

SECRETARIAL NOTES

Our Anniversary Year

In anticipation of our 150th anniversary, members and friends looked back to the year of origin of the Society with the help of Alison Jack (through a literary lens), Johnston McKay (drawing on his recent work on social theology as it unfolded through the nineteenth century), James Stewart (sharing researches on the origins and early years of the Society), and Ian McCrorie and the Secretary offering a flavour of the worship of the time in a reconstruction of what people were singing. The day was held in Eastwood Parish Church, where the current minister, Rev Graham Cartlidge, spoke to us about his earlier predecessor George Campbell, one of our Founders.

The year itself was launched by an article about the Society in the January issue of *Life and Work* and continued with an **Anniversary Service** in the Canongate Kirk on the afternoon of Saturday, 31st January, the day of the founding of the Society in 1865. The music was led by Dr John Kitchen (organ) directing the Edinburgh University Singers, and twelve members of the Council read Scripture and led prayers from the pens of the Society's past and present members. In his sermon based on St Luke chapter 24, the President, Neil Gardner, drew a imaginative parallel between the Eaglesham Road, place of our founding, and the Emmaus Road, where the Risen Christ was found present. The Moderator, the Rt Revd John Chalmers, newly returned from a visit to Africa, in an extended introduction to his reading of Ephesians 1:15-23, spoke of his experience of worship there and at home and, speaking of 'the need to continue the work of producing worship resources that are shaped by those who are theologically articulate, intellectually robust and culturally sensitive', recalled the Society to its task.

The tradition of the Society's contact with Greyfriars Kirk continued this year when an excellent **Anniversary Dinner** was provided by the newly-developed Grassmarket Community Project, attended by 42 members and friends of the Society. A fine address was given by our member Gillesbuig Macmillan, which had all the flow of anecdote one hopes for in an after-dinner speech, but which also managed to acknowledge the context of the occasion - namely the tradition that at this time each year the Society looks forward to a paper of some

substance (albeit given as the climax of the less Trimalchian delights of the annual general meeting). It was an address to enjoy but also to be challenged by as several unconscious, albeit dearly held, assumptions about the conduct of worship were lined up for questioning. (The full address is printed elsewhere in this issue of the *Record*.)

During the year, Greyfriars Kirk was also commemorating significant events both 150 and 25 years ago, events which ran parallel to the Society's interests and often overlapped. This was marked by an ambitious and hugely successful Festival of Worship and the Arts ('SPARK'), and one or two events were shared by the two celebrations. One was **Directory Enquiries**, on 29th April, when a large company in the Martin Hall of New College gathered to hear what the SPARK publicity named as 'four of the most charismatic, controversial, challenging and scholarly figures of the Scottish church and university scenes' joined in 'a robust, provocative and engaging symposium considering how the Westminster Directory of 1645 impacted upon Scottish worship, for better or worse, and what its legacy and influence might be for the Church today'. These were the Revs. Prof. Susan Hardman Moore of New College, Prof. Donald Macleod, formerly of the Free Church College, Dr Doug Gay, Principal of Trinity College, moderated by the Very Rev Gillesbuig Macmillan KCVO.

Another was **Church Music's Greatest Hits of 1865** (expanded from our 2014 Study Day), narrated by the Secretary and conducted by Ian McCrorie – an event whose *Life and Work* rating was 'Wow', not least in respect of the number of shoemakers reported to have written hymn tunes! This took place in the context of the Heart and Soul event on the Sunday afternoon during the General Assembly in Princes Street Gardens.

Penultimate event of the year was the **Study Day** in Paisley Abbey, by kind invitation of the minister, former President the Rev Alan Birss, entitled 'Papers from a New Generation', when four current and recent researchers spoke on a wide variety of subjects relating to the interests of the Society. Rev Dr Nikki Macdonald, now minister of the Upper Clyde parishes, reported on her work on Reformation liturgies of fasting and corporate repentance; doctoral student Martin Ritchie revealed the suprising presence of a Calendar for the Christian Year in the early books of Common Order and explored its parameters; Miriam Weibye, now Programme Officer of Action of Churches Together in Scotland,

brought the science of linguistics to bear on the uncovering of the theology within the liturgical formulations and patterns of worship; while Uniting Church in Australia minister, Sarah Agnew, currently doing doctoral studies in New College, showed the resource for worship and Christian formation that could be found in Scriptural story-telling, and involved the company in a related experience. The day began in worship led by the Minister of the Abbey and closed with the now traditional (founded 2013) songfest led by Ian McCrorie and the Secretary, featuring more sung material from our founding years.

The climax of the year was the **Sesquicentennial Lecture** given by the distinguished liturgical scholar and former President of the Society, the Rev Professor Bryan D. Spinks, Bishop Percy Goddard Professor of Liturgical Studies and Pastoral Theology, Yale Divinity School and Yale Institute of Sacred Music. His address, on 'The nineteenth century liturgical revival: evolution and devolution of worship in the Kirk' is printed elsewhere in this journal. The metaphors in the title, while assisting in his analysis, also served to challenge his listeners, when he called on the Society and all those concerned with worship to be 'liturgical genetic switches to help adapt and evolve new forms' in the quest for 'worship that both glorifies God and feeds the contemporary human soul'.

This rich and varied year, well supported by the Society's members (who also in large measure gave the input), was ample celebration of the 150 years of the Church Service Society's contribution to the worship and life of the churches in Scotland. The momentum continues and prompts the question: What do we do next? and it is hoped that a vigorous discussion will ensue.

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