

Harvest Letter

Gerard Manley Hopkins once wrote a poem called 'Hurrahing in Harvest' – an odd title, but his poetry is gloriously odd, because he insisted in seeing God at work in extraordinary ways, not simply providing food through the harvest of earth and sea, but in the stooks themselves rising, 'barbarous in beauty'.

We don't see stooks any more, we see big round bales, but we keep on celebrating harvest one way or another, thirled to see God at work in nature and science as well as in church and in people. Do misread 'thirled' as 'thrilled' if you wish, because we Scottish Presbyterians are fairly good at being thirled to our work, whether it be on farm or at home, paid or unpaid, and work of whatever kind is indeed a calling. Indeed we are not bad about being thirled to the work of the Kirk, and thank you for that. But being thrilled is something more, and I would love people to be as passionate about the work of God as Hopkins was about the world he described in verse, and indeed to link the two as the poet did. And to be thrilled about our future as it unfolds.

Is there anything in Lothian and Borders Presbytery to be thrilled about? One major thing is that we have funding to appoint someone to be a mission agent in the new town of Blindwells which has been taking shape for some time in East Lothian. And do keep your eyes on the Presbytery website – I have to confess I only began looking at it when I was asked to be Moderator, but it is certainly worth looking at, not least the sector heading 'mission and faith'. There are good resources on offer.

But more than anything, be thrilled about God, the way God took human shape in Jesus and brought that to glorious harvest, the way Jesus likes to live in our hearts by the Holy Spirit. And be thrilled with good stories and good people. The poetry of Gerard Manley Hopkins would never have come to light had he not had a friend, Robert Bridges, who made sure it was published, but nearly 30 years after his death. May God give you friends like that – and may you be a friend like that to others – as we look to God for every kind of good harvest.

Jock Stein