



St John the Baptist
Scottish Episcopal Church
Perth

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December and January 2019-20

Letters from the Clergy

Dear Friends,

What a joy to welcome Annie as our Curate and for her to write the Curate's letter this month instead of the Rector's – it will give you all a break from my ramblings!

However, I do want to take the opportunity to wish you all a very happy Christmas. Once it arrives, and if you are staying in Perth, I look forward to seeing you in Church. Bishop Ian will be with us on Christmas morning. We look forward very much to seeing him back in St. John's. If you are away over the season, I hope you have a lovely time catching up with family and friends.

Peace and Love to you and yours at Christmastide and in the New Year.

Graham.

Dear Friends,

I was pleased that Rev'd Graham invited me to write these lines to you. This letter has given me the opportunity to thank each of you for your amazing support during my placement months, and for your warm and loving welcome back as your curate. It is a delight to be serving you now as deacon.

Whenever I step early into the hush of St John's, I am struck by the palpable sense of prayerfulness that the combination of years of worship and beautiful architecture has realised. That hush is a kind of gift – a reminder of God's often quiet, powerful presence with us wherever we are. It can stop us in our tracks, make us pause, listen - and wait.

Kneeling

Moments of great calm,

Kneeling before an altar

Of wood in a stone church

In summer, waiting for the God

To speak; the air a staircase

For silence; the sun's light

*Ringing me, as though I acted
A great rôle. And the audiences
Still; all that close throng
Of spirits waiting, as I,
For the message.
Prompt me, God;
But not yet. When I speak,
Though it be you who speak
Through me, something is lost.
The meaning is in the waiting.*

R S Thomas

The line, '*waiting for the God To speak*', brought to mind Mary's annunciation and her subsequent waiting for the birth of her Son, Jesus Christ. As she gazes in surprise at the Angel Gabriel's announcement, Edwin Muir movingly describes a painting of the scene thus. 'These neither speak nor movement make, but stare into their deepening trance, as if their gaze would never break.' Even so, like every mother, Mary then had to get on with the business of waiting. Waiting can be tough, irritating. Perhaps it requires more patience than many modern lives of instant gratification are used to. In terms of our faith, it requires slowing down into a more receptive state of openness before God, all the more so as we approach Advent - our time of expectant waiting and preparation for the celebration of the Nativity of Jesus at Christmas. Revd Graham has been discussing Advent planning with some of us and our prayer is that it may be fruitful and joyful, a time when we may find deep meaning in this season of waiting.

Blessings and warm greetings as aye,

Annie



December and January

Weekly Services

Sunday 8.30 a.m. Holy Communion

Sunday 10.30 a.m. Sung Eucharist

Thursday 11 a.m. Communion, coffee and a chance to chat

Special Services

19th January 6.00 pm Evensong

Christmas Services

Sunday 15th December- 10.30 am Carol Service

Sunday 22nd December – As usual, 8.30 am and 10.30 am

Tuesday 24th December – 4 pm Christingle Service for families and Children

Tuesday 24th December – 11 pm Midnight Eucharist

Wednesday 25th December – 10.30 am Sung Eucharist led by Bishop Ian Paton

From the Registers – Eternal Rest

Margaret MacDonald died 25th May 2019 (aged 94 years)

Irene Holmes died 18th August 2019 (aged 96 years)

Ministry – we must not stand still

St John's Church has been recognised both by the Bishop and by the Scottish Episcopal Institute as being suitable and ready for training curates for the future. This is an exciting opportunity both for our church and for future ordinands.

The benefits of having a curate are that it will increase our outreach and mission locally and improve our ability to bring people to Christ. The training received at St John's will also benefit the future of our Scottish Episcopal Church.

The duties that our new curate will undertake cover all aspects of pastoral care including Home Communion, Sunday duties, Café Church and other church activities where appropriate.

Would you consider increasing your giving to support the expenses of having a curate here at St John's, now and in the future?

The request is not all about money, as we read in the Epistle to the Romans. It is also about talents, gifts and your service to the Church, such as, for example, Intercessions, Readings, Coffee Rota and so forth. Please contact the Rector if you feel called to any of these ministries.

Please will you pray about this and consider your own personal support for this initiative.

The Vestry

St John's Fellowship

The Fellowship outing to the Cafe at the Black Watch Museum in mid-October for afternoon tea was a pleasant and relaxing occasion. We have members who for various health reasons are no longer able to attend services on a Sunday but who manage to feel still very much part of and in touch with what is going on in St John's, when they are able to meet up with longstanding friends at social occasions such as this.



Our normal monthly meeting date is the second Monday of the month which, for November this year, turned out to be the 11th. It was clear that the theme would be Remembrance with the focus on World War II. In planning the afternoon it was decided to ask members to come with their memories or family stories of 1939–45 along with any actual physical memorabilia that they might have.

The committee had in mind that a number of members were old enough to have clear memories of that period and also that our membership have

spent their early lives in a variety of places with only a few of the membership originating from Perth.

We felt very proud to find we had a member present who had actually served in the WAAF for much of the war. Joan Gibson described her life working as a “plotter” tracking the movement of aircraft. When she first joined up she was based at Newcastle but she also had spells based in both Northern Ireland and in Cornwall. We were also shown a piece of a bomb that had landed right beside Graham K-R’s father; we heard the story of Irene not recognising her father when he returned home after the war; we were shown a “Welcome Home” beautifully embroidered tablecloth that Val’s mother had made to welcome her father back from the war. Eileen came with a fascinating account of Albert’s father’s wartime experience in France. Albert had made a point of writing down the story while his father was still alive. Margaret Terris described taking school pupils to wartime cemeteries in France and the moving effect it had on those pupils. Doreen read the personal account that she had read in Church the day before for the benefit of those who hadn’t been there. We discovered that Sonia’s father had served in both world wars. We were aware that there were also others present who also had their own memories and other interesting stories to tell.

I think we all went home feeling both fascinated by the variety and moved by all that we had heard.

Jean Hendry



Carols for Christmas

Celebrate the first Sunday of Advent with Christian Aid

At Christmas, we remember one of the most powerful stories ever told: Mary's journey to Bethlehem, to give birth to Jesus. Mary's bravery, perseverance and devotion brought her family out of danger and enabled God's hope and love to enter the world.

This year, on Advent Sunday, Christian Aid is inviting churches throughout Scotland to lift their voices and sing Kathy Galloway's carol *When out of poverty is born*, and raise funds to help mothers break free from poverty. Christian Aid and its partners work constantly to enable women to use their God-given gifts. Given the chance, women can achieve transformational change - even in the most desperate situations. Mothers like . . .

Amena



Like many women in Bangladesh facing discrimination, Amena could not afford medical help. She went into labour at home, but then started bleeding profusely. Only with the help of Christian Aid's local partner PEPSEP was she able to obtain a voucher so that she could attend hospital immediately and give birth safely.

Ranjita

In India, manual scavenging is reserved for the lowest caste, known as Dalit. Despite being outlawed, there are still over a million manual scavengers, of which 95% are women. Ranjita was forced into manual scavenging work at just nine years old. She earned just a few rupees and a piece of stale



bread in return for hours of degrading work cleaning human excrement by hand: ‘They treated us worse than animals.’ she recalled.

Now a mother, Ranjita was determined to build a better life for her own children. Through a community self-help group run by Christian Aid’s partner ARUN, she learnt about her rights and was able to apply for a government compensation grant. This helped her start a tailoring business. Now Ranjita can provide for her family: ‘My children and I are happy now I am earning with dignity.’

This Advent, let us at St John’s help Christian Aid create a better life for many more women, like Amena and Ranjita, living in difficult places.

Elaine Cameron



Sunday Lectionary

December 1st First Sunday of Advent

Isaiah 2.1-5

Matthew 24. 36-44

December 8th Second Sunday of Advent

Isaiah 11. 1-10

Matthew 3. 1-12

December 15th Third Sunday of Advent

Carol Service

December 22nd Fourth Sunday of Advent

Isaiah 7. 10-16

Matthew 1. 18-25

December 24th Christmas Eve

Isaiah 9. 2-7; John 1. 1-14

December 25th Christmas Day

Isaiah 9. 2-7; Luke 2. 1-14

December 29th First Sunday after Christmas

Isaiah 63. 7-9

Matthew 2. 13-23

January 5th Second Sunday after Christmas. The Epiphany

Eucharist

Isaiah 60. 1-6

Matthew 2. 1-12

January 12th First Sunday after Epiphany

Isaiah 42. 1-9

Matthew 3. 13-17

January 19th Second Sunday after Epiphany

Eucharist

Isaiah 49. 1-7

John 1. 29-42

Evensong

Psalm 145. 1-12

Galatians 1.11-24

John 1. 43-51

January 26th Third Sunday after Epiphany

Isaiah 9. 1-4

Matthew 4. 12-23

25 Years Anniversary

Much of my time recently has been devoted to helping plan the service of celebration on 14 December in St Ninian's Cathedral to mark twenty five years since women were ordained to the priesthood in the SEC. The first ordinations took place on 17 December 1994 when forty two women were ordained in Cathedrals around Scotland – eight here in Perth by Bishop Michael Hare Duke in St Ninian's Cathedral.

The Anniversary service was requested by the College of Bishops and will be attended by twelve of the women ordained in 1994 (including Shelley Marsh, ordained by Bishop John Taylor in the diocese of Glasgow and Galloway) as well as relatives of some who have died. It is good to celebrate how far the SEC has travelled over these twenty five years, although I think we are still on a journey towards wholeness in ministry - some doors still need to be opened!

As the eldest (by far!) of the organising quartet, my main task has been to edit a short booklet of reflections by those ordained twenty five years ago. It has been very humbling to read of unfulfilled yearnings, unexpected epiphanies, amidst the joy and privilege felt in becoming and being priests.

The Rt Rev Anne Dyer, Bishop of Aberdeen & Orkney and the first woman to be consecrated as a Bishop of the SEC will preside at the Eucharist. The sermon will be given by the Rev Canon Dr Anne Tomlinson, Principal of the Scottish Episcopal Institute.

Carrie Applegath leads the planning for this Celebration. She is looking forward to welcoming folk from St John's, and hopes that some may be able to give assistance in various ways. If we mention a Celebratory cake after the Service, that may be an enticement! I look forward to seeing you there!

Elaine Cameron

Café Church

Café Church opened its doors again on Wednesday November 13th and we were pleased to have the tables full, though the weather kept a few of the regulars away.

Jane Gibreel, the new Chair of Amnesty International, and Barrie Rutherford were introduced by Bishop Bruce and gave an inspirational talk on their work. They drew attention to the plight of migrant women in the UK who are affected by domestic abuse. They also spoke of those people wrongly imprisoned and trapped in camps in China.

These are cases which require action. We were offered cards to sign which would be sent to the Home Secretary and to the Chinese Embassy, requesting urgent attention to these problems.

Café church at St John's will be open again on Wednesday December 11th at 5.30 p.m. The Revd Canon Graham Taylor and his team look forward to welcoming as many members of the congregation who can come and support them. We open the doors to the public to enjoy a chat over Christmas refreshments.

Doreen Kneller



Election Fever

The first election in which I voted was in 1964. Other members of the congregation will have longer memories. In one sense it was a landmark election; Labour gained power after thirteen years. Apart from Ted Heath's government of 1970-74, Labour ruled until the advent of Mrs Thatcher in 1979. Eighteen years of the Conservatives came to an end with Tony Blair's government of 1997. In all these elections the choice was between the two major parties with other parties nipping at their ankles. Labour and Conservative were in fact coalitions between hard and soft versions of their respective philosophies. Generally speaking, there was not much difference in practical terms between the centrist elements in both parties. The slogan 'Time for a change' was a rallying cry, not a manifesto.

In 2019, the game is rather different. For the last nine years there have been minority governments or hung parliaments. No longer is it the case that two parties are taking turns to resolve familiar problems. The consensus has broken down. New issues have come forward, such as climate change, Brexit and Scottish independence. Parties have become single issue protest groups and the wider view and a sense of proportion have gone out of the window. For example, the SNP have declared that independence transcends all other considerations. A similar stance on their own policies has been taken by the Greens and the extreme Tory Brexiteers.

However, those who call for a radical change, for example proportional representation ('Everyone should have a voice') or abolition of the House of Lords (this argument has been rumbling on since 1911), should be careful what they wish for. Look at Italy or Belgium, which could not form a coalition government for nearly 600 days. Or look at Israel with a unicameral parliament where extreme religious parties with perhaps two members of the Knesset can hold the country to ransom.

Politics is always messy and at the moment it is very messy indeed. It is also exceedingly unpleasant. Personal attacks and threats of violence are commonplace. There is scant regard for the truth. Promises are made which can never be fulfilled. Just like politics in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, in fact. One thing lacking today is a sense of style. Remember this quip of Disraeli: ‘If Mr Gladstone were to fall into the River Thames that would be a misfortune. If anyone were to pull him out, that would be a tragedy.’

Much as one may deplore low standards in politics and electioneering in this country, the alternative, as seen in some other countries, is worse. Elections give a patina of respectability but results are rigged and opposition parties are not allowed to stand; examples are legion. In Nazi Germany, North Korea and China, elections, however corrupt, were not even held.

The process may be noisy and strident, the vilification of opponents may be ugly, the lies we are told may be blatant. But we are fortunate that we have the opportunity to vote and express our views according to our inclinations. The result may not be what we wish for, but we have to accept it, for that is the essence of democracy. Religion and politics don’t mix easily, but it is surely right to give thanks for the system we have. And it does not come amiss to pray for a little wisdom on the part of our public figures.

David Willington



Ferntower Jazz

Ferntower Jazz gave a concert in St John's on Sunday 17th November which was well attended. They are an occasional group; the members are Gordon Murch (piano), Elaine McPherson (flute), Paul Vaughan (bass) and Peter Murch (drums). They played works by Bolling, Rollins, Brubeck and others, which combined exquisite lyricism and marked syncopation, and they performed with great skill and musicianship. This was a thoroughly enjoyable evening and we are very grateful. If you have not heard them, do look out for their next concert, and go to it.

Thanks also to Joyce and Christine for the refreshments afterwards, which were much appreciated by our guests.

If anyone has ideas for such an event next year, please let me know.

By a retiring collection this concert raised £335 for Church funds.

David Willington



chansons

Perth's Chamber Choir

Christmas Charity Concert

A Ceremony Of Carols



Areti Lympelopoulou | Conductor

Sophie Askew | Harpist

Kevin Duggan | Organist

Programme includes:

Britten | A Ceremony Of Carols

Pärt | Bogoroditse Devo

Thompson | Alleluia

Poulenc | Quatre Motets Pour Le Temps De Noël

Gardner | Tomorrow Shall Be My Dancing Day

Tickets £15 youth concessions £5 (under 25s)

Buy your tickets at www.chansons.co.uk | email tickets@chansons.co.uk
call 01259 742346 | at the door | Refreshments will be served at end of concert

£5 from each ticket sold will be paid to PKAVS Young Carers

Saturday 14 December | 7.30pm
St. John's Kirk of Perth



Mathematics

I have mentioned before my love of Mathematics and enjoyment of puzzles. (Don't panic, I am not going to tax your brains with more problems to be solved this time!) As a teacher though, I largely spend my time with people who don't share my enthusiasm for the subject (understatement) and it is easy to become jaded and disillusioned.

However last week I attended an in-service training event which inspired me once more! The guy delivering the course was good and his ideas were interesting but that wasn't what did it. It was the fact that his method gave me a whole new perspective on basic Algebra – a topic which I have been teaching for more than thirty years and about which I believed there was nothing more for me to learn. How wrong I was!

In the world of Mathematics there is always more to learn; new ways to approach things; further applications of familiar material; greater depths to be explored; more connections to be made. And in this I see the beauty of God's creation as surely as I see it in mountains, sunsets and flowers.

Cath Bodrell

From the Editor

Thanks very much for everyone's contributions to this issue and to those who helped prepare it for printing and distribution. Please hand in or email all items to David Willington for our February/March issue by

Sunday 19th January

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