



St John the Baptist

Scottish Episcopal Church

Perth

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February and March 2024

Pastoral Letter

Dear Friends,

Happy New Year!

I hope you all had a lovely time over the festive season, a wonderful time for catching up with family and friends. As we celebrated the joy of our Lord's birth once again, it was lovely seeing St. John's beautifully decorated, as usual, and of course seeing so many there supporting the services. Thank you to all who made it such a happy time.

As we move into this New Year, who knows what God has in store for us? All we can do is trust and walk in the way of Christ, knowing that we are never alone, but that the Spirit of God is there with us.

A challenge will be for the Vestry and myself in particular about how we move ahead this year, as a worshipping community, and how we plan for the future. The Bishop has asked that each charge would produce a 5 – 10 year plan, and have a rough draft before Diocesan Synod in March. We are at present looking into this and will take time to reflect together our response. Many challenges face the Church and congregations in the times we are living in. We only have to look at our neighbours in other denominations to see the challenges facing our planning for the future. Please remember us in your prayers as we reflect on the way ahead for St. John's.

It seems that Christmas is just over and we are now looking ahead at Lent and Easter. All very early this year. Please check the Pew Sheet and the Notices in Church for what we will be doing over these coming weeks. A good time for us to journey through suffering, Christ's Passion and the Cross, before celebrating once again the joy of Easter and of the risen Lord.

I do hope to see you all in church over the coming weeks, and to those who are unable to be with us these days, we assure you of our love and

ongoing prayers. We will never forget all you have done for St. John's. To shape it's past for the future, making it such a loving and wonderful community to be part of.

In all things, we give thanks and praise to Almighty God.

With love to you all,

Dean Graham.

Special Services

4 th February	10.30 am	Transfiguration
14 th February	7.30 pm	Ash Wednesday
10 th March	10.30 am	Mothering Sunday
17 th March	10.30 am	Passion Sunday
24 th March	10.30 am	Palm Sunday
27 th March	7.00 pm	Stations of the Cross
28 th March	7.00 pm	Maundy Thursday
29 th March	12 noon	Good Friday
31 st March	10.30 am	Easter Day

Winter Birds:

Photographs by
Mary Willington,
Patricia Noel-Paton
and Joyce Sampson



Thanksgiving

In an article in *The Times* for the 6th January this year Matthew Parris, ex-MP, adventurer, commentator and here in his role as savant, asserted that ‘We don’t need God or faith to be thankful’. He is a confirmed atheist. While acknowledging that there is an element in the human make-up that craves for a supreme being, in his view that does not mean that there is a supreme being out there. It is true that no amount of logic can prove the existence of God. However, he goes on thus: ‘Yet not believing in a god to thank does not blunt my regular and strong feelings of generalised gratitude. A day does not pass when I don’t give thanks for the beauty of nature, for a roof and a warm bed, for my own good fortune, for what fun life can be. I say “Thank you” knowing perfectly well there’s nobody to whom my thanks are directed.’

The first thing to say is that he is not showing gratitude. All he is saying that is ‘I am enjoying beautiful nature, I am warm in bed, I have prospered, I enjoy my life’. This is an exercise in solipsism (oneself alone), or to put it less philosophically, self-centredness. The verb ‘thank’ is a transitive verb and requires an object, someone or something to thank. When cruel things happen he feels anger but that is all: ‘My sense of injustice finds no supreme adjudicator.’

In earlier centuries, God is described as the heavenly watchmaker, the architect of the universe, the First Cause and so forth. But Science has provided physical explanations for phenomena. We know now that the universe started with the Big Bang, that human beings evolved by a natural process and that the forces of nature can be violent and destructive. We do not need a god to explain them. However, if, as we believe as Christians, God works within ourselves, he is outside time, not constrained by physical parameters. He is accessible by prayer and meditation and He has provided a template for our lives in Jesus.

So we have a lot to be thankful to Him for, summed up in the words of the General Thanksgiving: ‘We bless thee for our creation, preservation and all the blessings of this life but above all for thine inestimable love in the redemption of the world by our Lord Jesus Christ...and...give us that due sense of all thy mercies that our hearts may be unfeignedly thankful...’

This article raises so many issues that cannot be dealt with in a few words. Just reflect that when people stop believing in God, they don’t stop believing in something, even if it is themselves.

David Willington

Lenten Fast

At the risk of appearing a killjoy, I have a suggestion to make. Could we perhaps revert to plainer refreshments at Coffee after church during Lent, such as no chocolate biscuits, cake etc, though I realise we might want to make an exception for a special birthday?

When we first came to St John's we found it was standard practice at coffee on Thursdays. But now, with all businesses and supermarkets striving to make more and more money, our wants have become our needs (as the Franciscan, Richard Rohr, writes) and we no longer have the pleasure of waiting, and then enjoying what we have waited for when we finally get it! I myself am not a great one for Lenten fasting as a whole, and prefer to do things instead.

But could this be a useful gesture to remind ourselves of what is happening to society? It would be good to hear others' views on this.

Ruth Harris

Fellowship

The Christmas Fellowship meeting which was being anticipated in the previous Quest now seems a distant memory but it took place with its usual format of entertainment both musical and with some drama and recitation all coordinated by Judy, which was followed by seasonal refreshments and enjoyed by all. The January meeting also followed the pattern of previous years when we meet over lunch. This year it was served in the Threshold on a very cold day. The menu was kept simple due to anxieties about the weather possibly causing a last-minute cancellation, but all was well as it didn't actually snow that day and those that were present all seemed to enjoy the occasion.

In February we look forward to a presentation by Jane Savage on her and David's trip to New Zealand and in March it will be another presentation when we discover where Peter and Shelley Marsh went on their most recent holiday! I am writing this on a January weekend of rain and gales making me feel the winter meetings are the right time of year to sit back and be reminded of how beautiful and varied our planet is whether in Perthshire when the weather behaves or, in the huge and varied range of exotic locations that our members have managed to visit.

Jean Hendry

Christian Aid – the Gathering 2024

Christian Aid's Gathering is an opportunity for anyone interested in the work of Christian Aid to celebrate the difference their work has made. Plans for the coming Christian Aid Week and the year ahead will also be shared.

Since Covid days, this event has been held online. This year the date is **Tuesday 27th February at 10.00am – on zoom. I would be delighted to have some of you come and join me watching it at 21 Barossa Place.**

One person we will hear from at the Gathering is Christian Aid's Ukraine Response Director, **Iryna Dobrohorska**. This seems especially appropriate when the British Ambassador to Ukraine is Martin Harris, son of a former Rector of St John's – you will have seen his photo with Volodymyr Zelensky, President of Ukraine, in the last Quest.

Iryna lives in Kviv, which she loves. She misses her family, but keeps in touch with them by texting daily. So far all is well with them, but she worries about them.



Iryna says that her faith sustains her in these tough days. Indeed, she thinks that faith is even more important for people in war time. Of course you see the worst kinds of suffering, but you also see the best in people. In helping one another, they create a kind of interconnectedness: the brightest light from the worst darkness. They have a very clear sense that they are not alone.

She is inspired by her friends and the people of Ukraine who are demonstrating incredible resilience in these challenging days, withstanding both the security risks and the economic pressures. Despite nearing two years of war, morale remains strong.

So, please come and hear more from Iryna about Christian Aid work with survivor communities in Ukraine. I also understand there will be exciting previews of Christian Aid Week 2024. There will be time to ask questions.

I look forward to welcoming you Tuesday February 27 at 21 Barossa Place.

Elaine Cameron



Sunday Lectionary - February and March

February 4th Epiphany 5, Sexagesima

Isaiah 40. 21-31, I Corinthians 9. 16-23, Mark 1.29-39

February 11th Sunday before Lent, Quinquagesima

2 Kings 2. 1-12, 2 Corinthians 4. 3-6, Mark 9.2-9

February 14th Ash Wednesday

Joel.2.1-2,12-17 or Isaiah 58.1-12, 2 Corinthians 5.20b-6.10, Matthew 6.1-6, 16-21

February 18th First Sunday of Lent

Genesis 9.8-17, 1 Peter 3.18-22, Mark 1.9-15

February 25th Second Sunday of Lent

Genesis 17.1-7,15-16, Romans 4.13-25, Mark 8. 31-38, or Mark 9.2-9

March 3rd Third Sunday of Lent

Exodus 20.1-17, 1 Corinthians 1.18-25, John 2.13-22

March 10th Fourth Sunday of Lent, Mothering Sunday

Numbers 21.4-9, Ephesians 2.1-10, John 3.14-21

March 17th Passion Sunday

Jeremiah 31.31-34, Hebrews 5.5-10, John 12.20-33

March 24th Palm Sunday

Isaiah 50.4-9a, Philippians 2.5-11, Mark 14.1-15,47 or Mark 15.1-39{40-47}

March 28th Maundy Thursday

Exodus 12.1-4{5-10}11-14, 1 Corinthians 11.23-26, John13.1-17; 31b-35

March 29th Good Friday

Isaiah 52.13-53,12, Hebrews10.16-25 or Hebrews 4.14-16; 5.7-9, John18.1-19.42

March 31st Easter Day

Acts 10.34-43 or Isaiah 25.6-9, I Corinthians 15.1-11 or Acts 10.34-43, John 20.1-18 or Mark 16.1-8



Eco Congregation Silver Award

We are delighted to have been awarded a Silver Award from Eco-Congregation Scotland. We initially applied for a Bronze Award, but the assessors, Mary Sweetland and Sheena Wurthmann, quickly recognised that we had actually met most of the requirements for Silver. The only thing missing was a Church Environmental Action Plan for the coming year.

We had already been making plans, so it was easy to put these together into a formal Environmental Action Plan that met with Mary and Sheena's approval. The Plan includes a series of HeatHack workshops (which are now in progress) to learn more about how we can efficiently heat our old church building, more support for Fairtrade (including more Fairtrade stalls), and monitoring and reporting our energy use and carbon emissions.

With this Plan in place, Eco-Congregation quickly confirmed that we had been recommended for a Silver Award.

Thank you to every one of you for your support, prayer, and practical action that has helped us to achieve this award and do our part in caring for God's creation.



Mary Sweetland presented us with the award plaque made with recycled wood. The plaque will be displayed in the Threshold.

Mary and Sheena commended the congregation particularly for:

- The commitment of the Rector to environmental matters and linking it regularly with the spiritual life of the church and raises issues of environmental justice. Also the involvement of lay members in intercessions praying for the impact of climate change on all people and creatures.
- Our inclusions of so many volunteers within our projects and reaching out to the wider community. The clear communication of eco-matters in our magazine, and our brand logo!
- The impressive action we have been making over the years to reduce our carbon footprint by switching to electric heating, and reducing use by installing A rated appliances when replacement is needed, and LED lighting. By using a Green Electricity Tariff we are very close to net-zero already, producing an average of 1.38 tonnes of CO₂ per year.
- Our recycling efforts, particularly in being forerunners of blister pack recycling.
- One of the Eco group (Elaine) completing Climate Literacy Facilitator training, to aid evangelisation of caring for creation across the church.
- Our involvement with the wider church both locally and at a national level.



They also gave us some recommendations for future work:

- Continue to work with other churches in the area to highlight how we should care for creation spiritually, practically and promoting climate justice.
- Include our environmental credentials on leaflets/printed material used to promote hall lets and other relevant church activities. Engage further with our community to help them understand why caring for the environment matters.

Rhiannon Miller (Eco Group)



Waxwings

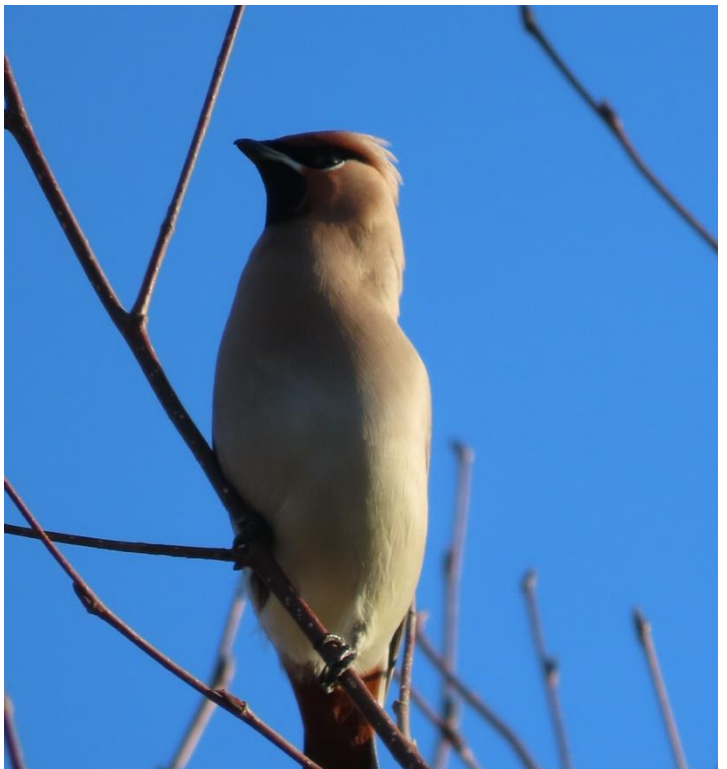


The number of waxwings that overwinter in Scotland each year can vary enormously, as few as 50 or as many as 15,000.

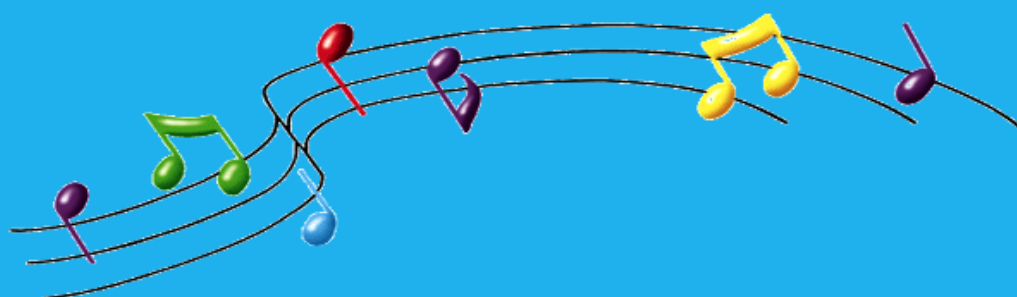
This is influenced by conditions in their native Scandinavia. If the weather is poor or there are shortages of food, large numbers will

migrate, called an 'irruption'. This happens about every 8 years. As early as November 2023, flocks of up to 500 have been recorded along our east coast, and on New Years Day 2024, a group of over 50 settled in Kinfauns, feeding on fallen apples and clearing the bushes of berries. A waxwing can gobble its way through 800-1,000 berries in a single day, roughly twice its body weight.

The species of waxwing we see in Scotland is the Bohemian waxwing. About the size of a starling, it has a prominent crest, black eye mask and colourful wings, with the flight feathers tipped in bright red resembling sealing wax – hence the common name. We can expect to see them until March when they will gather and return to Scandinavia to breed.



Joyce Sampson



**FUNDRAISING CONCERT IN AID
OF THE HAEMATOLOGY AND
ONCOLOGY WARDS, P.R.I**

**SATURDAY 2ND MARCH 2024
AT 7 PM**

DOORS OPEN AT 6.30 PM

**ST JOHN'S EPISCOPAL CHURCH,
PRINCES STREET, PERTH**

**ADMISSION £10 - CHILDREN GO FREE
RAFFLE TICKETS WILL ALSO BE ON SALE**

Contact Information

Rector	The Very Rev. Graham S. Taylor	634999	rector@episcopal-perth.org.uk
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Retired Assistant Clergy	Rt Rev. Bruce Cameron Rev. Canon Shelley Marsh Rev. Canon Alan Tilson		
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the Scottish Association of
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