it, is that people, not grounded in faith but rather immersed in fear could get so sucked in by whatever junk or misinformation is out there on Social Media.

I laughed on January 1st when comedians were sharing ideas about good New Year resolutions. Joe Brand said, “Tweet others as you would wish to be Tweeted!” Isn’t that something to think about.

Biden did send a strong message about that. He said, “we must reject the culture in which facts themselves are manipulated and even manufactured.” He said some other meaningful things—that he wanted the United States to be known, not for its example of power but by the power of its example. And he made it clear that he was willing to put his actions along with his words when he said, “My whole soul is in it today, on this January day. My whole soul is in this. Bringing America together, uniting our people, uniting our nation.”

As Christians this is the least that we expect from good leaders. That they tell the truth—that their actions will show integrity. Warren Buffett is a wealthy financial investor in the US. He gave some valuable advice on hiring the best people in business. He said, “if you want to hire the best person, look for three qualities: integrity, intelligence and energy!” But he added, “if they don’t have the first of these three, the other two will kill you!”

Jesus set the bar high when it comes to leadership. He impresses on his followers the need to be faithful, to act with integrity and to work for truth. David McKenna shared some ideas about why Jesus chose these fishermen at work rather than scholarly men worshipping in the temple. McKenna believes that it is easier to learn than it is to unlearn. He explained that we have to have a teachable spirit in order to learn—we must be open to the truth to learn the truth. Truth and teachability go hand in hand. The disciples had integrity. The disciples were teachable because they were willing to learn from Jesus and he knew that when he led them to the truth, they would learn His way and in Him they would find true life.

McKenna argues that maybe another reason Jesus selected working men like Simon, Andrew, James and John—and that was because they were courageous. Their lives had been tested by the wind and the waves. They had not spent life sheltering in the temple. For the disciples to leave their nets to follow Jesus was a very brave thing to do. Fishing was their livelihood, the way of life they had known since childhood and here this young Rabbi tells them to leave their life behind to become fishers of the souls of men. Yet they didn’t hesitate. They didn’t ask to go home and think it over. The bible says, “at once they left their nets and went with him.” James and John followed, “Immediately!”

Interestingly, many good leaders recognise that sometimes the need to act is urgent. Biden himself noted that between the Pandemic and Climate Change, the need to end systemic racism and endemic inequality, he acknowledged the world’s need to press forward with speed and urgency for we have much to do in this winter of peril and significant possibility.

This week if you watch the Moderator’s service you will be reminded that this is the week for Christian Unity. Normally at this time of year we share this service with Balerno and Juniper Green churches to commemorate our Unity as Christ’s Disciples. And so this week the Presidential plea for unity was not misplaced. Our Christian faith works best when we are unified as Christ’s followers. This was his very prayer before his death and resurrection.

Jesus prayed, “My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me. I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one—I in them and you in me—so that they may be brought to complete unity.”

There are still divisions of course. Unity does not mean agreement. It doesn’t mean everyone is the same. How boring would the world be if we were all the same or if we thought the same. But we can still be unified if we trust in God and put our faith into actions that are good.

Jesus called people he knew he could teach. Men who were trustworthy, courageous, honest and truthful and he unified them as children of God. There were of course times when the disciples disappointed Jesus, and when he found their lack of understanding frustrating. But ultimately he knew that he could entrust the kingdom to these ordinary folk whom he had called.

I will just finish with a quote from that marvellous poem by Amanda Golden at the inauguration when She said:

*“We are striving to forge our union with purpose.  
To compose a country committed to all cultures, colours, characters, and conditions of man.  
And so we lift our gazes not to what stands between us, but what stands before us.  
We close the divide because we know, to put our future first, we must first put our differences aside.  
We lay down our arms so we can reach out our arms to one another.  
We seek harm to none and harmony for all.”*

Her poem is surely a prayer for our time. Her words, like Christ’s words helping to lift our souls in a world so in need of healing and unity.

## Prayer for Others

Lord, We bring to You now our prayers for others and for ourselves.

Lord we ask that You bless and guide Your church here in this parish and throughout the world, helping us to reach out to others, sharing with them the good news of Christ and standing with those who are most in need of our help, love and support.

Guide us in our relationships with others, within our families, with friends, neighbours and those who we struggle to love or try to avoid.

Fill our homes and communities with the warmth of Your love, may we learn to love and accept all.

Pour out Your Spirit into the world, bless those struggling with poverty and homelessness, evil and war.

Help us to reach out to those who are in need. Bless those who are ill at home or in hospital, those who are feeling anxious or low, feeling like they would rather just give up than live on.

May they know Your love and sense Your presence with them and may we as a church reach out to them in their time of need.

Bless the leaders of nations and people.

Guide them in the decisions that they make, ensuring they work hard and fight for the people they represent.

Lord, may we always sense Your presence in our lives and in the lives of others. Transform us to be the people that You would have us be.

All of this we ask in the name of Jesus Christ, our Lord and Saviour Amen



## Do something different

These resources are designed to help you explore the Bible as a family together at home while we can't go to church. Be as creative as you want to be and enjoy spending time with each other and with God.

### Prepare yourself...

Loving Lord,  
thank you that you meet us where  
we are,  
in the middle and muddle of our  
daily tasks.  
Help us to hear your call,  
to recognise your voice,  
and to respond to your invitation  
to be with you now.  
Amen.



### Question...

How do you feel when plans change?  
Is it easier or more difficult if there's a sudden change?

### Praise together...



[Everybody's welcome](#) by Vineyard  
Kids UK

### Challenge...

**Yes or No:** Ask a volunteer a series of questions that would normally have a yes or no answer. The rules are that they can't say yes or no, if they do they are out.



### Read the Bible...

Today's verses are found in Mark 1:14-20. You can read them in a Bible or find them [here](#).

You could try reading the verses in different versions to see if it adds to your understanding of the passage. Or you could try acting out the story.



## Talk together...

Does anything surprise you in the story?

Why do you think the fishermen were so willing to leave everything behind to follow Jesus?

What do you think Jesus meant when he said “fish for people”?

Are there any skills the men used to catch fish that they might need to use to “catch people”?

For example, patience or gentleness.

How do you feel about the idea that you are chosen by Jesus?

What might make you hesitate to follow Jesus?

What makes you want to follow him?

Jesus spoke to the men during their daily routine, where in our daily routine could Jesus be speaking to you? What might he say?

## Play together...

### Simon says

Play a game of Simon says. Can you include some actions linked to today’s story?

E.g. fishing, following, calling.

### Musical bumps

Play a game of musical bumps. Sometimes we have to respond quickly, and if you hesitate, you lose! Today we saw how the disciples followed Jesus straight away.

What do you think might have happened if they had hesitated?

## Pray together...

**Fish prayers:** You’ll need strips of paper or card at least 10cm long and 2cm wide, scissors, pens or pencils.

Cut a slit about 2.5cm from each end of the strip, on opposite sides of the paper.

Write your name on one side then bend the strip and fit the slits together, making a fish shape.

Hold your fish and say this prayer together:

**Jesus, we want to respond when we hear you call our names.**

**We want to live our lives with you.**

**We want you to be with us.**

**Amen.**

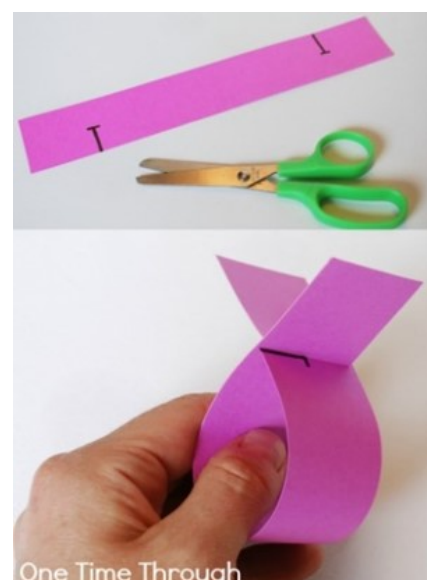
Then you can throw your fish into the air and watch as it spins to the ground.

## Do something...

Following Jesus isn’t always easy, what are some things that make it difficult?

Create a maze for someone else in your house, either draw one on paper, build one out of lego, or create a trail round a room, your house or the garden for someone to try and get through.

Jesus promises that he will always be with us and that the prize of reaching heaven is worth going through the challenges we might face along the way. Perhaps you want to have a prize at the end of your maze!



Sunday Club is taking place on Zoom this term. Fortnightly beginning on Sunday 24th January at 4.30pm. We'll have a Bible story, games and activities together for around 45 minutes. If your child would like to join in then contact Heather at [familyworker\\_jvp@outlook.com](mailto:familyworker_jvp@outlook.com) for details.

## MOF Updates



**Christmas Fair** - A massive thank you to everyone who knitted, sewed, created or donated goods to our online Christmas Fair. Our total was £755, a fantastic result given the circumstances over the past 9 months.

**Toilet Twinning** – Our total has now reached £595 to the Toilet Twinning project.

**Bethany Welcome Centre** – A team from Currie Kirk cooked on Monday night for the Welcome Centre (previously called the Night Shelter). Mark McGill very generously donated steak pies along with scones, rolls and bread! The rules for this winter are that the food needs to be cooked in the kitchen at Central Hall (Tollcross), put into serving trays inside insulated containers then transported down to Haymarket Hub hotel, across the road from Haymarket train station. A team of volunteers from Chalmers church met us there and they served the meal to around 45 people. We have agreed to cook again on Wed 31st March.

On Tuesday we had a team out in the **Care Van** – they served around 25 people at Waverley market and the Grassmarket with soup, sandwiches, tea and biscuits. Thankfully no one was homeless but were staying in a hostel or with friends. We will continue to volunteer with the Care Van on the 3rd Tuesday every month until November.

## COVID-19 Update (Re-opening of Church Buildings)

The Church of Scotland's COVID-19 Action Group has recently issued new Lockdown Guidelines, advising Churches and Youth Groups to stop meeting in public in Church Buildings until well into March or possibly even longer. This was further endorsed by the First Minister earlier this week. (COVID Report below).

We appear to be sometime away from being able to meet each other, either in the Kirk or the Gibson Craig Halls. Will keep you updated as the situation dictates.

In these somewhat depressing times, I was encouraged by an interview on Radio Scotland's 'Call Kay' programme (Thursday) where a Dr Chris Smith, an eminent Virologist from Cambridge University, gave me and hopefully all the listeners a glimmer of hope on the COVID front.

He basically said we're going to get through this within the next few months, the vaccine programme is on track and we have to remain patient. As the new shoots of Spring appear, and the sun's rays warm up the earth, then we too can all return to a better level of normality. I thought his words were very uplifting.

So keep the Faith, stay safe and keep a look out for each other.

Gordon





# The Church of Scotland

## COVID UPDATE – 6 JANUARY 2021

Dear Colleagues

This afternoon I have chaired a meeting of our own Covid-19 Group and subsequent to that I attended a meeting of faith representatives and Professor Jason Leitch, the National Clinical Director.

What follows comes from those meetings and I hope answers some of the issues which you have raised. Some of what is said below applies to all parishes in Scotland, some only to Level 4 areas (mainland Scotland and Skye) but there may be items that are of general interest in the Presbyteries of England and International Charges.

### **PUBLIC STATEMENTS ON THE LOCKDOWN**

You will have seen that some other denominations have issued statements to the media criticising the decision of the Scottish Government to close churches for worship and private prayer. Some have asked why the Church of Scotland has not also issued a statement.

There are two reasons.

One is that we as a Group see the sense of the Government's decision in the face of the growing threat of the new variant of the coronavirus and we believe our Church should be supportive of the very difficult choice that has been made. You should know that Prof Leitch has just stated in the meeting that as places of worship were the last settings to be closed, they will also be the first to be reopened when restrictions are eased.

The other reason is that we have consciously adopted an approach of building trusted relationships with the SG and its civil servants in which we are able to put across our concerns and they are able to share something of the reasoning behind the policies they have adopted. The "letter to the editor" approach can damage these relationships of trust and can make politicians more defensive and less willing to be open about the policy debate. In essence, we are better heard by Government in these weekly meetings than we would be by issuing press statements.

You should, however, know that when we are approached by the media we do offer comment and that happens on a daily basis. We say that we deeply regret that it has been necessary to close for worship but that we accept that the Government's decision had to be made. In the meantime, we continue to sustain our life through a variety of approaches and our premises remain open for essential services upon which the most vulnerable of our neighbours depend. And that we look forward to the day when we can meet in person.

The whole thrust of the lockdown is to stay at home – and only to leave home when it is essential to do so because it is when we are near other people that the virus has the chance to spread. Given the dangers of the moment and the promise of the vaccines the Covid Group believe that the absence of the already very restricted physical worship services is a price worth paying to keep people safe from an infection which, in its new form, is threatening to run out of control.

### **BAPTISMS IN ENHANCED LEVEL 4 AREAS**

These are not permissible in the current lockdown.

## **FUNERALS IN CHURCH IN ENHANCED LEVEL 4 AREAS**

There should be no more than twenty mourners at a service. The minister, funeral director, organist do not count in this number. Further details can be accessed [here](#).

## **ORDINATIONS IN ENHANCED LEVEL 4 AREAS**

At present, these are not permissible in the current lockdown however the group are continuing to speak to the Scottish Government to allow them to take place at the earliest opportunity.

## **USING CHURCH BUILDINGS FOR ESSENTIAL PURPOSES IN ENHANCED LEVEL 4 AREAS**

As with early last year, the church building can still be used for essential support services and travelling to the building to provide these is an exception to the stay at home rule. In general, please make sure that you can justify the service as being essential and that the number of volunteers is the minimum required.

So to give a Prof Leitch example. If you host a meeting of Narcotics Anonymous for six homeless people who cannot meet online then it is OK to continue – with all the usual mitigations of masks, open windows etc. And that can be widened to foodbanks, regulated childcare that allows key workers to go their employment and so on. But it's not OK to continue the Wednesday Bible Study how ever important that may be to its regular participants.

## **YOUTH WORK IN ENHANCED LEVEL 4 AREAS**

Youth work should be delivered online. Face-to-face support should only take place for either providing support to education hubs for the children of essential workers or providing support for the most vulnerable young people who do not have other means of support and cannot access support remotely.

In circumstances where support to a vulnerable young person is required, this should be provided on a one to one basis (indoors or outdoors) with restriction measures in place. Places of Worship may be used in such emergency provision, however a full and detailed risk assessment should be in place.

## **USING CHURCH BUILDINGS FOR RECORDING OR BROADCASTING SERVICES IN ENHANCED LEVEL 4 AREAS**

This is permissible and the worship leader is allowed to leave home to fulfil this activity. A number of people have asked about numbers who might be permitted – the minister, the organist, the “tech” person, the reader and so on.

Please remember that whenever we increase the number of people gathering we increase the risk of infection.

So it should be the absolute minimum number of people in the church for the task in hand and you should have a justification for each person you ask to be there – ask if it really couldn't be done without them being physically present. Prof Leitch assured us that the police will not be checking on compliance but we must take care of each other and it would be a terrible thing if our recording session became a place where the virus was spread.

## **RESOURCING ON-LINE WORSHIP**

Many people have expressed their thanks for the services provided by the Moderator for the “Boxing Day Lockdown” – Sundays 27<sup>th</sup> December and 3<sup>rd</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> January. The Covid Group has asked Martin to draw together new worship resources for the Sundays during the rest of this month and work on those has already begun. More details to follow but you can be assured that there will be everything from complete services to individuals service components for you to use – or not use – as you see fit.

Several people have asked for assistance with finding good music resources for their on-line worship.

- ◆ there are a number of audio files from CH4 hymns if you register for an account on the Church of Scotland Music Website (<https://music.churchofscotland.org.uk/>).

- ◆ For copyright reasons it is not possible to provide downloads of videos with words on them. However Donald McCorkindale on his webpage (<http://itsforministry.org/music-videos>) is curating a list of hymns that churches have recorded and would be able to be used by other congregations with the appropriate licenses. These videos would not be stored on the site, rather a list of 'who to contact' to receive a copy. Donald is currently inviting churches who have such videos that they would be willing to share with others to contact him ([dmcorkindale@churchofscotland.org.uk](mailto:dmcorkindale@churchofscotland.org.uk)) to arrange the listing for others. The more churches that participate the greater the library of resources will be for people.

The Ecumenical Officer is also working with colleagues in the Church of England to see if access can be granted to their material on the Church Near You website.

## **DISTRIBUTING MATERIALS**

A number of congregations are issuing materials such as newsletters, service transcripts and DVD's.

The Covid Group recognise that these are important in keeping those without the access to technology connected with the church. However, as with the previous period of lockdown it is important that every care and precaution is made in preparing and distributing materials. This means:

- ◆ One person, or as few people as possible, copies or prepares mailings and adheres to all proper hand hygiene guidelines
- ◆ Congregations should not be asking volunteers to break the legal duty to 'stay at home' to deliver such materials.
- ◆ Congregations should utilise Royal Mail (or another delivery company) to deliver the materials to members.

## **FURLOUGHING PARISH MINISTERS**

The Covid Group have been asked about parish ministers being furloughed where they had caring responsibilities for children not at school. The Interim Head, Convener, and Vice Convener of Faith Nurture Forum have looked in detail at the matter and do not feel that it is appropriate to furlough Parish Ministers. Where a Parish Minister has young children at home they should feel able to alter their working pattern to prioritise their week to allow for sufficient flexibility to share responsibility for children and ministry across the working week within the family unit. There will always be a willingness from colleagues to assist where genuine emergencies occur but Presbyteries also need to balance the well-being of ministers who would be required to provide interim moderator cover for a furloughed minister. At a time when more in communities are seeking the support of our churches it is important that all employees and office holders within a parish setting are able to provide necessary support.

## **CHURCH BUILDINGS AS VACCINATION CENTRES**

With the encouragement of the Covid Group I repeated to Prof Leitch the Church of Scotland's willingness to assist with premises for the vaccination programme. I know of a couple of cases where this has been set up already and there may be others. Prof Leitch indicated his gratitude for the offer.

## **UPDATING OF GUIDANCE**

We are working to update the Guidance on the web site and Version 8 will be issued shortly.

## **LOOKING AHEAD**

The question of timescales was raised – when will the lockdown end and when will the churches reopen? Prof Leitch said, that in his view, we are probably talking two to three months rather than several weeks but it all depended on how successful the lockdown was in suppressing infection rates, virus prevalence and the progress of the vaccination programme.

We continue to engage with the Scottish Government on at least a weekly basis and we find that they are keen to hear our experience, understand our perspective and share their knowledge.

These are going to be the most difficult of times where we need to support each other. The vaccine holds out real hope of better days to come. May that be soon.

*George Whyte  
On behalf of the Covid-19 group  
6 January 2021*



## The Guild

We started our 2021 meetings with an extremely interesting talk from Heather McAffie about “Changes at the Botanics” in which she told us a great deal about the work going on all year round behind the scenes. It is astonishing just how many people work and volunteer there. The Botanics are still open to the public, but you do have to book in advance.

The Guild is continuing to support the foodbank at Wester Hailes and required items are small cartons of juice. Babybels, crisps, sweets, yoghurts and similar foods to make up packed lunches for children. Since many of you probably don't want to visit the shops, any monetary donations would be acceptable as well. I am collecting at 13 Dolphin Gardens West or you can email at [elf.lamont@blueyonder.co.uk](mailto:elf.lamont@blueyonder.co.uk).

Several of our members have received their first dose of the vaccine and others have been given dates for attending.

Marion and William Doughty not only celebrated their Diamond Wedding Anniversary on 14<sup>th</sup> January, but also had their first vaccination so double congratulations.

Our next formal meeting will be on Tuesday 2<sup>nd</sup> February at 10am when we will be hearing from Tom Baldwin about “Life and Work”.

However, we are hoping to have a “Zoom Coffee and Chat” at some point next week.

So stay safe and look after yourselves.

Louise Lamont  
Guild President

