

St John the Baptist Scottish Episcopal Church Perth

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October and November 2023

Pastoral Letter

These fine mornings we've taken to leaving behind the mayhem on the kitchen radio. We breakfast early right by the sea, on a quiet bench below the castle walls. We face The Isle of May with a flask of coffee and bacon and egg sandwiches. Not as romantic as Omar Khayyam, 'A Jug of wine, a loaf of bread....Oh Wilderness were Paradise enow!' Nevertheless, the North Sea has been a colourful paradise to us, its surface a steady azure across to a horizon of milky blue, distant wind turbines etched black against pale skies. The tides have cleansed the flat seas. Crystal clear. Good for swimmers wearing goggles, enchanted by swaying forests of

the deep if not by the occasional Lion's Mane Jellyfish. Easier hunting too for the gannets spearing shoals of mackerel. They are like missiles. Google tells me, 'They reach speeds of 80km/h and pull greater g-forces than an astronaut before hitting the water in a perfectly straight line.'



In spite of the hundreds we saw hunting last week, many have fallen prey to avian flu on their colonies on Bass Rock and Isle of May. I saw several washed up. They are stunning and much bigger than I'd realised. I'd only seen them previously through my father's old WW2 field glasses. He was on the south coast in the Royal Marines training for the Channel crossing invasion. As he gazed across the English Channel towards the enemy encamped on French shores, I don't suppose he was that interested in spotting gannets. No wonder.

Meanwhile, the autumn crocuses are out, immaculate in clusters. No southern geese overhead yet. I've been handling Victoria plums slitting them to let the stones tumble out. They are a luscious fruit, nice to touch, firm and soft and juicy. The freezer swells. I anticipate hot winter puddings fragrant with cinnamon.

Last week's sermon was a tough one. They all are in their way. Never easy. This wrestling and praying about many of the things our good Lord

is telling us and what we're supposed to do, never ends. People who say being a Christian is a soft cop out, need to rethink. Several of the congregation had a word with me afterwards. This is a good thing, reflecting on scripture together and my attempts at unravelling it. It would be even better if we had longer to tease out meanings between us, well, good for me anyway.

It seems Covid has morphed into new strains. Our NHS appointments for the next round of flu and covid jabs have arrived earlier than planned. We're taking them. For the technical research and prophylactic, we are grateful - and for more besides. Our scattered families, brought up nomadically through twenty plus house moves courtesy of HM Forces, are good at keeping in touch via whatsapp calls. It's a techy wonder too. We can all talk and see each other on a shared call.

Claire escaped the worst Canadian fires, just a bit of smoke that restricted time outdoors for the wee ones. Mhairi has been back to our old Italian home - Napoli, Amalfi and Ischia. She and Baptiste are refreshed, well fed and enamoured by places in one of our happiest army postings. Bella Italia!



Harvest Thanksgiving will soon be upon us. The roar of a yellow monster harvesting the fields at the back reminds me of Psalm 65 in which 'God provides the people with grain'. I remember wonderful, plaited loaves from such services. And 'garden produce'. It is more prudent and sensible nowadays for

ranks of tinned goods. Mind you, they lack the sort of holy smell of varied plants and vegetables piled up if not very artistically, with enthusiastic bounty!

But St John's beloved interior is reliably and beautifully decorated with both beauty and bounty mid-week and every single week by unseen artists with loving hands. Such a lift to any spirit. Another point for gratitude. It's a beautiful day in Crail, warmish, the sea glittering. The vast pack of visitors has dwindled. Swimmers still bathe in the bay, some without a shriek – but they're from Glasgow, like me. As the gannets head back to the Bass Rock, departing visitors say, 'Wouldn't it be nice to live here?' It is rather wonderful. Thank you very much, dear Lord.

Revd Annie.

Perth & Kinross Warm Welcome Fund

The Council is again offering this fund (previously the Cost of Living Fund and Warm *Space* project) for the coming winter. I submitted an application for funds in similar terms to last year's, i.e. in partnership with Bethany Christian Trust. Bethany continues to use St. John's parking space for its Care Van on Wednesday afternoons from 12.00 to 2.30 and Swarthick Salins, its co-ordinator in Perth, will be delighted to be able to use the Threshold again, where he can offer his benefits advice, advocacy and signposting services along with hot refreshments.

This year the Council held a series of workshops by Ward Area, inviting applicants to attend according to the Ward they represent, aiming to encourage sharing of ideas and achieve some synergy between groups with similar offers. Unfortunately neither Swarthick nor I could attend the City Centre workshop on 31st August, but both of us attended the City South one at Glenearn Community Campus on 7th September, confident that either or both would apply to us. We were told as there had been very big demands from organisations in the Centre, those funds were already looking stretched. So I don't know whether we shall get the amount (£800) applied for, but we are confident we shall get something.. and enough to cover the modest basic costs.

What we *shall* need is the willingness of last year's little team of volunteers, one per week, to open up, help keep the hot water on the go and generally keep an eye on the kitchen. Swarthick usually has the

support of at least two volunteers from his Church of the Nazarene. But we need one or two more please: if anyone else feels they could raise their hand to be in the Threshold for these 2-3 hours on a Wednesday afternoon, it would be very welcome; each of us would then only be on duty once every four or five weeks.

Judy Norwell

Fellowship

After the usual Summer break Fellowship resumed at its usual time on the second Monday of September with a good turnout to hear about the recollections of one of our members, Anne Addison, of nursing in the 1950s.

She described her life as a student nurse in Liverpool which clearly was very different from the life of a 21st century student nurse both regarding life in a nurses' home as well as in the way training is given. In the audience were former nurses who had trained in the 1960s and another recently retired nurse as well as a hospital doctor so memories were shared and discussion on what went and goes on in hospitals in various decades continued afterwards over tea and cake.

One episode described by Anne that none of the other professionals in the audience had experienced was of her experience of being a nurse on a passenger ship going between Liverpool and Canada and back. From descriptions of friends who worked on these ships she had gained the impression that it would be a working holiday with little to do as passengers and crew on these ships were normally fit and healthy such that the biggest issue was likely to be nothing worse than sea sickness but that was not the case on Anne's trip. I think most of us were impressed that a patient actually survived and recovered from emergency surgery given that it was carried out in a rough sea with the ship tossing about with surgical instruments sliding about all over the place!

The October meeting will take place at 2.30 pm on Monday 9th October. There will be some form of craft activity followed by afternoon tea which we aim to make a bit more extensive than our usual cake or biscuits with the tea or coffee.

Jean Hendry

Fairtrade at St John's

Many thanks for all your support of our Fairtrade stall Sunday 10th September. We raised £196.00 – quite a bit more than £120 in the spring.

As you know, we support the Fairtrade movement as part of our journey to Net Zero. While the climate crisis is already here, its worst effects are not felt equally. Too often it is the farmers and workers in the poorest communities whose hard work is destroyed by extreme weather and diseases. But smallholder producers and agricultural workers who commit to Fairtrade Standards are also part of the solution – they are climate pioneers! They are required, among other things, to reduce greenhouse gases; protect forests, tackle soil erosion, and reduce water waste.

And we can support them by taking small actions which can make a huge difference to them. Looking for Fairtrade-certified products when we shop – whether a chocolate bar or a bunch of bananas – means we are supporting environmentally friendly farming. It is even possible to be awarded Fairtrade Place of Worship status! This requires using Fairtrade products wherever possible (tea, coffee, sugar at least) and sharing information about Fairtrade through stalls and worship. Visit http://Fairtrade.org.uk

Our **next Fairtrade Stall** will be in Advent – **Sunday 3^{rd} December** - a chance to find some seasonal gifts and support some of the poorest communities.

Elaine Cameron



Jackie Thomson and Cath Bodrell helping out on the Fairtrade Stall on Sunday 10th September 2023.



You're invited to celebrate the renewal of Perth and Kinross as a Fairtrade Zone & to the screening of 5 short films about Fair Trade campaigning in communities across Scotland to mark 10 years as a Fair Trade Nation.

Sunday Lectionary October and November

October 1st Pentecost 18

Ezekiel 18..1-4,25-32, Philippians 2.1-13, Matthew 21.23-32

October 8th Pentecost 19

Isaiah 5.1-7, Philippians 3.4b-14, Matthew 21.33-46

October 15th Pentecost 20

Isaiah 25.1-9, Philippians 4.1-9, Matthew 22.1-14

October 22nd Pentecost 21

Isaiah 45.1-7, 1 Thessalonians 1.1-10, Matthew 22.15-22

October 29th Pentecost 22

Leviticus 19.1-2,15-18, 1 Thessalonians 2.1-8, Matthew 22.34-46

November 1st All Saints

Wisdom 3.1-9 or Isaiah 25.6-9, Revelations 21.1-6a, John 11.32-44

November 5th Pentecost 23

Micah 3.5-12, 1 Thessalonians 2.9-13, Matthew 23.1-12

November 12 Pentecost 24

Wisdom 6.12-16 or Amos 5.18-24, 1 Thessalonians 4.13-18, Matthew 25.1-13

Remembrance Sunday

Job 19. 21-27, 1 Corinthians 15. 51-57, John 6. 37-40

November 19th Pentecost 25

Zephaniah 1.1-7,12-18, 1 Thessalonians 5.1-11, Matthew 25.14-30

November 26th Last Sunday after Pentecost (Christ the King)

Ezekiel 34.11-16, 20-24, Ephesians 1.15-23, Matthew 23.31-46

The Nicene Creed

We recite the Nicene Creed in the Eucharist Service, following the Holy Communion in the 1662 Book of Common Prayer. It is longer and more explicit than the Apostles' Creed used at Matins and Evensong. It is a detailed statement of Christian belief, so much so that it became a check-list for orthodoxy; thereafter deviation was regarded as heresy. Looked at another way, it is somewhat of a camel, which, as you know, is a horse designed by a committee.

To cut a very long story short. In the first three centuries AD, the Roman authorities from time to time persecuted Christian sects. At the beginning of the fourth century the Emperor Constantine I made Christianity the official religion of the Empire after a thousand years of paganism. In AD 325 he summoned a Council of Bishops to Nicaea, in what is now north west Turkey. This was to bring uniformity to Christian beliefs as churches were riven by bitter doctrinal disputes, so bitter that armed force had been used to bring dissidents to order. Persecution of Christians by other Christians was as fierce as by the Romans.

There were many issues to be settled at Nicaea. But the most significant was Christological, the standing of Jesus in the Trinity. Arius, a learned priest from Alexandria, presented his thesis: (in simple terms) if God is eternal and unknowable, Christ cannot be God, since we know of him and his deeds in the Gospels. Therefore Christ is inferior or subordinate to God. Arius pictured a saviour who was like humans and participated in human struggles; he was a part

of God's creation, not simply an image of God. Arius's dispute with the Bishop of Alexandria spread over the Eastern churches. Constantine spoke to the assembled bishops, telling them that 'he would be present as a spectator and participator in those things that will be done'. When the bishops had exhausted themselves (and Constantine's patience) by their bickering, he proposed, at the suggestion of his ecclesiastical adviser, that the Son should be 'of one substance' (homoousios in Greek) with the Father, though the term was not defined more closely. This was accepted by all but two bishops out of three hundred.

This was not the end of the story. Disputes in doctrinal matters remained for centuries. A further council was called by the Emperor Theodosius in AD 381 which offered a definition of the Holy Spirit, absent at Nicaea, which 'proceeded from the Father and the Son', in Latin the 'filioque clause' which led ultimately to the secession of the Orthodox from the Imperial church. This schism has remained ever since.

As we stand to recite the Creed, it is unlikely that we give a thought to the controversies of long ago. Today I suspect they have resonance only with academics and theologians. Surely the passage at *Philippians* 2. 6-11, quoted in our Liturgy, is more comprehensible and conforms to what I think most of us believe.

David Willington

It's That Time of Year!

Yes it IS that time of the Year when we are at least thinking about possible Christmas gifts to family and friends. And so here is Bishop Bruce once again selling Rotary Kinnoull club's "Charity Calendar 2024"!

This year's issue will be ready for sale, with beautiful pictures of scenes of Perth and Perthshire, throughout October and November in the Threshold after the 10.30am service. Cost is as last year £7.50, and the proceeds from our sales will go to the work and witness of St John's. It is hoped that at least samples of the Calendar will have a preview on Harvest Sunday. Copies will also be available for those who attend the 8.30am service.

Eco News



The new SEC Net Zero Director, Paul Williams, is now in post, so action on the road to Net Zero 2030 is gathering speed. There is now an updated SEC Net Zero Action Plan (2023 – 2030) to download at:

https://www.scotland.anglican.org/wp-content/uploads/NZAP-For-GS-2023-Final.pdf

To celebrate the beginning of the Season of Creation, the Provincial Environment Group (PEG) announced the release of the updated Net Zero Toolkit. This online resource has been completely redesigned to complement the core objectives identified in the Net Zero Action Plan, approved by General Synod June 2023.

The new toolkit helps churches ascertain specific tasks to move towards Net Zero and shows where help and support is available. This toolkit may be accessed (but not downloaded) at https://toolkit.secnetzero.org

Net Zero workshop programme to save energy.

The Provincial Environment Group (PEG) is seeking ten volunteer congregations to take part in a series of Net Zero Workshops this autumn. The workshops will focus on energy use in SEC buildings, an important part of net zero — and one that also affects congregational finances. Dean Graham would like to offer St John's as one of these ten congregations, so he is seeking volunteers!

The workshops are for a group of six to ten people from within a congregation, and/or church building users. They take six hours to complete in total, split over a few sessions.

The programme has been adapted for SEC churches, so the six hours may be comprised of three 2 hour sessions, or two 3 hour sessions – or whatever suits. They prefer face to face sessions, as some elements are best done with the group.

Knowledge base is not important, because the programme will guide us through: a good cross-section of the congregation would be good.

Commitment to exploring the possibilities and offering a platform to work together is what matters.

PEG have scheduled a webinar about the workshop programme on Wednesday 4 October, 7 - 8pm, offering the chance for interested congregations to get more information. The webinar is open to all who want to learn about the workshops – but does not commit you to attending them. You can sign up to the webinar via Eventbrite.

Please let me know if you are thinking about joining the 4 October webinar.

Hopefully, Elaine & Eco Group

Eco-Congregation

We are now designated an 'Eco-Congregation', but what are your thoughts when you hear this term? Revd David Coleman (Environmental Chaplain to Eco-Congregations in Scotland) helped us to explore this concept when he visited St John's, at the beginning of the Season of Creation.

We may have been puzzled and amused as he handed out hand puppets of a wide variety of animals, but Revd Coleman then used these props to highlight some of the serious challenges affecting the natural world – including the loss of half of the animal population in the last forty years (visit WWF and the Zoological Society of London online).

Later, during a thought-provoking sermon, Revd Coleman quoted Pope Francis as declaring "a terrible world war against the environment is taking place" and Dr Rowan Williams' assertion that "in our expanding consumption, we have ignored the interdependence of human life". He then challenged us to recognise the dangers of a 'business as usual' response and 'kicking the can down the road', sidestepping difficult decisions. While recognising that these can apply equally to governments and global corporations, he also commented that, for the church, it can be

all too easy for the "workings of the church to get in the way of the work of the church". We are called to care for God's creation even when that means making challenging choices and speaking uncomfortable truth to power.

One of the tasks of the Eco Committee at St John's is to keep us focused on the importance of "re-using, recycling and re-purposing" at a local level. Revd Coleman helped to set these goals in the context of the 'big picture' of God's wonderful gift of creation.

This sermon is available to view on the St John's YouTube channel:

https://www.youtube.com/live/902-LbPpKiw?si=fBLXCq1ylClvZOxj

Gordon Murch

Christian Aid

I and some others from St John's went along to the Christian Aid Quiz in Letham St Mark's. It was very well attended - in fact they had difficulty squeezing in enough tables for us all, and it was great fun. Marjorie Clark had produced a really varied set of questions so there was something for everyone, though I have to confess our team was not near the top when the results came out! There was a stall with all sorts of home grown produce which was well supported, and the fantastic total raised was £1007.25! The team of organisers did really well.

Look out for it again next year.

Ruth Harris





The Diocesan Environment Group (PEG) have rescheduled the Gathering Calming the Squall, which covid prevented happening earlier this year.

Saturday 28 October St Luke's Glenrothes 10am to 4pm and also online.

Tea & coffee provided: bring lunch or buy there. Sign up form on diocesan website https://standrews.anglican.org/climate-change-group/

Further information from Elaine

Celebrations!

Diamond Wedding

Sixty years ago Elizabeth and I were married in St Thomas' Parish

Church of Scotland in sunny Leith.

At the reception in those days the Groom was usually expected to thank the bridesmaids and say, nervously: 'My wife and I' would like to thank you all for etc etc.

Today, sixty years on, the same nervous groom would like to say to the members of St John's **Episcopal Church** (same destination, different road): 'My wife and I' would like to thank you all for your love, kind thoughts and compulsory cake etc etc.



Raymond King.

Birthdays



Alastair Cruickshank celebrating his 80th birthday.

Anne Addison celebrating her 89th birthday.





Alison Swanney celebrating her 80th birthday.

Illustrated talk on The Grants of Kilgraston St. John's on Thursday 12 October 2023 at 7.15 pm



St John's pulpit with panels by Mary Grant of Kilgraston

Richard Blake, the author of *Sugar*, *Slaves and High Society: The Grants of Kilgraston 1750-1860*, is giving an illustrated talk about his new book in St. John's on Thursday 12 October at 7-15 pm. Members of the congregation are warmly invited to attend, but please let Richard know numbers in advance at admin@buskinbooks.co.uk

The Grants of Kilgraston had strong connections with St. John's. The pulpit panels were modelled by Mary Grant, one of the earliest professional female sculptors. One of her uncles, Sir Francis Grant, was the first Scottish President of the Royal Academy and another, General Sir Hope Grant, was granted the Freedom of Perth on his return from the China campaign in 1860.

All of this was set against the background of the family's involvement with slavery in Jamaica which generated the wealth to purchase and build Kilgraston House.

Funeral Rites and wrongs

A funeral is no laughing matter. So be it and I am sure we all agree. But there can be exceptions. Fifty years ago, while living and working in Nigeria, I had a hilarious experience which is still fresh in my memory.

My job required me to be involved there in the business and political world which was interesting, entertaining and sometimes dangerous. A particular ally was a Nigerian businessman, a Yoruba Chieftain and man of great wealth, influence and importance in the Country.

A confirmed Christian and Anglophile, he was a great source of help and advice to me and the Company for which I worked. He had a house in London and became a close friend of my Chairman. Sadly, Chief Henry, for that was his name, became ill and after a short time died.

There was much sadness in Lagos as well as the London boardroom of my Company. My Chairman decided he had to come to Nigeria for Chief Henry's funeral. I met him at Lagos Airport and chartered a light aircraft to fly to the funeral at his estate in Ile Oluji, Ondo State.

What I had not expected was a magnificent floral wreath which my Chairman had brought with him as a tribute from the Board of Directors in the U.K. It was circular with a 4ft diameter, very colourful and extremely heavy.

The funeral gathering was a massive affair with a crowd of hundreds pressing to get to the Church, chanting, crying, dancing and milling around the grounds. "Go on" said the Chairman to me "barge through and get the wreath onto the roof of Henry's car " (which happened to be a Rolls Royce).

The only way I could manage to reach the car was to hold the wretched wreath above my head with both hands and pray that the Almighty would forgive the language which I was obliged to use. I finally succeeded.

In his autobiography, published years later, my Chairman wrote: "Perspiring under a blazing sun, his arms thrust skywards, Noel-Paton had no hope of getting

them down to his sides and no chance against the pickpockets who reached into his jacket, took his wallet and dodged under the legs of the crowd to get completely away ".

He fails to mention that in the throng I had felt hands fumbling around my body which, in addition to my wallet, removed my gold Parker pen, the money clip in my back pocket, my dark glasses and my smart leather belt. My Chairman I think found the whole affair very funny and also wrote: "Henry I felt would have been furious on one hand at the robbing of a guest, but on the other hand he would have roared with laughter at the sight of a helpless European, in full business kit, at the mercy of cheeky Nigerian urchins".

I suppose it was something to laugh at!

Ranald Noel-Paton

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Calling all drivers...

If you regularly drive to church and would be willing to give someone a lift, either from time to time or on a regular basis, would you please contact Alison Swanney 01738632722 or 07968254428.

We are looking to gather together a pool of people who might be able to support those who don't have transport to attend our services and occasionally social events.

Similarly, if you need a lift on a Sunday morning let Alison know and she will do her best to get you sorted with transport.



From the Registers – Eternal Rest

Ellis Murray Thomson: 6th May 1931 – 15th July 2023

From the Editor

Thanks very much for everyone's contributions to this issue. All entries to the editor, Mr David Willington dwillington@hotmail.com for our December/January issue by Sunday 19th November

From the Eco Group

The Eco group are very pleased that so many of you are popping blister packs in the box at the back of the church. It is very reassuring that you do not want them to end up in landfill. Superdrug on the High Street will take them as well.



Scottish Guild of Servers







The Scottish Guild of Servers held their annual service and AGM led by Revd Canon Gordon B Fyfe at St John's on Saturday 2nd September.



THE BARN GALLERY THE BIELD BLACKRUTHVEN PERTH PH1 1PY



6-20 OCTOBER 10.00-16.00 OF WORK
BY
PARTICIPANTS
ON THE
SCOTS
CREATIVE
ARTS
RESIDENENCY
AT THE
BIELD



BIELDATELACKRUTHVEN.ORG UK

Contact Information

Rector	The Very Rev. Graham S. Taylor	634999	rector@episcopal-
	Granam S. Taylor		perth.org.uk
	Rev. Annie MacKay	07989	annemackayhughes@
Assistant Priest	Hughes	519050	gmail.com
	Rt Rev. Bruce Cameron	317030	
Retired Assistant	Rev. Canon Shelley Marsh		
Clergy	Rev. Canon Alan Tilson		
	Rev. Canon 7 Han 1 Hson		
Church Officers	Mail to be sent to Office		@episcopal-perth.org.uk
Rector's Warden	Gordon Murch	827034	church-warden@
People's Warden	David Willington	813787	
Administrator	Eleanor McGourty	634999	office@
Lay Representative	Christine Bracewell	552817	
Alternate Lay Rep	Jean Hendry	623603	
Vestry Secretary	Judy Norwell	626789	secretary(a)
Treasurer	Peter Marsh	575040	treasurer(a)
	Jackie Thomson	07946	
		784687	
Health and Safety	Vacant		hands@
PVG	Caryl Steeves	07708	pvg@
		454870	
Director of Music	Robin Miller	625903	music@
Sacristan	Vivienne Underwood	07549	
		651425	
Team Convenors			
Ministry	Alan McPherson	552337	
Finance	Peter Marsh	575040	
Communications	Eleanor McGourty	634999	
Website/Facebook	Shelley Marsh	575040	
Children	Jean Hendry	623603	
Buildings & Eco	David Maclehose		
Social	Fundraising Group		
Church Activities			
Intercessors/Readers	Liz Thompson	245968	
Flowers	Christine Bracewell	552817	
Magazine	David Willington	813787	
Fellowship	Jean Hendry	623603	
Young Church	Jean Hendry	623603	
Links	Ruth Harris	621379	
Christian Aid	Elaine Cameron	441172	
PACT	Jean Hendry	623603	
Threshold bookings	Eleanor McGourty	634999	office@episcopal-perth.org.uk

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St John the Baptist Scottish Episcopal Church Princes Street, Perth, PH2 8LJ

www.episcopal-perth.org.uk 01738 634999 Scottish Charity Number SC 011398

The Very Rev. Graham S. Taylor 23 Comely Bank, Perth PH2 7HU 01738 245922 rector@episcopal-perth.org.uk



