

Displacement and destruction

Carol Finlay provides an update on the impact of rains in East Africa, and how Church of Scotland partners are helping.



THE impact of El Niño-induced heavy rains and flooding during the March to May rainy season have been devastating across the Eastern Africa Region.

Torrential rains and flooding have resulted in the loss of lives, displacement, and destruction.

In Kenya, the Church of Scotland partner Church, the Presbyterian Church of East Africa (PCEA) are providing accommodation in schools and churches and supporting people who have lost loved ones, homes and possessions. They have distributed blankets and food and also identified a need to support children who have faced emotional trauma.

In Malawi our partner Church the Church of Central Africa Presbyterian (CCAP) are supporting communities reeling from the devastating impacts of the El Niño-induced floods but also drought, which are destroying harvests, affected this season's maize harvest and causing hunger to soar

to crisis levels, exacerbating food insecurity. About 40 per cent of the population could face acute hunger by the end of the year because of the drought. In addition, about 14,000 people were displaced by floods and landslides in the northern part of the country.

On March 25, the President of Malawi declared a national disaster. Similarly, neighbouring countries of Zambia and Zimbabwe have also declared national drought emergencies. Ida Waddell, Mission Partner with the United Church of Zambia (UZC) tells of drought which has affected the water table in the hydro electric dams and this has meant everywhere – homes, businesses, schools and medical establishments – having at least eight hours per day with no electricity and sometimes much more, affecting the whole economic structure of the country, drought caused famine, increased food and fuel costs. ■

Welcome to the first Life and Work monthly newsletter, a free resource helping Church of Scotland members stay up-to-date with everything going on in the Church and its partners.

Each month there will be exclusive features, news and updates from Church organisations.

The newsletter is free to download from www.lifeandwork.org/newsletter. Feel free to share with church members, friends and family, and get in touch if you have any comments or suggestions.

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‘Confidence to take action’

Jackie Macadam learns about a church project helping people save energy



Anna and Tom Sibbald. Picture: Clare McMicking/CraicN Communications

ANNA and Tom Sibbald, Aberfeldy, have always loved nature. Both have worked in outdoor education for many years, and find that mountains and water have been a great way to share God with people.

So it is no surprise that when it comes to the environment, they are keen defenders. It was this that led them to begin Warm Connections, a small home energy project based in Aberfeldy Parish Church and within the linkage and beyond.

“Passion for the environment and a cold, hard-to-heat house led us to do lots in our own home to make it more energy efficient,” says Tom.

“Lockdown, when all coaching work stopped, gave us time to think about the future so when we started thinking about a home energy advice project and approached folk from our church, they were keen to support it - a natural addition to the other community focused work of our church which includes a youth project, a community larder, a community warm space and café.

“We did a pilot project in the spring of 2021 before applying for a big grant (which funded two part-time posts and full running costs for two years.) We have been on a huge learning curve as there is a lot of information regarding grants, house types, materials etc,” Anna explained.

“The basic qualification required for home energy advisors is the City and

Guilts Level 3 in Energy Awareness, which we both did online. Other churches could definitely copy our model - all it needs is passion for the environment, people and time to get into an industry which is growing and changing fast.

“Grants and funding change all the time but so does technology. It’s quite cool because solutions are becoming available for today’s problems all the time.

“We get asked by our funders how we could encourage new projects; we struggled with this as there are lots of projects out there, many with excellent credentials. As we have become more established we have become more convinced that what works for us is simple, and commonly found in so many churches across the world. Firstly, being in the community that you want to reach. Secondly, be honest and remember you are offering a service (ie being a servant). Lastly, belonging is essential. Warm Connections is a part of a bigger picture through our church and we are looked after and encouraged by our church.

“When we are able to help someone find ways to heat their house for less – or more often, combat ways that heat is lost - it is a delight it is to see the worry lines lift, a smile return when an energy debt is paid off through emergency funding, or a pre-payment meter topped up so the heating clicks back on.

“Such a privilege, but so is the slower walk with someone as they navigate the maze of options and possibilities available to improve the fabric of their home and make it greener, warmer and more affordable,” Tom says.

“Most of all, we encourage those small things which cost little or nothing; using less is nearly always going to be a winner. Though *our* main motive is environmental, for others change may be driven by health or financial benefits, or simply a desire to be more comfortable; whatever the motive, helping folk to use less energy in the home and to keep the heat in the house for longer usually benefits all of the above,” smiles Anna.

“Our focus is on carbon emissions reductions and on those vulnerable to fuel poverty. Supporting and caring for people in this way within our communities is another way that we as Christians can love our neighbour, and we are so thankful that our church community has got behind this amazing opportunity. It is a privilege to visit people at home, to encourage, guide and support householders through the many energy challenges which are out there.

“We liken home energy advice to coaching to some extent, as both involve caring for people who are on a journey, trying to do the best thing but uncertain what that should be. By having the time to listen and to talk, to share knowledge, and encourage we often see people turn their desire to see things improve turn into the confidence to take action.” □

General Assembly

The General Assembly of the Church of Scotland opens on Saturday May 18. Follow the livestream, and download documents and speeches, at www.churchofscotland.org.uk/about-us/general-assembly/general-assembly-2024

Life and Work will provide daily reports at <https://www.lifeandwork.org/generalassembly2024>

Editor Lynne McNeil will also live tweet proceedings from [@lifeworkeditor](https://twitter.com/lifeworkeditor)

Stamp Appeal

The Church of Scotland used stamp project raised over £11,000 in 2023 for the Firmly Planted project. This will allow churches to plant indigenous trees to help prevent erosion and soil degradation, particularly at this time where climate change is bringing serious flooding and droughts. Please continue to send collect your stamps and note new address for sending them to: Stamp Appeal 2024, Keith Scott, Dene Hard, Garelochhead, Helensburgh G84 0EL www.churchofscotland.org.uk/connect/campaigns/stamp-appeal

CrossReach Impact Report 23/2024

Last year, it was a privilege for CrossReach to be a small part of the story for over 28,500 people across Scotland. As the social care arm of the Church of Scotland we thank you for being part of this story too. Thank you for your prayers, support, and practical help. Together we have seen a year of joyful transformations, hope for better days and at the heart of everything, we have seen love in action every single day.

View the latest Impact Report at www.crossreach.org.uk/impact-report-2024

Getting ready for the UK General Election

Churches are being asked to make the most of the opportunity of the next UK election by encouraging members and the wider community to engage in thinking about politics and voting. This includes sharing news about the need to register to vote and to have valid photo ID when voting, to consider the question of justice which Church groups are asking in the context of an election, and for congregations to start planning now for running a constituency hustings or election meeting.

Voter registration and photo ID resources: www.voterchampion.org.uk/

Act on Poverty – from Christian Aid: www.christianaid.org.uk/get-involved/campaigns/act-on-poverty

Hustings guidance: www.churchofscotland.org.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0004/88636/hustings-guidance-for-churches-february-2024.pdf

Living Generously

Living Generously—a whole-life response to God’s love is a new book from the Church of Scotland’s National Stewardship Team which explores how we can recognise and steward God’s gifts across twelve different areas of our lives. It offers short articles, case studies and discussion prompts to encourages both individual and group reflection on the impact of generosity. The book is now available online from a range of booksellers and direct from Saint Andrew Press at standrewpress.hymnsam.co.uk/books/9781800830493/living-generously

What’s On

Launch of God Welcomes All Hymnary Supplement

Sunday May 19, 7pm
Edinburgh
St Cuthbert’s Church

Church of Scotland Guild Big Sing at the Assembly Hall

Tuesday May 21, 7pm
Edinburgh
guild@churchofscotland.org.uk

Eco-Congregation Scotland Annual Gathering and AGM

Saturday May 25, 10am
Stirling
Baptist Church
www.ecocongregationscotland.org/agm2024

National Prayer Breakfast for Scotland

Wednesday June 12, 8am
Edinburgh
Prestonfield House (and streamed)
www.npbscotland.org.uk/

Hebrides Revival Conference

Friday 14 - Sunday 16 June
Stornoway
Martin’s Memorial Church
www.hebridesrevivalconference.com/

For the Glory of God March

Saturday June 15
Glasgow
2pm: Meet at the Nelson monument on Glasgow Green
3pm: Worship at Kelvingrove Park

St Margaret’s Pilgrimage

Sunday June 23
Dunfermline
12.30pm: Ecumenical Prayers at Dunfermline Abbey
2pm: Procession from Pittencrieff Park
3pm: Mass at St Margaret’s Memorial Church

In June's Life and Work

The True Measure of Fatherhood

The fathers of the Bible

'We Genuinely Care About People'

The Railway Mission

General Assembly 2024

Four pages of reports to the Assembly

Our Presbyteries

North East and the Northern Isles

Letter from the Holy Land

Update from the Church's mission partners

'Fundamental to Who He Was'

The faith of James Clerk Maxwell

'This is Not About Worldly Success'

Artist Linda Hoskins and her work with Bethany Christian Trust



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The Big Picture

The mountains of Arran from Bute, by John Crichton



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