St John's

September 2022

Cornerstone Magazine

The St John's AMEN-S:
Affirming and Nurturing the faith of our Members
Making new disciples of Jesus Christ
Embracing eco-justice for ourselves and the world
Nursing the wounds of those who are hurting

Contents

Editorial

When I needed a neighbour, were you there?
After a Sunday on which the parable of the Good Samaritan was read recently, the Rector posed the perennial question: "Who is my neighbour?" This is one of the most fundamental questions that as Christians we have to answer. Who is the one who needs our help? In society at the moment there is, for example, an epidemic which no vaccine will fix, - an epidemic of loneliness. People tend not to admit that they're lonely, so although it's so common it's out of sight for most of the time. The current statistics should concern us all: 9 million people in the UK are reported as 'often or always' lonely. They're hard to pigeon-hole, - the widowed, the single, those living alone, the unemployed, carers, those between 16 and 24, those from an ethnic minority or with a disability. There may be one living next door to you, or in the next pew in church. Try to notice them and offer the warmth of friendliness, - or else sign up with a charity like Age Scotland to give a friendly phone call each week to someone who is isolated. You may be making their day.

In this magazine you will find a wide range of topics. If you want to explore the essentials of faith, you can find out about the group that meets on Monday evening called EfM (Education for Ministry, or Exploring Faith Matters). You will find recommendations for the best new religious books, and discover more about your fellow members of St John's. You will find stories of the remarkable range of people from all over the world who come into the church in the hours it is open (12 – 2 p.m.). And much much more. Do let us know, though, if there are topics you would like to see covered in future issues. The Cornerstone is your magazine and it should reflect your voice.

Stop press: Just as this magazine was about to come out came the news of the death of Her Majesty the Queen. Our community mourns with the rest of the nation the loss of a monarch whose powerful Christian faith and sense of duty have been a source of inspiration and stability for us all for 70 years. May she rest in peace.

From the Rector

Dear Friends,

I have to admit: I have admiration for the Church of Scotland. No, I do not want to convert. For me, Episcopal polity within synodical governance and the sacramental nature of our ministry links the church back to the times of the Apostles. I believe that Episcopal worship in all its forms addresses the total human experience: It has a more pronounced focus on becoming a vehicle into the divine mystery through prayer, music, exhortation, and the sacraments. And embracing the Incarnation as our theological foundation speaks to me much more of God's self-revelation, love, and plan for creation. "Evangelical Truth and Apostolic Order" – our motto – is something with which I very much identify.

However, I admire the members of the Church of Scotland for the recent radical steps they have taken. Implementing the "Radical Action Plan" is no small feat. Quite the opposite! I do believe there is a lack of pastoral, spiritual, and occupational support for ministers and other church leaders, yet what the Church of Scotland is set out to do is indeed radical. And I would argue it is driven by the Spirit of God.

Why?

Well, what I admire about the Radical Action Plan is its blatant honesty. It doesn't shy away from naming the realities of church life in Scotland in the 21st century. And things are not good – and this is not just a Church of Scotland problem. If we think we are doing any better, have

I got news for you…! And, yet, the Radical Action Plan is not just trying to put the church on life-support waiting for the last person to switch off the light. There is a deep trust in Christ's promise that neither hell nor high water nor secularism will overcome the church. We have a message to proclaim. But we have to do so in changing circumstances, with changed resources, by changed means.

Theologically, the Church of Scotland uses as framework for all this the central story of the Christian faith: Good Friday and Easter. There is a tendency for Christians to bypass or avoid Good Friday. Who would want to contemplate in a profound way the death of the Saviour on the cross? And would want to stay at the grave that holds the body? Often, we rush to Easter and celebrate the new life of the Resurrection. And it doesn't matter however we believe the Resurrection to have occurred, it is a much safer place to be.

But the danger is that by trying to rush to Easter without going via Good Friday, we cannot actually get there. It is unlike the game of Monopoly. You must not by-pass Go, ie the death of Christ. Because if you do, you get stuck, you do not go forward: the Resurrection becomes a mere resuscitation of a dying body. In real terms, it means that we keep on doing the same things in administration, ministry, governance, and mission over and over again expecting a different outcome. Yet, this is one of the definitions of insanity! And when it comes to thinking about the church's future, we often act like insane people. Resurrection, however, new life in Christ only comes if we admit we are dead, and if we let the life-giving Spirit lead us to new life, new ideas, new identities, new ways of doing what the Gospel commands us to do.

This is scary. It is hard work. And it hurts. When you talk to Church of Scotland ministers, you will experience the pain and frustration. But nobody ever said following Jesus would be easy; the whole of the Gospel tells a different story. And yet, there is Resurrection waiting for us on the other side of Good Friday.

And I believe this is what the Church of Scotland is trying to do.

And I wish we would have the courage to do the same.

I have written over the past few weeks in the weekly e-news how frustrated I find myself with the institution. There is a lot that that troubles and concerns me in the SEC. It is not just the ongoing conflict in the Diocese of Aberdeen and Orkney, even though, I have to admit, it irks me how legalistic and hierarchical we seem to have become. There is more, though, as I experience diocesan and provincial lay and ordained leadership to be stuck in either ignoring the facts or in becoming paralysed by them. The world is burning and we get stuck in legal battles, power-games, narcissistic and personal vendettas – or hide under the sofa. The house that is the SEC is on fire, but we fight over who will have the right to pick the colour-schemes for our curtains… All this is not helping the mission of the church to say the least.

We here at St John's find ourselves in a privileged position. There is a lot of positivity happening and there is a lot of life within our community. And it is all due to the combined efforts of us all, as much as I believe that "there is a sweet, sweet Spirit in this place." We are not facing Good Friday!

But maybe we need to add the word "yet" to the previous sentence… And in a world faced with war, exploitation, spiritual death, COVID, starving souls and bodies, and an energy emergency that we continue to ignore, even we at St John's should ask ourselves if our structures, our governance, our priorities, the way we see ourselves, and even our worship still is up to snuff. Coming out of the pandemic, I do believe we need to throw things in the air and see where they fall down. And we should not be afraid to do so, because the things we do well (of which there are not few!), the things that give life, the things that grow out of the Good News, will not only survive, they will blossom.

We are moving closer to the AGM in November. Maybe there is time and energy to have conversations about this. We also have planned to do a "ministry fair" on Sunday, 13 November after the 10:30am service. I

would like to invite all those leading ministry groups at St John's to consider how they would present their ministry to the congregation. More will be revealed, but please do get in touch.

Thank you to all who continue to plough the field that is God's vineyard here at St John's. As I said: "there's a sweet, sweet Spirit in this place…"

As ever,

Markus

From the Operations Manager

What a difference a year makes! Certainly, this year's summer has seen a complete change in the fortunes of Edinburgh and its customer-facing businesses with the tourism and hospitality sectors having an excellent season so far. This has certainly been reflected in terms of the feedback from the West End Craft Fair's traders. Although the Craft Fair has operated at around 75% capacity, the trade has been busy and profitable for those attending, no doubt helped by the summer sunshine.

Equally, we have had a busy few weeks with the halls including a long booking for the Edinburgh International Film Festival which brought together diverse groups taking part in activities and talks. We were also very pleased to see the Just Festival back again this year with a display of paintings alongside a programme of talks

and music. This also meant the church enjoyed much longer opening times allowing visitors and locals a chance to soak in the atmosphere of cool and calm from the buzz of the busy streets outside - all staffed by Just Festival's team.

In the background we continue to deal with all the inquiries and bookings building for the year ahead as well as preparing for this year's audit due to take place in September. We also had our annual review with CAF Bank who were pleased with the performance across last year and commented, ''I have shared the draft Management Accounts to the end of July 2022 with our Credit Risk Team, and we have calculated that based on these figures the Debt Service Cover Covenant will be met by a ratio of 1.4 : 1. A good result considering the difficulties over the past 2+ years. This will effectively be the first year that the covenant has been met (based on the consolidated activities) since the loan was drawn.''
Good news and progress indeed; however, the next few months are set to be uncertain as people watch inflation rising and energy costs soaring so we continue to be frugal and cautious with our budgeting for the next 12 months while looking at ways to continue to build income. Our own energy challenges are clear and we will look to reduce costs however, three months prior to the start of the Ukraine invasion we had renegotiated our energy suppliers giving us some certainty for the next 20 months; as long as the companies stay in business!

As the Festival activity subsides we are now looking at pre-winter jobs around the buildings including a roof inspection and gutter clearance, some repairs to welds on the railings that have failed, masonry pointing, particularly on loose garden walls, and high level weeding mainly around the east end at the Dormitory, alongside other jobs that are needed.

We look forward to a busy few months ahead and thank you all for your support.

Iain Herbert
Operation Manager

The Streets of Edinburgh Part 1

As we approach St John's from various directions we might not always be aware of some of the history that lies behind the names of the streets we pass through, nor of how they illustrate some of the slight oddity of Edinburgh's system of street naming.

If we come along Princes Street, which dates from 1767, it might come as a surprise to learn that the first name proposed was St Giles Street, in honour of the patron Saint of Edinburgh, but George III objected because the name reminded him of the insalubrious district of St Giles in London. After some discussion it was agreed to name the street after two royal princes – George, Prince of Wales, the future George IV, and his brother Frederick Duke of York, later to be remembered in the rhyme The Grand Old Duke of York, for his alleged military incompetence, and already in 1767, at the age of four, Prince Bishop of Osnabrück. Since 1840 it has been customary not to use an apostrophe in the name of this street.

Perhaps we come along Lothian Road, which dates from 1785. There is a baseless story that it was built in one day. It is often called The Lothian Road by our fellow citizens. It leads from Princes Street to Tollcross, where the road to Lothian formerly began. It has no connection with Lothian Street, 1796, at the back of the National Museum, (possibly named after Lothian Farm, which had some connection with the Marquess of Lothian).

Shandwick Place is another possible approach. It was built in 1806 by Sir John Cockburn Ross of Shandwick, Nigg, Easter Ross. It was originally a terrace inset on the north side of Maitland Street. The whole of the north side was renamed Shandwick Place in 1890, and south side, until then Erskine Place was incorporated into Shandwick Place in 1979.
Edinburgh is rich in thoroughfares named "Hope", nearly all of differ-

ent origins. Our one seems to have been nameless until 1808, when a resident Mrs Maxwell complained to the council about the inconvenience in living in a nameless street. It was then named after Charles Hope of Granton, Lord Advocate and MP for Edinburgh. In 1966 three other Hope Streets, in Leith, Portobello, and Corstorphine, were renamed. We still have a number of other Hope thoroughfares in various parts of the city and environs.

(To be continued.)

David Carver

St John's Forum

The Forum started spontaneously in the middle of lockdown as a way of continuing debate and enquiry on Zoom at a time when we were deprived of face-to-face contact. It has continued vigorously since then, and still takes place on Zoom. This is convenient when we have members in places like Dunfermline and Orkney. Meetings last one hour, 5.30 – 6.30 p.m. on the last Monday in the month.

From the beginning the topics covered have ranged widely over philosophy, literature and current ethical issues, usually with a spiritual dimension. Poets like Coleridge, R.S. Thomas, Wordsworth, George Herbert, Les Murray and John O'Donohue have featured, and at a recent session we were pleased to have as our speaker Malcolm Guite, distinguished priest, poet and musician, logging in from Norfolk. We have also had meetings on C.S. Lewis, George Orwell, Dostoevsky and Charles Dickens, and various subjects within the area of health. A recent meeting which raised much interest dealt with Dementia, leading to the formation of a group to be ready to give support to anyone in the congregation whose life is impacted by this most distressing of conditions.
Our first autumn meeting will be on September 26th, when we shall hear from Michael Fuller on Science and Religion: beyond the impasse. Michael, a former Associate Rector of St John's, and more recently

Director of the Theological Institute, lectures at New College, and as a Chemist, specialises in how, if at all, science and religion impact on one another, for instance in his book Atoms and Icons.

If you are interested in this, or any of our meetings, do let me know. You will be very welcome.
Robert Philp

Philosophy Corner

A Short Summary of the Ontological Argument for the Existence of God

Over the centuries, many have tried to formulate arguments towards the existence of God. There is a desire to support with thought and reason the position of faith. People have tried to reason from such starting points as – the existence of the universe – as being evidence of a creator God.

The 'ontological' argument starts not from the evident universe around us, but from an idea or ideal of perfection we can access with just our minds. (It is termed the 'ontological' argument from the Greek word for being/existence, as the argument centres around the question of existence of a being, the supreme being of God). The argument runs as follows.

Premise 1 : God is that supremely great being that one can think of.
Premise 2 : It is greater to exist in reality than only in the mind.
Conclusion : Therefore, God exists.

It is an interesting, attractive and mesmerising argument. It can be articulated in different ways, and differing versions of it exist and have been put forward through the ages. It prompts reactions ranging from confusion and disinterest, to fascination and for some, acceptance. The famous philosopher Bertrand Russell at one point in his life exclaimed "Great God in Boots! – The ontological argument is sound!".Though Bertrand Russell was later in life quite sceptical, it evidently made quite an impact on him. To this day philosophers

of religion, theologians and thinkers wrangle over the argument and there are well-known contemporary philosophers who are staunch defenders, such as Alvin Plantinga.

Debate in History

The first known formulation of the ontological argument is from the 11th century by St Anselm of Canterbury. It was taken up again by René Descartes in the 17th Century, re-examined by Gottfried Leibniz in the 18th century and continues to occupy philosophers of Religion to this day. The most famous critic of the argument is Immanuel Kant (1724–1804), who argued that 'existence is not a predicate' that is to say, that with an existing thing, its existence is not a property or attribute that it has over and above the matter of it existing. There is another similar criticism, which was made directly by the monk Guanilo in response to St Anselm and is therefore almost as old as the argument itself: you might be able to imagine a perfect island, but must that island therefore exist?

Replies to Critiques

Kant's and Guanilo's critiques, do seem to target something that might be awry with the argument. But it is hard not to think that 'having existence' means something is greater than 'lacking existence'.

While Kant's argument has been influential it has by no means been universally accepted, and to this day philosophers are divided on whether existence is or is not a predicate. The ontological argument has not been destroyed to date, and continues to intrigue.

Catie Gladstone

Rector Markus and Caleb

St John's welcomed its new canine member, Caleb, Markus's gorgeous fox red labrador. Their mutual affection is clearly evident from these photographs. Pictured here on his introduction to the congregation, Caleb (Hebrew for dog) revealed himself as gentle and friendly. He was bred and trained by Chris Hill, son of Jan and David Hill. The Hill family have a long connection with St John's, and it is good to see that

connection extend to the canine world. Caleb can often be seen after services and around St John's.

Education for Ministry

(also known as Exploring Faith Matters)

[Comments by participants are in inverted commas.]

Each Monday evening for two hours over the last year, a group has met in St John's to engage in this course. EfM started in the U.S. as a four-year programme of small group study covering the Old Testament, New Testament, History of Christianity and theology, St John's being the first church in Scotland to take it on. The course is for interested enquirers, as well as those looking to take up some form of lay ministry. Our group was a large one, up to 16, so at the start discussion was tentative, but as the year progressed we became more and more used to one another and ready to share often intimate thoughts. All the group was studying the Year One, O.T. course, except one of us who had done it last year and was happy to recap the Year 1 course, at the same time as exploring the N.T. for the Year 2 course, where Mark Powell's Introduction was an "eye-opener", offering fascinating new details and a window

into the scholarly debates that the N.T. still generates.
"Markus and Rosie were excellent guides, making us do most of the thinking but guiding us along the path."
It was "an enriching experience" and "an opportunity to wrestle with the big questions."
The reading prescribed each week to get through the whole Old Testament was hugely ambitious, with often three books in one week:
"There was a huge amount of reading".
"The weekly readings can be onerous."
"I haven't read half of what I should have." When Monday came, it was often "a scramble to cram".
We all agreed our knowledge of the O.T. was very patchy, fairly reliant on bits we hear read as lessons on Sunday. The chance to re-engage with it was widely appreciated:
"The O.T. is a real masterpiece of literature whether you are a Christian or not. It points to Jesus and helps us to understand our need for a Saviour," because it's
"the story of a people who are continually trying to make sense of their lives in the light of what they know about God."
"My lightbulb moment was when John used a wonderful analogy, describing the O.T. as like a worked tapestry where figures might appear or disappear. The Good Book as a kind of ongoing Bayeux Tapestry. Worked for me! I saw the light."
The main textbook, Collins's 'A Short Introduction to the Hebrew Bible', provided a succinct scholarly analysis of each book. It was backed up by other reading: books by U.S. academics on how to spot the taken-for-granted biases that permeate the O.T., the built-in prejudices of each era against women and against every kind of non-mainstream conduct.
"It was an uncomfortable but salutary experience reading the O.T. and viewing the Church through feminist, colonialist and laity-affirming perspectives."
This prolonged engagement with the monument of literature that is the O.T. was appreciated by all.
"For all those raised as Christians but never quite sure what to make of the O.T., the EfM course is an excellent primer. It is also a helpful prod

to not only read the great work, but also reflect on what it means in daily life."
"The most complicated and long-lived work of spiritual writing that is still widely read today."
While some of the attitudes of the mid-first millennium B.C. were hard to swallow, the course helped us all appreciate the qualities of this monument of early literature.
"Reflective studies were also part of the course as homework to allow you time to wrestle with your own thoughts and emotions, and to connect those to your personal history, the culture we live in and the culture in O.T. times. Then to think Where is God in all this?"
Some felt they also benefited from "improved listening skills and understanding of how and when to apply a theological reflection."
As we got to know one another better and better, the discussion got livelier and franker over the year, until it became hard to get a word in edgeways. Altogether a bonding experience.
Overall, "it has been a great year, very ably supported by Rosie and Markus, to whom much thanks is sent." If you are interested in next year's EfM, do tell Markus or Rosie.

Robert Philp

The Reverend Eileen Thompson 25th Anniversary of Ordination

One of my earliest memories of Eileen is on a St John's walk over St Abbs Head and round the Mire Loch. Although we were talking about India we both remember the sound of the wind in the rushes very clearly.
I can't remember which stage Eileen was on her route to ordination on that walk but the following answers fill in many of the gaps.
Whilst I had a satisfying career in Christian communication, it felt as though something was missing. Then at an interview someone asked if I would seek ordination if it were possible in the Anglican Church in the

UK. Everything fell into place and a journey of 13 years began.

I was accepted for ordination 'when possible' in the Anglican Church. I had by then worked in India off and on over a twenty year period and was committed to ecumenism. The Moderator of Church of South India suggested that is where it should happen, in India and in a united church. They already ordained women. This was indeed a gift. I was accepted by the appropriate authorities, and although it took longer, it was worth the wait.

I had studied theology and ministerial formation. I was duly ordained on 27th April 1997 in St George's Cathedral in the Diocese of Madras My first charge was Holy Cross, Perambur, a congregation of Tamil and Anglo-Indian people. I then moved to St Mary's, the oldest Anglican Church East of Suez, though by then it was CSI and united. It was a fascinating congregation. We ran courses and seminars, worked ecumenically with the Roman Catholics and Syrian Orthodox, and across religious boundaries. We held brains trusts on marriage or death customs in different faith communities and built bridges between them. We also worked with poorer communities and had a vibrant youth ministry. At the same time I was diocesan communication director.

Later I moved to Kerala where, along with being the Moderator's liaison officer, I had charge of two congregations, one in the tea plantations.

On my return to UK, I was called to serve in Livingston Ecumenical Parish. This enabled me to work in the four denominations which made up CSI and put off the day, painful to those of us who are used to united churches, when I had to 'choose' a denomination. It is still a joy to be in-

vited to take services in Church of Scotland, United Reformed Church and the Methodist Church as my ordination enables me to be a minister in each.

Livingston in its heyday symbolised all that is good in ecumenical living. All the congregations had members from the parent denominations and worship was innovative as it often incorporated elements of each and used hymns from all.

When I retired from full time stipendiary ministry, Markus asked me to join the ministry team at St John's. As well as that, Bishop John has called on me to help out in other congregations so 'have cassock, will travel'. But St John's has been my home since 1991 and has supported and sustained me throughout my ministry. It is a joy and a privilege to continue to exercise that ministry 'at home'.

Eileen Thompson with Jeanette Rennie

Spotlight on Tim Tunley

The Reverend Tim Tunley, Chaplain to Seafarers and Most Recent Member of St John's Ministry Team

I knew nothing about The Mission to Seafarers, other than knitting a hat, until Tim preached at a 10.30 Eucharist and followed it up with a very interesting discussion. I was struck by the fact that The Mission responds to all who work in any kind of ship and wherever they come from in the world.

The following gives an insight into

the route which led to this Ministry and the frighteningly topical stage it is at now.
'I have been asked about my past in the Church of England. I went to Ridley Hall in Cambridge 1989–92 for ordination training. My title post was at Boroughbridge in North Yorkshire and my second curacy was at Knaresborough. My first living was Swaledale with Arkengarthdale again in North Yorkshire. I was then team vicar in Seacroft in Leeds. Twelve years ago, I took up a five year contract with Mission to Seafarers and moved to Linlithgow.

In my spare time I am undertaking a sponsored cycling trip on behalf of Mission to Seafarers Scotland along the Rhine River from the source to the sea, around 800 miles. If you would be interested in supporting this details for Just Giving can be found here. https://www.mtss.scot/on-yer-bike-tim/ Please mark any donations "Cycle". (I look so pale in the photograph as I had Covid at the time.)

Ukrainian Crisis and seafarers.
I have been asked a lot about Ukrainian seafarers over the last couple of months.
Below is the account of a recent ship visit. Some of you may have heard this read at evensong.
I went to visit the container vessel xxx. After passing ships security I was met by the Ukrainian Second officer. He was desperate to talk. He told me his story.

His wife and child were in Prague. They had no mid- or long-term accommodation. I was asked if I could help with a contact. I texted Head Office to see if they knew anyone. Their suggestion was to contact the Anglican Chaplain. (I was going to do this when the seafarer contacted me to say that some resolution to his family's situation had been reached).

The next part of his story was that his Russian cousin was part of the Russian invasion force into the Ukraine. His brother and father are in Odessa waiting for the Russian tanks and digging ditches.
We were then joined by the Master of the vessel. I offered to pray, and I prayed with the crew and blessed them. The Ukraine Master then said a prayer in Russian followed by the Second officer. While all this was going on, the loading continued, messages kept coming in on the radio and seafarers came and went from the mess.

I am not often stuck to know what to do but this was one of those occasions.

Update
The Master's wife was killed not long after this meeting when a rocket hit her taxi while she was escaping the fighting. Their daughter was in the following taxi. We are offering whatever pastoral help we can.'

Tim Tunley with Jeanette Rennie

Pen Portraits

Chris Hewitt

I joined St John's Church 47 years ago, when I was expecting our firstborn, while teacher-training at Moray House. I valued having been raised in a loving Christian home, and wanted that for our own family. My husband, Ninian, and I had moved from London, where I worked as a studio manager at the BBC and Ninian finished his medical training as a GP.
I was drawn to St John's by its architectural beauty, peaceful atmosphere, and wonderful choir and organ. I felt instantly 'at home' as my father had been an organist and choirmaster in Yorkshire. I joined our choir over 20 years ago, and still proudly wear my Dad's surplice (three children, and eight grandchildren later!).
When Neville Chamberlain became Rector I taught junior Sunday

school for several years directing the annual Christingle Nativity play. I have served on the Vestry twice, am a Pastoral visitor, and take home communion to housebound people. I clean brasses, help with flowers, and assist on the Daily Prayer team. I have had several careers, including running business education courses in schools and as a development worker with the homeless at Cyrenians. After training as a psychotherapist, I volunteered for PF counselling service for 10 years, until I retired. (I have served on several Boards as a Trustee).

Lynda Anderson

I was born in Edinburgh and over the years enjoyed sitting in St John's appreciating the peace and beauty I find here. My husband Colin is a retired lawyer who worked nearby. We have two married sons and three grandsons. Originally an Occupational Therapist, I then qualified in Community Education and as a Creative Counsellor. Since 2013 I have managed a playgroup supporting families in Leith. I have a heart for parenting and encouraging little people. I enjoy walking in the hills and being in creation, being 'still' with horses, baking and cooking, being the singing Nanny.

Rachel Gwilt

I'm from the South East of England and moved from London to Edinburgh in May this year. I've always had a connection to the city because it's where my dad is from and I've spent a lot of time visiting family and friends over the years.
I work as a Business Analyst at Forestry and Land

Scotland, which is office based but I do hope to get out and see some outdoors spaces too.I enjoy knitting, hiking, and playing music, with an emphasis on the knitting!
St John's has been a fantastic welcoming community to find myself in so soon after moving here, and I look forward to getting to know more people.

Guardians at St John's

Being a Guardian at St John's is seldom boring. This year so far we have had visitors from over the world who wanted to visit St John's to explore its beauty, to pray, to get out of the rain or cold or because of the Ukrainian flag on the flagpole. All are welcomed by the Guardians on duty. One day a group of German visitors came in and one asked if he could sing. He sang the Lord's Prayer 'beautifully' according to the Guardian on duty. On another occasion, an Australian came in to see the church where she was married over fifty years earlier. Iain Herbert came into the church while she was there and got the appropriate Register from the Vestry. She had the chance to see

exactly where she and her husband had signed the book on the day of her marriage. Her delight was palpable. The photograph above shows a group of Ukrainian students on an Erasmus exchange at Kingston University, London, who came in having seen the Ukrainian flag on our flagpole. They were in Edinburgh on a break from their

studies. They stayed for some time and were then treated to lunch at the café on the terrace and talked about their families at home, their fears and acknowledged the huge support they had had from the British people. Photographs were taken and friendships formed.

A Guardian reported that on one occasion recently that members of a small choir from India were visiting St John's and said they had given a recital in Inverness, but were just in Edinburgh to sightsee, not sing. The Guardian on duty said lightly, "unless of course you'd like to sing in here." They immediately perked up and said they would, lined in front of the chancel and sang Deep River quite beautifully. There were quite a few people in church who listened in rapt silence. One of those special moments.

Another time a 90-year-old visitor came into St John's. The Great Grandson of Bishop Seabury came with his family from the USA to visit Scotland for his 90th birthday. Bishop Seabury in 1784 was the first Bishop of the Episcopal Church of America and was consecrated by a Bishop of the Scottish Episcopal Church. Sarah Armes was on duty with the Just Festival the day he visited so she was introduced to them as the daughter of the Bishop of Edinburgh.

Although we can only staff the Guardian rota two hours a day four days a week, there is no doubt that it provides something special for many people. New Guardians are needed so we can be open for longer. Contact Josephine MacLeod at josephinemacleod@talktalk.net if you would like to join the rota.

Grace Durham

Christian Aid

The Rt Revd and Rt Hon John Sentamu spent the weekend of 13 May with Edinburgh Christian Aid, including opening the 50th Christian Aid Book Sale at St Andrew and St George's West. He preached at Evensong on Sunday, 15 May, and complimented the choir on their singing.

Obituaries

Eleanor Bath

Eleanor retired to Edinburgh, having practised medicine in the South. She joined St John's and became a valued member, taking part in Sceptics and the Walking Group. She was a spunky person, not afraid to speak her mind, but never with malice. Her later years were not easy ones but she managed to get around with the help of her daughter Louise and her faithful carer who enabled her to get to St John's and to EDFAS lectures amongst other activities.

Ada Burberry

Ada was a member of St John's for many years. Married to Jimmy they brought up their two boys and a girl in south Edinburgh. She was quiet and self-effacing known for her warm smile but to many also for a sense of humour and determination. Ada was one of the first members of the St John's Country Dance Group continuing almost until its closure. Clephane records that they had long and deep chats and Ada enjoyed some lovely shared communion services with a neighbour (Elspeth Donaldson).She was happy to see her daughter Frances ordained and later amused to be referred to as the 'Dean Mother'. Latterly it was easier for her to get from her house in Craiglea to Frances's church, St Ninians.

Constance McArthur

Constance had a varied life: she was a teacher, hotelier and intrepid traveller. She was also a devout Christian. Her beatific smile belied a strong, forceful personality, one who enjoyed debate and discussion. She was a member of the Sceptics Group at St John's and enjoyed nothing more than a lively discussion about religion or the meaning of life. She was a keen member of the Wednesday Morning Book Group as well. Her interests were wide: religion, the arts, travel and people in general.

She was well known at the RSNO on a Friday night where she marched around the grand tier at great speed using her worthy walking frame.

Colin McEachran

Colin was a real 'lad o' pairts'. He was a successful QC (even taking on a new case in his last few months to support tea pickers who were fighting their poor pay and working conditions in Myanmar). Colin was a strong believer in justice, and he spent his life defending it. At St John's he was a valued member of the Vestry, recently being asked to be on a committee to look at the way St John's could help refugees, and organising the Guardians for five years. His faith was very important to him, and it came through in the way he lived his life.

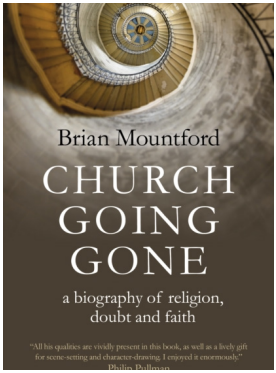
Cornerstone Bookshop Book Reviews

'Art & Faith'
By Makoto Fujimura
9780300254143 £20.00

Part philosophy, part theology, this book is essentially a hymn to the spiritual dimensions of the art of 'making'. Artist, Fujimura, is an American artist, known world-wide for his painting – "slow art" – through which he expresses "Hope, healing, redemption [and] refuge". Every time he enters his studio he approaches his work with "A discipline of awareness; waiting, prayer and praise," and so his work becomes theological as much as aesthetic and is an exploration into that which is both 'good' and 'beautiful'. Highly commended by theologians such as Rowan Williams and Miroslav Wolf, so too, the legendary film director, Martin Scorsese, says of this "luminous" book, it reconciles questions of art and faith "with a quiet and moving eloquence". A poetic and inspiring exploration of the

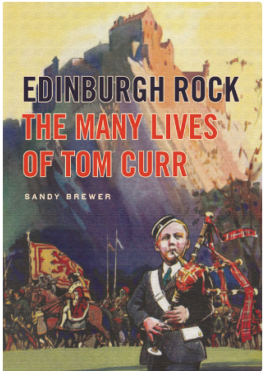
fundamental elements of caring and loving as a means to experiencing the depths of God's being and grace.

'Church, Going Gone'
by Brian Mountford
9781789046124 £14.99



Brian Mountford, Canon Emeritus of Christ Church Cathedral, Oxford, is known for his liberal theological ideas and he espouses them here with his typical deftness and humour. The title for this rich and pithy autobiography is taken from Philip Larkin's poem 'Church Going' which comments on people of all ages who are forever "surprising / A hunger in (themselves) to be more serious". Despite a sweeping secularisation of society which he has witnessed throughout his priestly career, Mountford does not see a correlation between the demise of the institutional church and the hunger we have withing to explore and ultimately 'belong' to something beyond our selves. His writing pleads with organised religion to be ever-more inclusive and welcoming of all while encouraging individuals to a continued questioning and exploration on life's journey. God's great adventure is ours too.

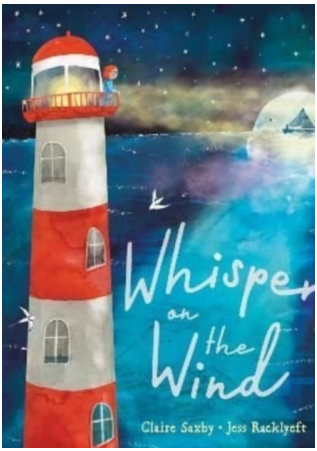
'Edinburgh Rock
– The Many Lives of Tom Curr'
by Sandy Brewer
9781527238732 £20.00



To a previous generation of Edinburgh citizens, Tom Curr was a 'well-kent' name – Justice of the Peace, Town Councilor and Baillie, a prolific commercial artist (most famously he painted the original Scott's Porage Oats shot putter) and cartoonist, a lauded WW1 soldier (he was on the front line at

Passchendaele before being seconded to vital map-printing operations), broadcaster, President of the Baptist Union of Scotland and inspirational Boys' Brigade leader. Now, more than sixty years after his death, a meticulously researched and richly illustrated biography has been privately published to honour his life-time of public service. In the many things to which he committed himself, Curr's faith was always central and countless people whom he encountered considered his friendship and guidance in such matters a privilege. The book not only documents one man's extraordinarily varied career, it also paints a valuable cultural picture of his home city of Edinburgh in the early twentieth century.

'Whisper on the Wind'
by Claire Saxby & Jess Racklyeft 9781911679387
£11.99



Clutching her soft Dolphin friend, Ren is fast asleep in her lighthouse bed – there she dreams of the ocean outside and the wind that "carries the whisper" of the dream. Across the waves, among the scholls of fish, in the company of the fisherman by moonlight, the dream is carried into the dawn of the morning. From the multi-award winning duo behind 'The Iceberg', this is a lyrical and poetic book, balanced by evocative imagery. A lovely book for parent and young child to read together.

Pentecost

Pentecost 2022, 5 June, was celebrated with gusto at the 1030 service at St John's. The Bishop was in attendance, the church was bedecked with flowers, largely red; there were red altar hangings and the beautiful altar cloth embroidered by Gill Edgar for the Bicentenary. In addition to the Eucharist, there were confirmation, renewal of baptismal vows, presentation of the St Cuthbert's Award. It was a wonderfully lively and faith affirming service.

Those confirmed were: Jonty Frost, Gabriella Frost, Raimondo Collu, Ioan Kettle. David Oliver renewed his baptismal vows.

Left to Right: Fred Mobeck, Raimondo Collu, David Oliver, Bishop John, Gabriella Frost, Jonty Frost and Ioan Kettle.

The following were awarded the St Cuthbert's award for long service to St John's:
Shelagh Brand catered for many functions, ran the creche and organ-

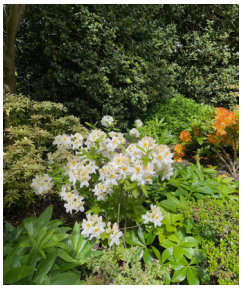
ised the coffee rota for very many years.
Fred Mobeck for his work beautifying the grounds of the church; being Sacristan for many years and general dedication the St John's.
Austin Reilly was Secretary of the Vestry for many years, holding things together particularly during the fundraising for and building of the Cornerstone Centre.
Isobel Watson for her dedication to the Choir and to the church; She is 'Mistress of the Wardrobe' looking after the choir's robes and for many years, along with Sheelagh Brand, catered for various functions.

Left to Right: Fred Mobeck, Isobel Watson, Bishop John, Austin Reilly, Shelagh Brand.

The Murals at St John's

The murals at St John's often provoke a variety of emotions from passers-by. Some admire them for their artistic value; some dislike them intensely. They are, however, impossible to ignore and they make almost everyone react and certainly think about the issue raised by the mural. Some murals require a lot of thought to understand the message; others are more straightforward.
There is a small mural team, including the artist Greg Mitchell and Markus, who think about various current issues and decide what the theme will be.

Photographs by the artist, Greg Mitchell



Just one example of Fred Mobeck's handiwork in the grounds of St John's. Do wonder round the area for a great treat: an oasis in the bustle of Princes Street.

From the Archive

The Organ

Organs have been crucial to church worship for many centuries, even though they need constant care and attention. As far as St John's is concerned, we have been well served, and several distinguished names in the world of organ-building have had a hand in our instrument. When St John's opened in 1818, it was located at the rear (west end) of the church. In 1835 this was rebuilt by David Hamilton, a great innovator. He added a Choir Organ and pneumatic lever action, – an invention that was afterwards taken up by other craftsmen in Europe. In 1842 he introduced pedals, – the first in Scotland, along with a semi-radiating and flat pedal-board. In 1880 the organ was moved to its present position by Brindley and Foster.

The dawn of the 20th century saw the arrival of a completely new instrument, and this is where the name of probably the greatest craftsman in the history of organ-building comes into the story. Henry ('Father') Willis was called in and, for the sum of £2,000 designed a three-manual of 32 speaking stops. He found the shortage of space very awkward, but made the best of it. This was one of his last commissions. By 1931, however, further work was needed, and Rushworth and Dreaper provided a new console and electro-pneumatic action, to give an enhanced specification of three manuals, 43 speaking stops and 24 Couplers, with a total of 2,253 pipes.

In 1973, when the Church was re-wired and re-decorated, the decision was taken to renovate the organ at the same time, and many awkward choices had to be made within the constraints of space and

budget. Since 2002, the organ has been maintained by Principal Pipe Organs (York), and has benefited from a number of modifications aiming to address reliability issues and bring out more of the characteristic style of the original builder. Although wear and tear have left their mark, our Willis organ has a distinguished heritage. Long may it continue to inspire our singing.

Robert Philp with Peter Horsfall

St John's Walking Group

Our walking group comprises members of St John's and other friends, mostly more 'young at heart' than young in years, but united in a love of fresh air, gentle exercise, exploring new or well-loved walks, in town or out in the country, and of course chatting as we go. Walking together is a good way to meet and get to know other people. We would we very pleased to welcome new members. You can come along on any walk and see how you like it. There is no commitment to come more often than you feel like.
We organise walks on the first Thursday and the third Saturday of each month. Thursday walks are between 4 and 6 miles, and the terrain is easy. The Saturday walks are longer and may be more demanding, but we are often able to organise a shorter easier – and slower-paced – walk at the same time.

Each walk is led by an experienced member of our group. We travel to the start point by bus or by car and can usually arrange to give lifts to those without a car. Prior to each walk I send out detailed instructions to those on my mailing list.

Upcoming walks are – on Saturday 17 September – a 'figure of eight' walk from Comrie in Perthshire, and - on 6 October – a walk from Musselburgh to Cockenzie.

Bits of News You Might Have Missed

In 2020, the birth rate in Scotland was the lowest on record (records having begun in 1855).

Three things that happened on 20th July:
1. Liz Truss (with Rishi Sunak) is chosen as one of the two final candidates for the role of Conservative leader and PM.
2. Liz Truss is declared the favourite to win and become PM.
3. In a Times poll of the public on who of the last four candidates they would like to see as leader and PM, Liz Truss is named by 4%.

Last year 44 migrants died while trying to cross from France to England, a distance of 8 miles. In the same year, 4,404 migrants died trying to cross from Africa to Spain, a distance of around 18 miles.

Several Universities show thoughtful concern for the sensibilities of prospective undergraduates, and warn of potential sources of angst in the course they are intending to take:
Thus, the University of Glasgow warns its theology students that a course about the life of Christ ends with a violent episode called the Crucifixion.
The University of York warns that an archaeology course shows 'images of human remains'.
The University of Aberdeen warns of the hazards of studying Medieval Literature. Students may encounter 'animal death', 'eating disorders' and 'ableism' (sic), not to speak of 'alcohol abuse' and 'monsters'.

Des – Service with a Smile

"What is the wrong with telling the truth with a smile?" Desiderius Erasmus to Martin Dorp, 1515

Culture Clash
The Episcopalian watchdog, OFFbish, has received the strongest possi-

ble hint from the new Prime Minister that, among other things, churches must not make political statements and must on no account attempt to radicalise their members. The letter from 10 Downing Street continues:
"In particular we note that every Sunday evening – indeed weekdays as well in some collegiate foundations and in cathedrals – you are guilty of this practice. You oblige the congregation to sing, or to listen to, the words: "He hath put down the mighty from their seat, and hath exalted the humble and meek." We would be prepared to accept the excuse that this dangerous doctrine arises from our Levelling Up Agenda. But it is a gross distortion of it. It is similar to suggesting that the free speech to which we are committed allows you to say things – woke nonsense, for example - of which we disapprove. However, later on in the same rabble-rousing chorus members are encouraged to sing "And the rich he hath sent empty away". Not only is this clean contrary to government policy, it is clearly a most dangerous clause to sing in churches. Imagine if children, or other weak-minded people, were to take it at face value?"
And so OFFbish has instructed the Council for the Reappraisal of the Anglican Prayer Book to retranslate the Song of Mary into more politically acceptable language. As The Not Very Reverend Parkin Slipshod (Platitudinarian) explained: "Biblical scholars are increasingly aware of the need not to take the imagery of the Gospel writers literally. The word "rich" clearly does not refer to money, dividends or party donors, but is, rather, a metaphor."

DORP: What rubbish!

DES: You will also, my old friend, be pleased to hear of the efforts to tempt more people back into the churches by re-examining and, if necessary rewriting, some of the more difficult passages of holy writ. The project has not got far, but one awkward verse has been recast thus: "And another of his disciples said to him: Lord, suffer me first to go and bury my father. But Jesus said unto him: Would it not be better to wait until he is dead?"

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Vestry Secretary vacant

Treasurer	Nicky Benn
Diocesan Rep	Anne Martin
Alt Rep	Ioan Kettle
Vestry	Anthony Falconer, Azeem G., Fiona McLuckie, Susan Spilsbury, Andrew Wright
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The Together Trust invites you to share in a

BIG GREEN SEPTEMBER

Alone we can make small changes
TOGETHER we can make a BIG difference

Throughout Creationtide this September, Edinburgh's city centre churches will be focusing on food sustainability in their worship and thinking.

On Sundays

8.00am Holy Communion at St John's, Princes Street
9.00am Holy Communion at St Andrew's & St George's West, George Street
9.30am Celebration of Holy Communion in the Memorial Chapel, St Cuthbert's
9.30am Choral Matins at St John's, Princes Street (not on 4th)
10.30am Morning Worship at St Andrew's & St George's West, George Street
10.30am Morning Worship at St Cuthbert's, Lothian Road
10.30am Sung Eucharist at St John's, Princes Street
6.00pm Meal service with Steps To Hope in the main sanctuary, St Cuthbert's
6.00pm Choral Evensong at St John's, Princes Street

The BIG GREEN WEEKEND

supporting the food banks of Edinburgh City Mission (SC050644)
and St Salvador's Scottish Episcopal Church, Edinburgh (SC013329)

Saturday 24 September

10am – 12.30pm BIG GREEN COFFEE MORNING at St Cuthbert's, Lothian Road
Stalls ♥ Demonstrations ♥ Children's Table ♥ Music ♥ Refreshments
FREE ADMISSION ♥ FINANCIAL DONATIONS WELCOMED
Held by St Cuthbert's Church of Scotland – Scottish charity number SC010592

Sunday 25 September

6.00pm BIG GREEN CHORAL EVENSONG at St John's, Princes Street
Featuring the launch at 6.45pm of

THE BIG GREEN RECIPE BOOK

followed by a simple carbon-friendly meal & talk on food sustainability
Held by St John's Scottish Episcopal Church – Scottish charity number SC012836

Supported by the Eco-Group of Edinburgh City Centre Churches Together
(otherwise known as the "Together Trust") a registered Scottish charity Number SC040773