

Glen Funnel – The Nominating Committee

A couple of Sundays before the Burger evening was the service after which the Nominating Committee had been elected. Given the small size of the congregation the committee was only to have 7 members, which somebody pointed out was going to be about 25% of the active congregation. All went well though, the Interim Moderator had come over to take the service and had preached on Discerning God's Guidance. Those being nominated needed to have been approached in advance, so there wouldn't be any embarrassing moments or people feeling they were being pushed into something they felt unable to give their heart to.

There were only 7 nominees eventually, and as they were all known to each other, were duly elected without a vote. Jim McDade had been everyone's obvious choice; he had worked away from Glen Funnel for a number of years, but had now returned and was considered as a wise and reliable member of the congregation. Logan was also nominated, although he would have been happy not to be. Eilidh had declined when asked as she was too busy leading the regular worship. The other 5 nominees were: Claire McN, Jack W, Ethel S, Bob MacM and Mrs Gladys McGarry. They met formally immediately afterwards because of the Interim Moderator's travelling challenges. Jim McDade was elected as the Convener and Mrs McGarry as the Clerk. It was also agreed that some of their meetings could be Zoom meetings to minimise the travelling for the Interim Moderator.

Of course, confidentiality prevents me from telling you too much about what went on. They had struggled a little in writing the Parish Profile because of the outcome of the Burger Meeting. However, after some discussion about how to make it more optimistic, it was finally written and published and gave 2 months for applications to be received. It became known among the congregation – how, I do not know – that there had been three

applications. One had been from an older minister who had spent all his life in an inner-city environment and it was reasonably quickly decided that he wouldn't be suitable for the village. The other two applicants were both deemed as suitable candidates, but all that was known was that on two Sundays, certain members of the committee had been conspicuous by their absence from church; "They must have gone to listen to the ministers preach." was the rumour.

As for the rest of the congregation, some were frustrated that everything was confidential, so inevitably there were some inaccurate rumours going around; others lost interest and just got on with life; whereas three others decided to meet one afternoon every week and pray for the committee, for the work they were doing and that God's guidance would become clear to them. Eilidh observed: "It's a bit like the parable of the Sower, the rocky places, the poor soil and the good soil."

Alistair Smith's initiative and now regular attendance with his wife, and the musical initiative had prompted wider interest among the village newcomers and there were now a number of others who came on what was becoming a fairly regular basis. The congregation began to realise that selecting the right candidate would be so important for the village, so much so that the church had become quite a topic of conversation around the village, something that had never happened before. Alistair couldn't understand why the members of the congregation never spoke to their friends about the church or their faith, whereas to him it was becoming as much part of his life and as important as the latest football results and things going on in Dunoon and the local community.

About six weeks later Logan announced that the Nominating Committee has selected a Sole Nominee who would be coming in a couple of weeks to preach with a view to becoming the new

minister of Glen Funnel Kirk. This momentous announcement was met with a mixture of excitement and apprehension.

The nominating committee had had an interesting and challenging meeting with the Revd Mrs Caitlin Beattie. She was in her mid-forties, with two teenage children and a husband who was a freelance copy writer, who worked mainly for magazines. He usually needed a wheel chair to get around but was very independent.

Each member of the committee had a question to ask, so that they could understand why Caitlin wanted to come to Invercross, concerning how she had been called into the ministry and also to clarify some of the statements in her CV. They also added some practical questions concerning the suitability of the manse, given her husband's mobility requirements, and stressing the occasional challenge of the ferry not running, which the children would need to use to get to school. On her part Caitlin asked some very probing questions about the worship, the servant nature of the congregational members, the plans they had for the future and what the village was like to live in.

On the third Saturday in May, the prospective minister and her family had arrived and were very kindly being put up by Mrs McGarry, who lived by herself in a large house near the church. Conversation in the evening was rather stifled as Mrs McGarry didn't want to say anything out of place. However, Logan had popped in for a while and that had helped. The regular service time was 10.30 am, so by twenty minutes past, the church was pretty full: the regular congregation, the new adherents and a few others who had just come to see what would happen.

Caitlin led a carefully balanced worship service, a blend of what she knew about their traditional style, mixed with indications of her way of doing things and an open pointer to the future. She took as her text Colossians 2: 6,7 *So then, just as you received*

Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live your lives in him, ⁷rooted and built up in him, strengthened in the faith as you were taught, and overflowing with thankfulness. It was a sermon of encouragement, but also of exhorting the congregation to take their faith seriously and to remember what Paul had written to the church in Corinth: *I gave you milk, not solid food, for you were not yet ready for it. Indeed, you are still not ready.* She expanded by saying: "When we become Christians, we are only baby ones and need simple teaching, but as we grow, we need to develop an appetite for solid food, a more detailed and grown-up diet of Bible teaching."

Caitlin finished by saying: "The most effective way for you to develop your roots and be built up in Jesus, is through regular Bible study, prayer and encouraging each other not only at the Sunday services but at other times as well. We are all brothers and sisters in Christ and should live our lives in that way."

Following the service, Caitlin and family were taken to the hall for a well-deserved cuppa while the Interim Moderator organised the vote on whether the congregation was accepting the Nominating Committee's choice to become the minister of Glen Funnel Kirk. The general opinion in the chitchat was that she had taken an excellent service and that she would fit well into the life of the village. The vote was duly taken, but there would be no immediate answer as the Kirk Session had to be called to count the votes.

The congregation also went through to the hall for a cuppa, giving Caitlin an opportunity to chat to a few of the congregation. After a while, Caitlin and family went back to Mrs McGarry for lunch. Meanwhile the Session were counting the votes, there was obviously a majority in favour of calling Caitlin and after fulfilling the legal requirements, an extract of the minute of the Kirk Session was affixed to the notice board in the vestibule notifying the congregation that Caitlin Beattie had been elected and appointed

as the new minister. (In fact everyone had voted 'Yes' apart from one abstention – there's always one!) Logan disappeared to go and break the news to Cailin and her family. Word soon got around and a sense of relief descended on everyone as they realised that the vacancy journey was over and a new exciting chapter in the life of Invercross was about to begin.

It was then over to the Presbytery to make arrangements for the Revd Caitlin Beattie's induction.