

Avoch Linked with Fortrose and Rosemarkie Church of Scotland

Quarterly Newsletter Issue 8 June 2021

Rhodope Mountains, Bulgaria

Long lockdown ending
Opportunities once more
Proceed with caution!

Douglas Simpson

A late April contributor to BBC Radio Scotland's *Thought for the Day* captured much the same sentiment as Douglas has in his haiku above.

Speaking from Moidart, he noted that the horse chestnut trees had taken advantage of lengthening days and were almost in full leaf. Their oak and ash neighbours, however, using nature's version of a risk assessment, showed little inclination to burst back into leaf until the cold days were well past.

Locally, gardeners will be all too well aware of the damage done by cold and snow that were a feature of our late Spring weather.

It all mirrors our feelings as we emerge from lockdown, unsure whether this is a temporary reprieve or the start of a gradual return to a world where we can plan and rebuild. If we are looking for silver linings on the Covid cloud, one might be the opportunity we've had to reflect on what really matters to us.

There is certainly evidence of reflection in this issue as we travel from the Rhodope Mountains in Bulgaria to Africa (several times) and back to Scotland. The scope ranges from the urgency of the climate emergency, the role of faith and politics through to personal reflections on key life events and memories of church life in Rosemarkie as we begin to celebrate 200 years of the current church building.

There is a further theme of creativity from haiku to quilting craft skills

from the joys of music to the skill of stained glass design. As always, the hope is that as a reader you find at least one piece that you enjoy reading. If so, please tell the contributor as an encouragement to continue putting pen to paper or fingers to keyboard. I am indebted to all who submit articles and, just as importantly, those who suggest topics or themes for inclusion. Keep going! CM

Next Deadline: Saturday 24 July 2021
calum.macsween@btinternet.com



Rev Beattie and Session Clerk, Jack Kernahan, presenting 40 Bibles (one for each resident) to the new Eilean Dubh Care Home on behalf of the congregation of Fortrose and Rosemarkie. Five larger print versions were also gifted. We look forward in due course to welcoming residents to our services.

May God bless us with wonder at creation's glory.
May God bless us with fury at creation's spoiling.
May God bless us with courage at this critical hour.
And may the blessing of God, Father, Son
and Holy Spirit,
Rest upon us and on all creation,
This day and for the future to come.

All who knew her were shocked and saddened at the sudden passing of Jennifer Pearks on May 1st. Jennifer was a regular attender at Rosemarkie Church and, more recently, at Zoom Church. A full tribute will appear in the next newsletter but, in the meantime, our thoughts and prayers remain with husband Allan and with David, Catherine, and Rebecca and all the their families as they come to terms with their sad loss.



From the agendas of political parties to the “polity of worship”

In the last few weeks we have been living through another election period. There are so many issues that the UK and its component countries have been facing – the Covid-19 pandemic itself, not to mention the impact of the pandemic on public life – on health, on the economy, on education on culture and so on. There are many other pressing issues in the wider world: the UK’s relationship with its neighbours in Europe and beyond; the role of Russia and China in international affairs; not to mention the ebb and flow of tensions in the Middle East.

In that context, one of the writers that I’ve been reading recently, William Dyrness, makes some intriguing comments about Christian faith and politics in *A Primer of Christian Worship*, (Eerdmans, 2009). He describes “politics” in the following terms: “the just ordering of human lives and relationships.” As we know, both the Old Testament (at a communal level) and the New Testament (at a personal level) offer many perspectives on ethical and social behaviour and show, in particular, a concern for justice in everyday life.

However, Dyrness asks a more pointed question: What does someone formed by Christian worship look like ... if you ran into them in the street? A question of interest to the parish minister as well as the readers of this article - though the former takes care not to “run into” his parishioners except when out walking ... At first sight, the connection with worship, as opposed to Christian faith in general, may be somewhat surprising, but Dyrness goes on to suggest that our regular times of worship are the place where “the patterns of kingdom life are practised and appropriate habits are formed.”

He then puts these three things – worship and politics and Christian faith together in the following comment: **The liturgy [our worship], then, is political because it forms us in ways alternative to those of our national political culture – though ... not in ways opposed to that culture. ... In projecting an alternative future to the one that governments promise, the practices of worship are political acts: ‘To say glory to God is to protest against the powers and the powerful who imagine that they can fulfil the longings of humanity [125].’**

In a nutshell this tells us that the way we worship should not just shape our spirituality in a personal sense, it should also shape how we conduct ourselves in our public lives in the wider society. The quote above hints at differences between Christian “polity” (our response to the civil world around us) and the agenda of traditional political approaches. Dyrness goes on to suggest that the “lessons of worship” teach us ways that Christians should engage with the world:

- **the joining in a new community**

At the heart of Christian faith is the way in which the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ reconcile us not just to God but to one another. We become part of a community of God’s people - what Paul calls “the body of Christ” – a community that transcends social distinctions and a community that transcends ethnic differences. People from all four nations in the UK regularly worship in our church, mostly in English, though we have moments of Gaelic and the Doric ... especially at times when we reflect on the diversity of the body of Christ. At the same time, we are a community turned outwards

- **hospitality**

The invitation “Let us worship God” is not ethnically limited. In the church orbit we have people from beyond the UK’s ethnic groups, and we have welcomed European and Asian visitors to church and to the manse (before the pandemic ...) Our church is part of a global community and both the last two organisations that the minister and his wife worked with routinely included more than 20 plus nationalities in the midst. This was a powerful reminder that we live in a world surrounded by different people and we need to learn to engage with them in relevant ways.

- **reconciliation and love**

It is not surprising, then, that the other consequence that comes from the reality of God’s concern for the whole world



William Dyrness

and his reconciling stance in Christ – that we interact in a particular way with both “our neighbours” and “the stranger” – reflects the attitude of Jesus of Nazareth who reached out to the world in service and we echo this, if we show concern for others, in their everyday lives.

The practices of worship nurture in people a spirit of welcome, and they seek, by God’s grace and in spite of many failed attempts, to overcome their parochialism and become welcoming to the stranger and the foreigner ... because this is a community whose core values include openness and hospitality [127].

There can be some practical limitations on the day to day implications of this in the North of Scotland – tourists notwithstanding – but the church needs to connect with projects that take the wider world and its social issues, seriously, and we have connections with groups like Blythswood, Christian Aid and Tear Fund who help us to do so.

- **space to lament**

Finally, there is space in worship to lament. Such a comment may surprise us but “lament” – is a form found across the bible especially in the Old Testament - in the Psalms and the Wisdom literature. In “lament,” we take time to view the world as God views it, to share in the pain of the world, to identify with our own struggles and to resolve to bring about change through the example of the prophets and Christ, and with the resources that God gives us.

So, we are left with issues to address: we need to consider whether our worship brings about change in our outward lives; we need to ponder whether it forms us and sends us into the world to be voices of challenge and renewal, to be channels of reconciliation and forgiveness, and to be places of welcome to our neighbours and the stranger.

Two quite pointed questions from Dyrness, make a fitting end for our reflections on “the polity of worship” and push us to adopt more practical responses:

"Will worship be a *transformative force* in our lives, or will the world around press us into its own little mould?

Will our lives be shaped by our worship, or will they *deny* what we confess?"

Congratulations, Hannah!

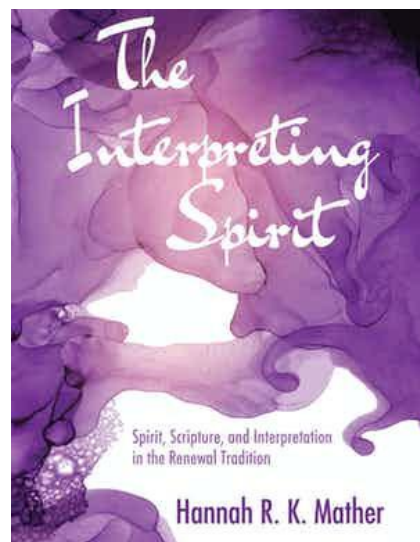
Congratulations to Hannah Mather who published her first book, *The Interpreting Spirit – Spirit, Scripture and Interpretation in the Renewal Tradition* and followed it up by being awarded the 2021 Foundation for Pentecostal Scholarship Book Award of Excellence. In so doing, Hannah became only the second woman to win the award and the first to be awarded it solely.

The flyer for Hannah’s book describes *The Interpreting Spirit* as both a consideration of the Spirit’s role in the interpretation of Scripture and a celebration of renewal scholarship. Hannah’s researches identified common, uniting themes amidst the diversity of scholarly approach and opinion over the last 50 years. The flyer continues, ‘Pivotal to Mather’s argument is her emphasis that we do not just interpret Scripture, but that the Spirit through Scripture, and working in our lives in ways that lead us towards Scripture, interprets us. *The Interpreting Spirit* is the first comprehensive analysis of the conversationthat has been taking place, particularly among renewal scholars, since 1970. It seeks to answer the notoriously difficult question, “What does the Spirit do in the process of biblical interpretation?” The reviewers have been impressed:

"*The Interpreting Spirit* should be the starting point for anyone exploring this crucial field for the first time and will prove to be a great resource even for authorities in the area.” — Andrew Davies, University of Birmingham

"Mather takes on ‘mission impossible’ and achieves a truly impressive analysis. Along the way, she celebrates fifty years of renewal scholarship in this field. A remarkable volume!" Now it’s your turn: read on.” —William Atkinson, London School of Theology

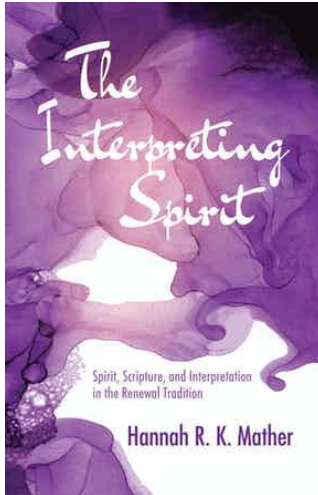
It’s been an eventful year for Hannah as she explains in the next two pages.



Rest, Reflect, Refocus:

How I made use of my pandemic lockdown

As Scotland starts to open up again after the second lockdown, I find myself reflecting on how I made use of my pandemic lockdown. I published a book, won an award for the book, and started a professional coaching business. I struggle with self-promotion. I would rather celebrate others and I am very good at this but I am working at celebrating myself too. A big part of me likes keeping myself hidden away. Unfortunately, however, I keep feeling a niggles that seems suspiciously like God that it is time to come out into the open now and stop hiding my light under a bushel. Calum asking me to write an article for the church newsletter is another small step in this process.



So, let's start with the book award and the book

Last month, I was delighted to be given the 2021 Award of Excellence from the Foundation of Pentecostal Scholarship (TFFPS) for my book, *The Interpreting Spirit: Spirit, Scripture, and Interpretation in the Renewal Tradition* (Pickwick, 2020). This is the published version of my PhD research, done at London School of Theology and under Rev. Dr William P Atkinson. It is about the role of the Spirit in the interpretation of scripture and is also an analysis of 50 years of scholarly writing on the subject. You can read the flyer or look it up on Amazon if you want to know more!

This award is given to one academic book published in the previous year focusing on issues relating to Pentecostal and charismatic studies. I was only the second woman in the history of the awards to be given this honour, and the first to be awarded it outright. See <https://tffps.org> for more about TFFPS and for a list of others who have won this award.

The award was given “in recognition of her efforts to broaden and enrich the knowledge and understanding of Pentecostal issues throughout Christendom.” There is no higher accolade they could have given to me. I love to help others see what makes different people groups so special.

Resting, Reflecting, and Refocusing

I graduated from LST in 2019 and have been living in Fortrose with family since. This has proved to be a God-given time of rest, reflection, and refocus. It has allowed me the space and opportunity to set up a professional coaching business which I now run alongside my academic work.

In-between points in our working lives can be uncomfortable times, especially if they are thrust upon us by circumstances outside our control like redundancy or furlough. This has been the case for so many this year, I know. However, these times also give us space to rest and rest is so important. Rest provides the key to moving forward into our future hopes and possibilities.

Rest allows reflection. As we rest we have space. Then, sooner or later, we start to focus afresh. This process starts with rest. Without rest, none of this can happen. There is a reason rest is an important biblical theme.

When God finished creating the world, he rested (Genesis 2:2–3). God rested at the end of his creative activity. Put another way, God rested at the end of his beginning. If God did this, why do we think it is perfectly reasonable for us to go straight from one significant period of working activity to the next with no space between the two?

Might we go so far as to say that when we do this, we are actually being unbiblical?

Rest

I rested at the end of my beginning too. I was exhausted when I came back up to the Highlands after submitting my doctoral thesis. So exhausted that I knew without doubt that all I needed to do was rest. People don't tend to realise it but thinking and writing, especially when it is at a high level like this can be really tiring. I was mentally, emotionally, and physically exhausted. I could not but rest.

As I rested I began to recover. I got myself a little part time job in IV10 where some of you had the delight of being served by me. This was a perfect job in my in-between rest time. I did not need to use my brain too much and I

loved being in an environment where not everyone had a faith and where people weren't trying to critically reflect on every sentence that was uttered! After being in a 'Christian bubble' for so long, IV10 was a burst of fresh air.

Reflect

It got me thinking. Did I want to stay within the academic world of Christian theology I knew full-time, or was God calling me into a broader, more open space too?

I thought about it long and hard (probably for too long) and decided that God was calling me to both. As I waited tables at IV10, I began to realise that an academic environment on its own would stifle and restrict me. I also couldn't shake off the feeling that if I coupled my academic work with something else, it could open up something really quite exciting.

Refocus

This also made a lot of practical sense. With the pandemic starting, the economic implications looked bad. Re-strategizing in a way that capitalised on my skillsets seemed like the sensible thing to do.

So I did a diploma in professional coaching practice. I achieved the first stage of qualifications last September which was when I set up my coaching business, Hannah Mather Coaching and Development (see <https://hannahmather.com>)

I did question my reasons for doing yet another course. It is always sensible to question one's reasons for doing something. I have a lot of qualifications now. Learning is my comfort zone. However, I saw this as 'one extra piece' that would help me translate and resource the skills and qualifications I already have.

Ultimately, I am walking by faith and not by sight. Who was it who said faith was spelt r.i.s.k.?

Happily, I am now diploma qualified and working towards the International Coaching Federation's ACC (Associate Certified Coach) certification.

As a professional identity coach, I work with people to help them to think about who they are, what they love, and how they can best make a living. Life isn't static so we all have times when we can think about who we are as a professional person afresh. As I develop, I will (God-willing) start doing this with people and their businesses too. As a Christian, I believe that we are all uniquely created and gifted in the image of God. As we move through life, different professional possibilities and paths can open up through which we can grow, realign, and transform into our uniquely created image.

Aligning who we are with what we do is a really exciting (and profoundly theological) thing.

I see my coaching business as my 'book of Esther' ministry in that God is all the way through it but not explicitly mentioned. I talk with people about their professional lives, I do not tend to talk with them about God. That does not mean God is not working in our conversations.

I worked in business development for seven years before studying theology so this route makes a lot of sense. Please pray for me as God leads me further into this.

As an academic, my interests have been developing too. I would value your prayers for God's continued leading and opening up of this area, especially that the opportunities that open up would be ones that partner with my business. I am involved with the University of Birmingham and London School of Theology. I try to protect time in my week to think and write but am not always successful.

Broadly speaking, academic interests concern the role of faith and religion in public, professional, and private life. My book falls into the 'private life' category as it is about what the Spirit can do in a believer when they read scripture. However, what the Spirit does privately and personally in us always overflows to the people and communities around us. When we read scripture with the Spirit (and that ultimately means reading scripture in relationship with God), the written words never stay on the page. They blossom within us and change us in how we live out our lives.

Three R's: Rest, Reflect, Refocus. Four if we add faith spelt R.i.s.k.

It all starts from Rest.

Hannah Mather

Struggling with God!



All night struggle



He left everything to be alone with God

Jacob was not perfect but he did want to go God's way. He left his family and all his possessions to be alone for a night with God. He wrestled all night with him. God touched his hip and made him limp. Jacob tried to control God but it didn't work! He only let go when God agreed to bless him. Then God gave him a new name "Israel", because he had struggled both with God and with people and had overcome. It was a reminder that real blessing only comes to those who let go of wanting to control everything and instead submit to God.

How about you? Who is in control of your life?! **Read more in Genesis 32: 22-31.**



God touched his hip



Key to blessing

W Mather©

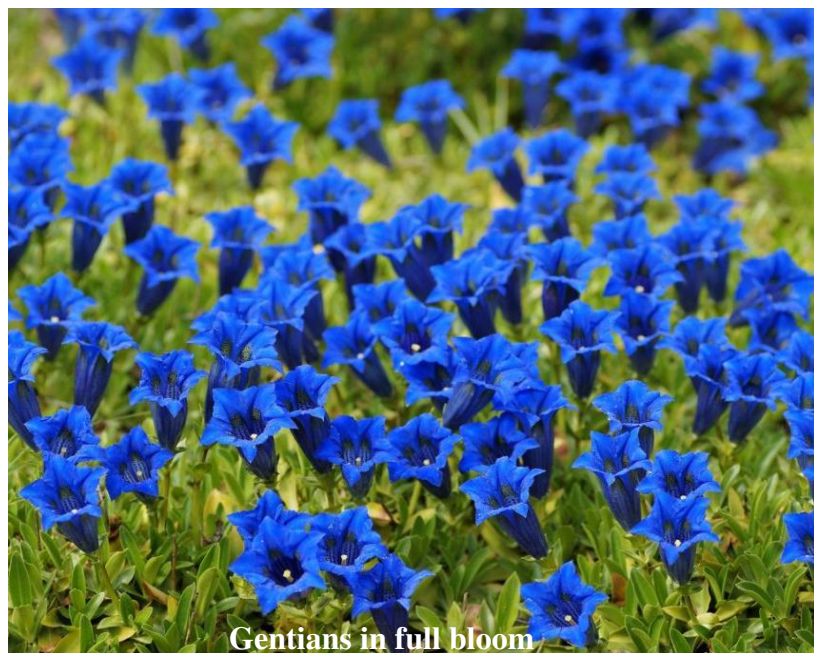


Jacob's new name

'I was a stranger and you took me in.'

There are times in life when something lodges in your memory, to remain vividly there through the ensuing years. My wife and I had a special love of high places and especially the mountain ranges of southern Europe, their glaciers, rock crags and special wild flowers, birds and animals.

One day in Bulgaria's Rhodope Mountains we were walking across a high-level meadow that was studded with wild flowers including spreads of gentians, with sky-blue trumpets opening to the sun. In the distance my eye caught sight of small grey stone building. I thought at first that it was a shepherd's hut but, as we wandered



Gentians in full bloom

over towards it, we could see that it was, in fact, a small chapel. The low wooden door appeared to be open and was draped with colourful wild blooms picked from the valley down below. Intrigued, I went closer, till I was right outside. I cautiously took a peek inside.

To my surprise, not to say embarrassment, I realised that there was a small gathering of people inside. An old man rose up and beckoned to us to come in. The inside was almost pitch black, apart from the candles that flickered brightly in front of smoke-darkened icons lined along the walls. The people were all quite old, the women with dark shawls over their heads. We both struggled to stifle coughs in the powerful mix of waxy candle smoke and rising incense.

Soon we were being offered a share of the simple meal they were sharing: mostly biscuits and some home-made Turkish Delight. We thought it might be the local saint's day and they had made their way up to that spot. The open offering plate contained blackened, crumpled, much used, lowest value notes, the kind we'd seen before in other countries, in use only among the poorest of the poor who live their lives in already poor situations.

That morning experience left us quite moved. People who had little to give were nevertheless giving from what little they possessed - to total strangers at that. In later times I've reflected on the generosity and hospitality of the little gathering in that tiny mountain chapel every time I see the story of the widow's mite. The woman Jesus talked about in that situation had little from which she could give, and these mountain folk would have been much the same at that time.

And those other words of Jesus had such a special ring also. As far as we were concerned, we were indeed complete strangers to those people. We never even understood one another's language but they nevertheless welcomed us in and shared with us the little they had. In their own simple, everyday way, they were indeed living and demonstrating the true Christian life.

Douglas Willis

Fortrose & Rosemarkie Finance Report

Income for the four months to 30 April 2021 was £12,911. This includes a full year's gift aid tax repayment of £4,915 for the year ended 5 April 2021. Expenditure was £8,668, giving a surplus of £4,243. Excluding eight months of the full year tax repayment gives a surplus of £966 for the four months, a period during which there was no exceptional expenditure and the church building was closed for a substantial time.

A copy of the 2020 Trustees' Report and Accounts can be obtained from me, either electronically or in print.

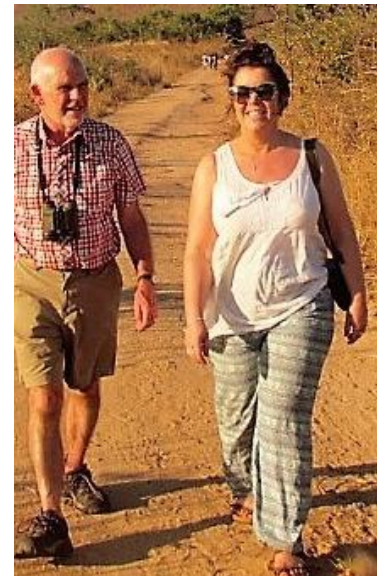
The Kirk Session continues to be encouraged by the continuing level of giving, especially through such a difficult period.

Jack Kernahan, Congregational Treasurer

Getting Serious About Climate Change

For a long time, we've tended to think of climate change as something affecting places far away – melting glaciers, massive flooding and landslips, frightening forest fires and the like. These are dramatic events that catch the imagination because of their sheer scale and also the visual impact when we see them on our TV screens. Yet, recent events at home, especially in terms of rainfall patterns, have been a salutary reminder that in our part of the globe we aren't detached from the impact of climate change either.

The decision to hold the really important COP26 UN conference on climate change in Glasgow has certainly brought things closer to home for us in Scotland. World leaders have had a tendency to refer to things as 'in future' and that's been the way of things since discussions and negotiations first began. But putting decisions off yet again is no option when the devastating impact of climate change is already being seen on people throughout the world. We hope and pray this time that urgency will be a key word in discussions.



As geographers we've taken a special interest in the topic. Visits to Ekwendeni Mission in Malawi for both of us in recent years have caused us to be really disturbed by the impact of erratic rainfall on the lives of people we, and members of our congregations, have come to know. In that small African country, as elsewhere in the continent, the maize crop on tiny family farms is the mainstay of life. In the dry season, ridges for cultivating the crop are raised up with hand tools in the dusty, red African soil. When towering clouds gather towards the end of the dry season and the increasing darkness of their base promises rain to come, the maize seeds are planted in anticipation. Then, when the much-awaited heavy rains arrive at last, seeds germinate. Crops then grow into lush green lines of plants with tassel heads and the familiar corn on the cob seed-heads, ready to fill the village grain stores. For the staff at Ekwendeni Hospital, having a patch of maize is key to feeding their families, as a supplement to their income.



The contrast between sufficiency and devastating drought

Well, that's been the predictable pattern of the past. Too often in recent years, the reality is that maize seeds have been planted, some rain has fallen, then - nothing. The rains stop and in the tropical heat delicate seedlings simply shrivel and die. Or, the rains prove to be excessively heavy and crop ridges, along with expensive seeds and fertilizer are washed away. Families who are already poor simply cannot afford to buy another lot of expensive fertiliser. The inevitable result is a failed crop and difficult times in the hungry months ahead. Putting seeds into the ground at the optimum time is now often a gamble that can go badly wrong, with devastating consequences. Climate unpredictability has increasingly become a feature of the past years. On our last visit we were shocked to see a series of maps showing the changes in rainfall patterns throughout Malawi.

Food aid, in the form of sacks of maize from abroad, is sometimes the only way to prevent immediate starvation problems. Rightly, money is raised out of humanitarian concern in countries of the developed world, like ourselves, to avert total food crisis. But, truthfully, it's a bit of a sticking plaster action, dealing with symptoms but not cause. The irony of the situation is that it's the countries of the developed world that have been responsible for

what's been happening in places like Ekwendeni.

So, what happens in forthcoming climate change negotiations must surely be a matter of concern for all of us. The Creation story tells us that in the beginning, the Earth was 'good.' How good it will be for generations to come is a matter of how seriously we all take environmental issues and especially climate change, and how we decide as individuals to do what we can to help make things better for those with whom we share our planet.



Listening to plans for agricultural diversification, the training of women in farming in which everyone is expected to join in! All such plans for self-help are threatened by climate change.

Douglas and Catriona Willis

From Creation to Creativity



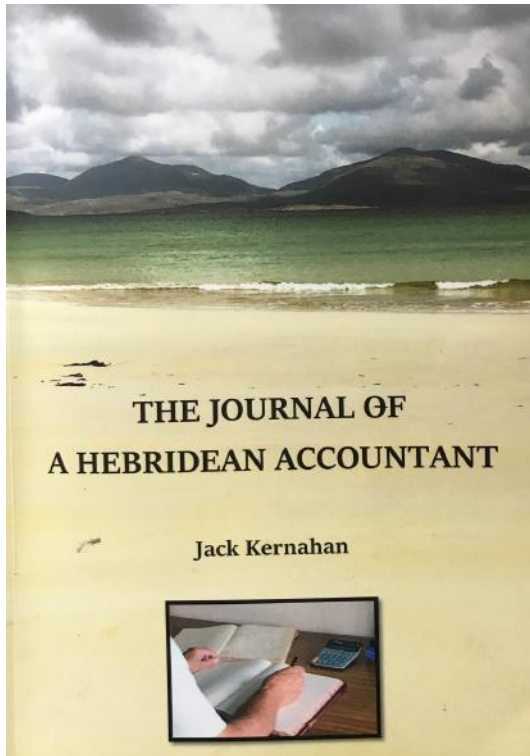
It was perhaps fortuitous that the Tuesday afternoon Craft Group, organised and run by Sylvia Brooks, had started a quilt project that kept them going for a good few weeks and months as lockdown started. Last month, as restrictions lifted, some of the group were able to meet and share their craftwork.

The ready-cut materials came from Sylvia's fabric store along with clear instructions and buckets of encouragement.

The results speak for themselves.



Is a Jaffa Cake a biscuit or a cake?



In the Introduction to his autobiography, *The Journal of a Hebridean Accountant*, Jack comments, 'I would have dearly loved to have read of the daily lives of my grandparents and indeed of my parents in the years before I was born.' It is a sentiment that many of us will share. Often, by the time we are sufficiently interested in our family history, the key witnesses have passed away. Jack used the time available during the first lockdown to write his life story for his children, grandchildren and hopefully future generations whom he will not know.

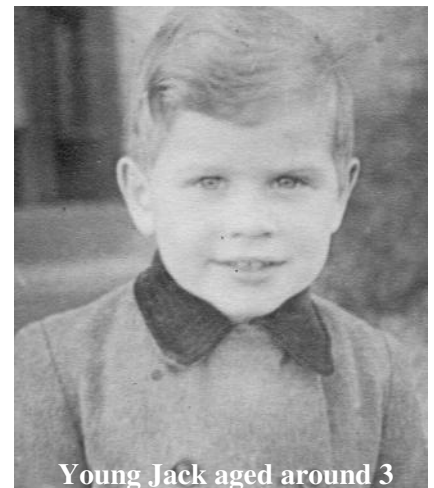
He has provided a great service for future generations of his family, not just by recounting his life and career, but also by garnering as much information as possible about previous generations. On his father's side, the trail takes him back four generations to County Monaghan in Ireland and the likelihood that his great, great grandfather, James Kernaghan, died in the Irish potato famine. On his mother's side the trail heads north to 1780 and finds John and Isabella Fraser residing at Stratherrick with John, in all probability, working for Lord Lovat, Chief of Clan Fraser. It is thought that John was a cattle drover, regularly walking herds of cattle to great 'trysts' at Crieff and Falkirk.

By the next generation, both sides of the family tree were firmly planted in the Central Belt, leading two generations later, in 1942, to the marriage of Thomas Kernahan and Jean Fraser, Jack's parents.

Jack refers to his parents as 'a twentieth century couple' - with Thomas born on 7 December 1899 and his mother passing away on 23 January 2000, that is almost literally true. Both left school at the age of 14. Thomas initially trained as a compositor, setting up printing type which, of course, meant having to think back to front so that the words and punctuation appeared in the right order. But his heart was set on joining the navy which he did at the earliest opportunity, signing up for twelve years from 1915. After a year's training, he joined HMS Radstock, aged 16, as a boy telegraphist for the final two years of WW1. A further twelve years in the Royal Naval Reserve should have resulted in his finishing with the Navy at the age of 40, but Germany's actions in 1939 instead resulted in six years active service in WW2. Jack's mother's father found office work for her with J&P Coats thread mill in Paisley, the main employer in the town, and there she stayed for 25 years.

Jack himself is a 'Paisley Buddy' by birth but the family moved to Shawlands in Glasgow within the year of his birth to a top floor flat in a four-storey tenement. Jack recalls life there in vivid detail. No electricity when they first moved in, gas for cooking in a cupboard, open fires, with coal delivered weekly up 66 steps in one hundredweight bags and dumped in a bunker in the scullery creating a stoor which then had to be cleaned before cooking could begin. Clothes were handwashed in a sink and hung on a four-pole pulley to dry. There was post-war rationing, free milk in small glass bottles at school, the main meal was taken in the middle of the day and 'high tea' in the evening. The autobiography is peppered with small, engaging details such as his mother's delight in a 'Milk Motoring' fruit and nut chocolate bar while listening to The Mcflannels, with the redoubtable Poison McIvy, on the wireless.

But the most striking detail of all was that Jack's parents were happy to give him a few pennies on a Saturday and allow him to head off on the Glasgow trams to explore their routes while Jack was less than 10 years old. These were different days but that freedom to travel sparked a lifelong fascination with transport of all types and six published books on railways, including the local Black Isle Railway. It all started with Saturday hurls on the green and yellow No 14 Glasgow tram!



Young Jack aged around 3



Jack with his parents in the 1950s

Jack's education took him from Langside Public School to Hutchesons' Boys' Grammar School (Hutchie) and a chartered accountancy apprenticeship with Mann Judd Gordon & Co which included a three year period securing an LLB degree from Glasgow University. Seven years and around 70 exams later Jack was admitted a member of the Institute of Chartered Accountants of Scotland in 1971 and the beginning of a long and successful career in accountancy. That career took an unexpected turn when Jack agreed to go to the Stornoway office for 'a couple of years until you find someone else'. Jack stayed for 34 years.

What follows is much more than the accountancy version of 'journal' - one of the 'books of prime entry' - it is a fascinating reflection on the range of activities involved in accountancy intermingled with Jack's personal interests and family life.

There's fun there too, including a reference to the Jaffa Cake debate that sprang up in the 1970s and became a feature in The Great British Bake Off a few years ago. When VAT was introduced in the 1970s it was applied to chocolate covered biscuits while cakes were exempt because they were considered a necessity by tax authorities. The fact that Jaffa Cakes look like biscuits and are shaped and packaged like biscuits convinced the tax authorities that a Jaffa Cake must be a biscuit! The case was settled in court in 1991, the clinching argument being that when biscuits go stale, they soften but when cakes go stale, they harden. What do Jaffa Cakes do? They harden. Case settled!

But the golden thread running through Jack's account is his faith. In the Introduction he states: "My Christian faith, built gradually throughout my life, and still growing has been my greatest experience." Growing up, he recalls the 1000 seater South Shawlands Church often being full and a range of activities for children and young people from Beginners to self-run Youth Fellowship as well as uniformed organisations.

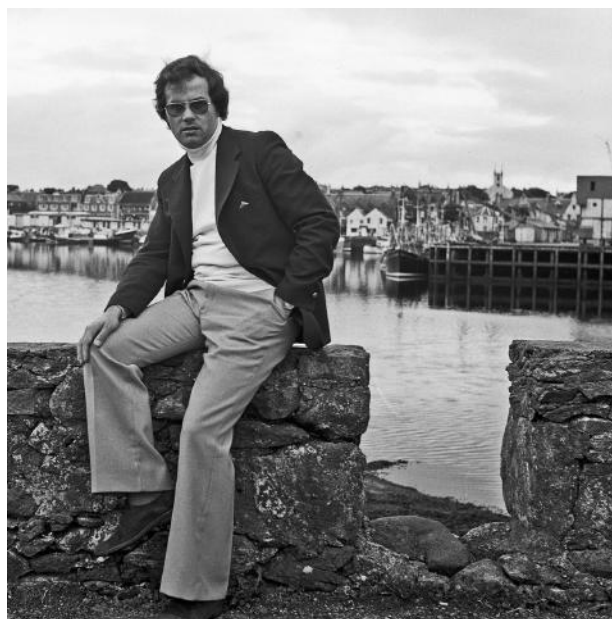
Later, in a poignant tribute to his father, he remembers being taught two very simple but vitally important matters by him: only Jesus has returned to this world to tell us what the next world is like; God has a plan for every man, and He has one for me. The thread continues through to the final two chapters of a very fine autobiography:

The greatest thing I give thanks for in my life is coming to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ, and this must be my advice to anyone reading this. Man's empires have come and gone over the last two thousand years. Faith in Jesus Christ, although it has inevitably waxed and waned during this time, has remained a constant through everything. The Bible, written all those years ago and maybe sounding old-fashioned sometimes in its language, contains help, guidance and reassurance of the love of God and forgiveness of sins and is totally relevant for the twenty first century. Do you know the exhortation 'do not worry' appears 365 times in the Bible? Once for every day of the year!

In writing my life story I was struck by something which I had not noticed until now. A common theme runs through the mottos of my three principal sources of instruction, the last being my professional institute of which I am still a member. The word is 'truth', but in each case it is in its Latin form 'veritas' It is a concept I commend to everyone. This one word is the motto of Hutchesons' Grammar School. The University of Glasgow has 'Via, veritas, vita' ('the way, the truth and the life') while The Institute of Chartered Accountants of Scotland has 'Quaere verum' ('Seek the truth'). Pontius Pilate asked "What is truth?" (John 18:38). I will not start that discussion, but what better way to end than with Jesus' words in John 14:6 "I am the way and the truth and the life".



Glasgow trams - the start of a lifelong passion



A younger Jack settling in to life in Stornoway

Stained Glass at Avoch Parish Church and Rosemarkie Church

Stained glass windows are often described as 'silent sermons' drawing our eye to a key text. Without a text they can create a quiet, contemplative atmosphere conducive to prayerful reflection. Whatever the interest, even the most casual observer will be struck by the skills that go into creating timeless stained glass.

Such a craftsman grew up, and still lives, in Fortrose. Erlend Tait studied Drawing & Painting at Gray's School of Art in the mid-1990s. There he started to experiment with painting on glass and after graduating moved to Edinburgh to work in a stained glass studio for 7 years before becoming self-employed.

Since 1997 Erlend has worked on stained glass design and restoration projects throughout Scotland in historic buildings such as St Magnus Cathedral, Orkney; St Machar's Cathedral, Aberdeen; St John's Kirk, Perth; The Queen's Gallery, Palace of Holyrood House; The Great Hall, Stirling Castle; Glasgow University; The Auld Kirk of Ayr and many, many more. Nowadays, although still doing some restoration work, Erlend concentrates on creating new works and exhibiting drawings, paintings and stained glass internationally. Douglas Simpson caught up with him and asked him to cast his expert eye over the stained glass windows in our two churches.



Over the last 24 years I've designed and restored stained glass windows throughout Scotland and one of the most enjoyable parts of my job is visiting Church buildings. I recently had the great pleasure of visiting both the Rosemarkie and Avoch Parish Churches to look at their stained glass windows. Both buildings are beautifully designed in idyllic settings, and each has its own distinct atmosphere when you step inside, due in part to the differing styles of windows.

The majority of the windows in Rosemarkie Church are traditional leaded-light windows in pale tints and a geometric grid pattern. They are made up of many individual squares of glass which are then assembled using lead came – this is a long strip of lead with an H-section which the glass fits into. It is then soldered at every joint, on both sides, and is made water-tight with lead-light cement which is similar to linseed oil putty, but dries faster and sets harder. Although the designs are simple, the colour and texture of the glass diffuses and softens the light and creates a calming, meditative atmosphere within the Church. There are two memorial windows behind the gallery on the west wall and in addition to their more colourful and decorative patterns, they show some masterful glass-painting and glass-staining.

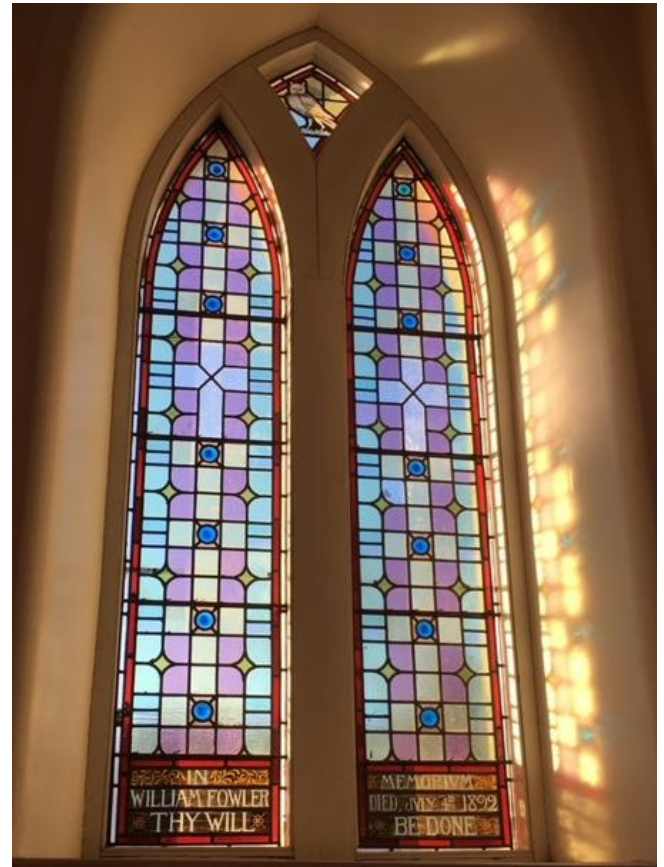
Stained glass windows are made up of many separate pieces of coloured glass which can be detailed with the use of etching, painting, and staining techniques. The richest and most beautiful colours come from mouth-blown glass which is sometimes “flashed”, meaning the glass has two layers of different colours. Areas of flashed glass can be etched with hydrofluoric acid to reveal the second colour. Then vitreous paint can be applied in multiple layers and fired in a glass kiln at 650 degrees Celsius. Finally, silver stain, which fires at a lower temperature of around 600 degrees, adds a yellow to amber colour, depending on the application. Simply put, vitreous paint is dark and is fired onto the glass, blocking the light, whereas silver-stain actually causes an irremovable yellow stain in the glass which light can still pass through.

Avoch Parish Church has some exquisite stained glass and there is a delicate harmony to all the windows throughout the whole church. I visited on a clear winter's afternoon and the low sun made the west windows glow. I love the choice of glass – the deep reds and blues in the quatrefoil-shaped windows at ground level throw coloured light into the hall, and this shape is repeated within the design of the windows above the gallery, which introduce lovely turquoises and delicate purples. All the windows share similar design elements, enhancing this unity throughout the building, and most of the backgrounds are made of quarries with floral motifs – these are diamond-shaped pieces of very pale glass with painted patterns, enhanced with yellow and amber staining.

The next time you attend a service I recommend allowing a little time afterwards to really look at and appreciate the wonderful works of art which enhance the internal light and atmosphere of each of these buildings.



Above - Winter light through a quatrefoil window – ground floor west gable wall of Avoch Parish Church.



Above - Subtle tints and delicate painted details with geometry based on the Cross in 1 of 2 memorial windows above the gallery in Rosemarkie Church.



Above - Spectacular combination of colour, pattern and figures in this window by Henry M Barnett of Newcastle. Late 19th Century, west gable wall, Avoch Parish Church.



Above - Detail from a stained glass window created by Erland for Glencoe Church.

'Gus an bris an là' - Gaelic for 'Until the day breaks'.

Rev George MacLeod of Iona Abbey fame liked to tell the story of a boy throwing a stone at a stained glass thus changing the wording **GLORY TO GOD IN THE HIGHEST** to **GLORY TO GOD IN THE HIGH ST** He thought that was rather apt.

My favourite piece of music is always the one currently being worked on. Far too many pieces, of every imaginable genre have been enjoyed, for a satisfying process of selection.

But ... I thought that narrowing the field to music from this last unusual year, might be possible. A tourist-deserted peninsula felt close to a desert island.

Five areas were significant every week of 2020-21, all of the music chosen by others:

The list of songs for the Zoom church service was eagerly scanned. No matter how apparently familiar, from an old melody set to new words, or a new song, learned via the internet, the range of type and period is wide, and they always excite. I love that the texts are carefully selected by ministers to enhance the sermon's message.

Urged to delay dementia, loss of mobility, and to support those who had temporarily lost their income, time was spent moving to the computer, to Merengue, Cha Cha, Salsa, Waltz, Indian and African music and Elvis, via Zoom sessions. Scottish Country Dance sessions (with an imaginary partner) included thousands from around the world.

Zoom was also vital for singing rehearsals with Edinburgh Festival Chorus (right), Royal Scottish National Orchestra chorus, and Edinburgh Royal Choral Union, some for future performance: 'Messiah' by Handel; 'The Creation' by Haydn; 'The Hymn of Jesus' by Holst; a new commission 'Water Psalms' for the 400th anniversary of the opening of Greyfriars Kirk and the landing of the Pilgrim Fathers in New England in 1620.



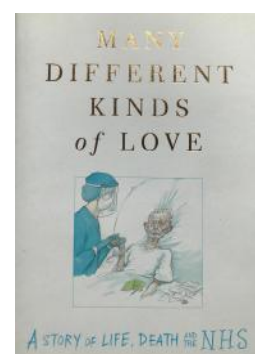
My Smartphone was used to learn how to make recordings.

Long hours were spent experimenting to create adequate recording conditions (fabric draped everywhere), good facial visibility, with light at the correct angle, and memorising (sheet music, aide memoires, was taped to walls and positioned in heather - one set of recordings (Carmina Burana) involved a Fyrish expedition). Eventually these videos were ingeniously grafted together and posted on Youtube. 'Taladh Criosta' was used as Edinburgh Festival's 2020 audio Christmas card. This was the year to send un-memorable audio birthday compositions and to tutor a young relative, but recording 'Locus Iste' by Bruckner will be an abiding memory of 2020.

'Locus Iste, a Deo factus est, inaestimabile sacramentum, irreprehensibilis est'.

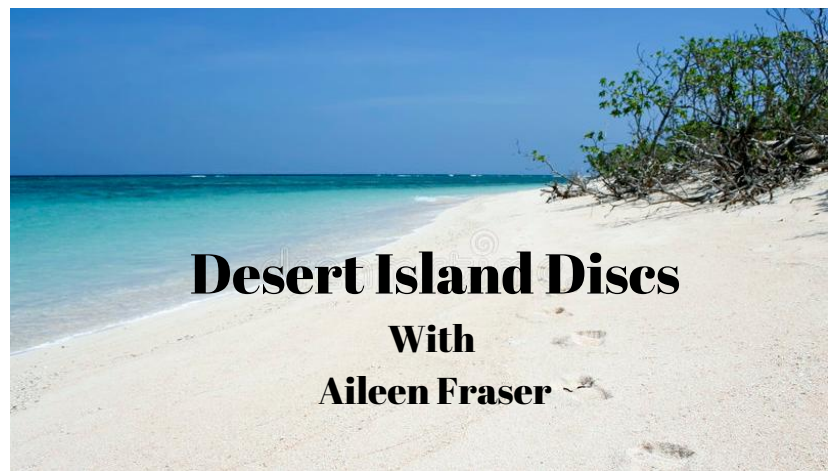
'This place was made by God, a priceless sacrament, it is without reproach'.

Walking to fulfil the hour's permitted outside exercise, bird-song was properly audible. The BirdNerd app. was vital as identification. However, oyster-catcher peepings became familiar. Two eggs, laid metres outside my house, provided thrilling times, protecting near-invisible eggs, then watching, unobserved, wobbly chicks, their parent feasting on crab legs - seagulls' dropped scraps.



My choice of book, newly published in 2021 is 'Many Different Kinds of Love. A story of Life, Death and the NHS' by Michael Rosen, an absorbing account of his experience with Covid.

Luxury item? Definitely knitting wool and needles!



A Favourite Hymn

When Calum asked perhaps you would like to share your favourite hymn there were several that came to mind. At first it was quite hard to decide which one to choose as there are very many which are appropriate reminders for many occasions and life events. Hymns have such a lovely way of connecting you together with people you love. I could have chosen "**O Perfect Love**" which Chris and I sang with friends and family on our wedding day and my mum and dad also had at their wedding. This hymn brings back lovely memories of when we were young and very innocently embarking on the road of a life together. Thankfully after 44 years together Chris is still my "Perfect Love". The hymn though has such a deeper meaning for everyone in the Christian faith. One of loyalty and a love that knows no ending which we are all given so freely.

The second thought was another firm family favourite which is associated very much with my lovely mother Margaret who when facing any difficulty in life always (very quietly) put her faith in God. "**I know who hold the future**" has such beautiful lyrics and a lovely melody to accompany. This sends a strong message for all of us when we have worries and are facing tribulations. It's a hymn about trusting God to take care of what's best for us.

I finally settled though on one hymn "**What a Friend we have in Jesus**" which is very much part of my own history. Growing up in Avoch in 13 Ormonde Terrace and attending the Congregational Church I remember so well singing this in both Church and in Sunday School. The words express comfort and hope for everyone in any situation in life. We all need the reassurance shared in the lyrics but sometimes when life twists and turns we can forget that we have one friend we can always turn to.

A true friend is one who shares in your joys, difficulties and especially in grief. It is so often during such times we realise who our true friends are. God is always there for us by our side whatever the situation. This became most apparent for me when 37 years ago we lost our baby boy at birth. A difficult few months lay ahead for us in coming to terms with what had happened so unexpectedly. In the months that followed I responded to an advert in the local paper and joined forces with a few other mums who had experienced similar loss. We set up a support group for others who experienced loss of a baby at or near birth. The need and the response to the group surprised us all. We organised a memorial book in the hospital chapel and it felt appropriate to have a memorial service which was held in Inverness. I had never heard "What a friend we have in Jesus" sung to the tune of "Scarlett Ribbons" until that day. The poignancy of the words and the beautiful melody will remain with me forever as one of my all time favourites.

Marina Huggett

*What a friend we have in Jesus
All our sins and griefs to bear
What a privilege to carry
Everything to God in prayer
Oh, what peace we often forfeit
Oh, what needless pain we bear
All because we do not carry
Everything to God in prayer
Have we trials and temptations?
Is there trouble anywhere?
We should never be discouraged
Take it to the Lord in prayer
Can we find a friend so faithful
Who will all our sorrows share?
Jesus knows our every weakness
Take it to the Lord in prayer*

'*What a Friend We Have in Jesus*' began as a personal poem entitled '*Pray Without Ceasing*' written by Irishman, Joseph Scriven to his mother from his new home in Canada. It went on to be one of the most widely sung hymns in the world.

Joseph was born and brought up in Seapatricks, Ireland in 1819 but headed to Canada following the accidental drowning of his Irish fiancée the evening before their wedding. Initially, he led a Plymouth Brethren fellowship and organized a private school in Brantford, SW Ontario. He moved around picking up jobs, ranging from preacher to railway construction workers building the Grand Trunk Railway across the Canada West to being a private tutor.

Tragedy struck again when his second fiancée, Eliza Catherine Roach, died of an illness shortly before their wedding. Scriven then returned to ministry among the Plymouth Brethren. He published a collection of his poetic works, *Hymns and Other Verses* in 1869 but it did not include 'What a Friend.....' lending credence to the view that it was a personal poem of mutual reassurance from a downhearted son to a mother who was struggling with illness. The hymn repeatedly emphasises 'we', a shared human experience, and the need for us to take everything to God in prayer.

Beside Every Great Man.....

In the last newsletter, Dannie Reid's fine piece on David Livingstone had to be trimmed slightly to fit the page. It meant we cut out any reference to his wife, Mary. I trust this extended piece rectifies that omission! Ed

There used to be a common saying in Africa that David Livingstone had three wives: his faith, his struggle against slavery and his commitment to exploration. It's an odd saying because his actual wife, Mary, was pivotal to all three aforementioned passions, yet is rarely mentioned.



Mary Livingstone

So **who** was Mary? Well, her parents, Mary and Robert Moffat, were missionaries in Kuruman, a remote mission station, some 500km north of Johannesburg. Mary was well educated at a boarding school in the Eastern Cape before undertaking a teacher training course in a mission school. In 1839 the whole family, including 18 year old Mary, returned to the UK on a four year furlough – in the old-fashioned meaning of that word! Robert embarked on a speaking tour of his native Scotland and one of his hearers, inspired by his words, headed for South Africa not long afterwards. His name was David Livingstone.

When the family returned to Kuruman in 1843, Livingstone was there to meet them. Shortly afterwards, Livingstone headed off to a different mission station where the famous lion mauling incident happened and delivered him back to Kuruman for recovery. Romance blossomed and in 1845 Mary Moffat became Mrs Livingstone.

The young couple moved north to Botswana where David preached and Mary taught women and children while raising Robert (b.1846), Agnes (b.1847), Thomas (b.1848). Pregnant again in 1850, Mary and the three children joined David on a long trek by ox-drawn cart across the Kalahari Desert to Lake Ngami. It made Mary the first white woman to cross the Kalahari but it was a journey fraught with danger and hardship, including days without water. On the return journey, Mary gave birth to Elizabeth but suffered a stroke. Elizabeth only survived a few weeks and the family retreated to Kuruman to recover.

Astonishingly, the next year the whole family set out again across the Kalahari to the Chobe River where Mary's status as the Moffats' daughter and her knowledge of local language and customs eased the way for them. Their fifth child, Oswell, was born in challenging circumstances under a camelthorn tree by the Boteti River on the homeward journey.

Mary's next expedition was to move her family to Scotland while David continued exploring. It was a difficult, itinerant life beset by illness and little money as they moved from Hamilton to Hackney, London, then back north to Kendal and south to Epsom before being reunited with David by now a national hero following his transcontinental journey to the Victoria Falls. Mary had, in effect, been a single parent for four and a half years.

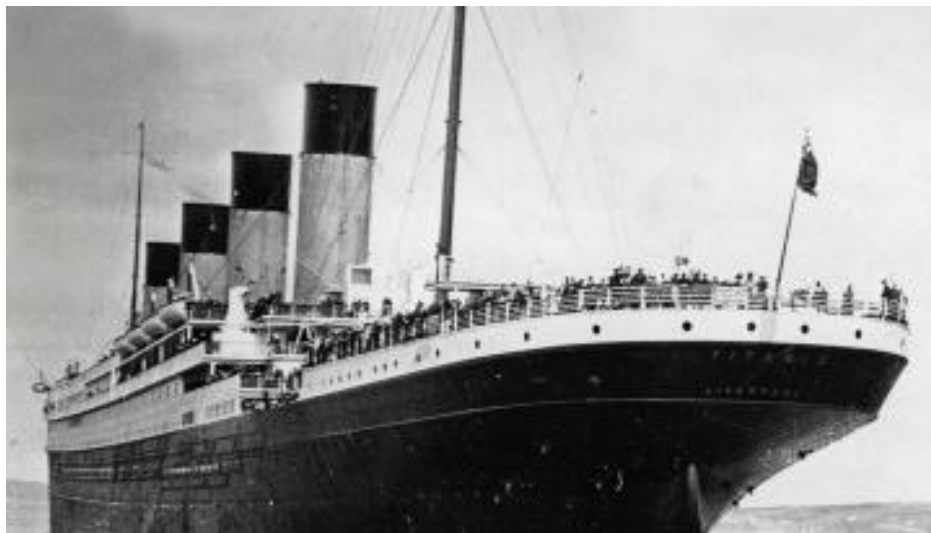
David settled to write a book, *Missionary Travels and Researches in South Africa* that became a bestseller and eased their money worries. But the exploration bug bit them both again and in 1858 they set off with young Oswell to the Zambezi Delta. Enroute Mary found she was pregnant and on arrival in South Africa headed 'home' to Kuruman where Anna Mary was born. The next year Mary returned to be reunited with her family and settled in Glasgow. But not for long. 1861 saw her head off back to South Africa and on to the Zambezi. By 1862, she had caught up with her husband but, sadly, succumbed to malaria three months later aged 41. In contrast to her husband's grave in Westminster Abbey, Mary Livingstone is buried in a remote grave (below) close to where she died.

After her death this well-thumbed simple prayer was found in her papers, 'Accept me, Lord, as I am and make me such as Thou wouldst have me be'. In a real sense Mary was, first and foremost, a missionary in her own right. In the early days especially, as someone from a trusted family rooted in southern Africa and accustomed to living in the bush, she was also her husband's navigator, his ambassador, his negotiator and his teacher of the languages and customs of local tribes. She endured many hardships and long periods of separation reflecting a great strength of character. Beyond all doubt, David Livingstone could not have achieved all he did without her.



The last convert of John Harper and the £42,000 Letter

The story of Titanic and its ill-fated maiden voyage in April 1912 has fascinated people for over a century now. Just a few months ago, a letter written on the Titanic fetched £42,000 at auction. In many senses, the letter from one Baptist pastor to another, written during the voyage from Liverpool to Cobh (then known as Queenstown) in Ireland, is a very ordinary communication:



My Dear Brother Young,

I am penning you this line just before we get to Queenstown to assure you that I have not forgotten you and especially all your kindness while we were north. I intended sending on Mrs Pratt's train fares just before I left but in the rush, which was exceptional having had 11 or 12 services for the week-end, I was unable to get it done. I will send it on from Chicago. We had a great season of blessing during the last few days in Walworth.

I don't know how I am to thank dear Aunty Mary and yourself for all your kindness. The Lord will repay you for it all. Trust things are going well at Paisley Road. The warriors are with me here and are doing well so far on the journey. Very kindest love, your loving auld Pastor, John Harper.



But there was nothing ordinary about the writer, Pastor John Harper – the ‘11 or 12 services for the weekend’ is evidence enough! He first came to prominence as a Glasgow street preacher and became the first pastor of a newly established Baptist ‘tin church’ on Paisley Road, Glasgow before moving to Walworth, London. Pastor Harper had spent November, December and January 1911-12 preaching in Chicago and had been invited back for an indefinite period to preach at the Moody Church in Chicago. Hence the Titanic voyage.

John Harper’s wife Annie died after complications during childbirth in 1906. The ‘warriors’ referred to in the letter are his 6 year old daughter, also called Annie, along with his 29 year old niece, Jessie Leitch who were travelling with him (pictured left).

After the liner struck an iceberg and started sinking, Pastor Harper wrapped Annie in a blanket and put her in a lifeboat with Jessie. But he refused to take a spot for himself and remained on the stricken ship to help others. While the band famously played on, witnesses saw the pastor preaching, praying and supporting the passengers still on board. Contemporary accounts record Pastor Harper praying and encouraging those in the freezing water before succumbing to the inevitable.

Baptist Church records refer to John Harper asking one man: ‘Has your soul been saved?’ and, on hearing a negative response, giving the man his life vest. The man survived. The account continues, ‘John was fully aware of his own mortality but he was assured from God’s Word that since he was trusting in the Lord Jesus there was a place reserved for him in Heaven. At a gathering of survivors four years later, the man he saved declared: “I am the last convert of John Harper.”’

Footnote: In 1921, the Paisley Road Baptist Church moved to a new, more substantial building fittingly named Harper Memorial Baptist Church.

Rosemarkie Church 200

Later this year we hope to be able to hold a few events and activities to celebrate our church's bicentennial. Some possible ideas include-

- commemorative stained glass artwork
- 'Rosemarkie in 1821' leaflet/ booklet
- open afternoon/ floral display
- commemorative artefacts (tea towels....mugs)
- congregational Songs of Praise
- time capsule
- congregational recollections
- bicentennial Christmas cards
- commemorative craftwork

If you've got any ideas you'd like to share or if you'd be willing to join a small organising group please get in touch with Douglas Simpson (620433)



Memories from the Pews

To jog memories of church life in past decades, what follows is a compilation of contributions from Alasdair Hossack, Billy Hossack, Sheila Paterson and one anonymous return. Many thanks to all four.

Not surprisingly, attendance at Sunday School - held immediately after morning service - is an early memory.

We waited impatiently at the front door for the congregation to come out and needless to say comments were, 'What a noise you were making.' There was no one in charge but we were supposed to line up and keep quiet!

The 'noise' is indicative of the fact that most of the village children attended, girls wearing bonnets and everyone whispering once inside the church. The younger ones were taught upstairs using big scrolls depicting Bible scenes. There were regular magazines too - **Morning Rays** for the younger ones and **The Great Heart** for older children.

Bible Class for teenagers at one time was held on Sunday afternoon, at another time it was in the evening. Teachers such as Miss Bessie Scott, Rev J.B. Russell, Miss Ada Cameron, Miss Katie More, Mr George and Mrs Rita Balfour are remembered fondly. The Balfours in particular are remembered for 'expertly produced and directed' Nativity Plays.

Mrs Balfour made the outfits of white dresses for the angels and silver tinsel halos. There were so many angels the pulpit and steps were full from top to bottom. The Angel Gabriel stood on a stool in the pulpit with a special halo of wire and tinsel. The wise men came in from the front door. One year it was candlelit.

Sunday school picnics and outings are remembered as ranging from the Manse garden (where rolling down the bank in good clothes is a memory - and no doubt the repercussions too), Rosemarkie beach and trips to destinations as far away as Nairn and Ullapool. Sunny, warm weather is associated with these outings but also a concession that it wouldn't always have been the case! A trip to the Eden Court Panto and a summer beach party later became the norm.

Miss Joan Penney was the organist in the 1950s before joining the London police in 1961. Mrs Marie MacKenzie then took over until her fingers became arthritic to be followed by Mrs Mary Naismith. The organ at one time was in the middle of the altar behind the Fowlers of Raddery table. The 'great singing' in a near full church is fondly remembered.

The Woman's Guild, now simply known as the Guild, was active for a number of years organising an annual Flower Festival. Women in the congregation were involved in providing, arranging, displaying the flowers.

There were lots of professional looking arrangements displayed and the church looked and smelled magnificent. I remember one year Mrs Edith Grigor doing a huge one on the pulpit shelf made up of more than one dish which merged into one striking unit.....The church was open for three days for the public to view and leave a donation for church funds. When the Guild folded they donated the metal seat at the steps going down to the beach.

When the church was re-slatted some years ago, the congregation could buy a slate or two to help with costs. A book was kept. Does it still exist?

It was also common for families to have their own pews. The Hossack one was in the gallery to the right of the pulpit as you look to the front of the church.

Also up in the gallery, in the highest seat next to the belfry tower, was the family pew of General Sir Richard O'Connor of Kincurdie House. A highly decorated war veteran of both World Wars and a former prisoner-of-war, Sir Richard became actively involved in the Church of Scotland on retirement culminating in being appointed Lord High Commissioner to the General Assembly in 1964 - a role currently held by Prince William. It is said that Sir Richard's view of the pulpit was obscured by a large chandelier hanging from the ceiling. He asked that it be removed so that he could see the minister!

In his role as Lord High Commissioner, he was entitled to appoint a chaplain and to the delight of everyone locally chose his own minister, Rev John Blake Russell. The congregation bought him a new gown for the occasion.



Rev Russell's 21 year ministry from 1946 - 67 made him the last minister of Rosemarkie as a standalone parish. A bachelor who went everywhere by bicycle, he is remembered with huge affection and respect for his preaching, engagement with families and involvement in local organisations. There are memories of picnics in the Manse garden and children being allowed to pick bunches of 'daffies' to take home. There were two services every Sunday and Sheila's grandfather used to say that a bachelor button / pan drop sucked was the length of a Rev Russell sermon! Rev Russell is buried just to the right of the front door of the church.

Rosemarkie church will also be remembered for family funerals, baptisms and, of course, weddings. On the left below, Alexander (Sandy) MacLeman and Janice MacKay, married on 28 February 1965. On the right, William (Billy) MacDonald and Margaret MacKenzie (daughter of former organist, Marie MacKenzie) married 27 September 1980.



Has this article triggered any memories or reminded you of photographs that you are happy to share? If so, please do get in touch. calum.macsween@btinternet.com 01381 622335

Biblical Characters in the Golf World

Billy Graham once commented that the only time his prayers weren't answered was on the golf course. That, of course, doesn't stop local golfers hoping, if not praying, that the golf balls land on the green pastures of the beautifully maintained course and not in the still waters of the Moray Firth.

For those of us who share Gary Player's view that golf is a puzzle without an answer, we can only look on and wonder as we wander past on the beach or on the edge of the course. On one recent meander around the golf course perimeter, I bumped in to Graeme as he was musing on golf and characters from the Bible. He has kindly agreed to share his light-hearted reflections. CM

This item has been requested by Calum and it is important to know that it is based on whimsical thoughts. Please do not look here for deep theological truths. It seeks to make connections between Biblical characters and the world of golf. You may well think you could do better yourself and I'm sure you could!

The first person is the Samaritan woman at the well. The connection is not with the woman's past life but the fact that she came to collect water at noon because she knew it would be quiet. Golfers who are not so good often copy her example by going on the course when it is quiet so that nobody sees their poor shots.

The second person is the Pharisee who would be extremely well-versed in the Law while sadly getting lost in the trivia. This would reflect the golfer who is well-versed in all the rules and who rigidly enforces them.

The third person is the rich young ruler who was too attached to material things. This would reflect the golfer who has all the most expensive equipment and is also very fashion conscious.

The fourth person is Barnabas who is known as 'The Encourager'. This is a great person to play with as he/she always has a positive word to fellow golfers whether commiserating on the bad luck of a poor shot or rejoicing in the success of a good one.

The fifth person is Zacchaeus. Not that the golf club is full of bent tax collectors but that he is a lonely figure climbing a tree. The golfer this reflects is not a tree-climber but is out on a limb usually playing on his/her own as there is no one to ask.

This leads to the sixth person who is Jesus. He/she is always on the lookout for anyone who is left out or left behind. This person will be quick to welcome and include anyone who looks a bit lost.

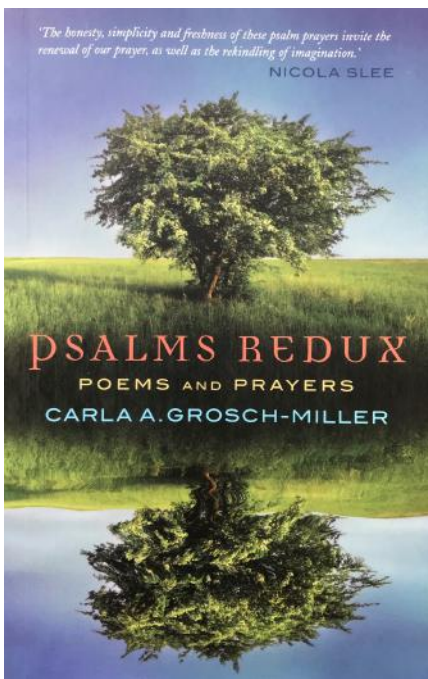
The final character is a non-golfer. This is the good shepherd who goes to any lengths to seek and to save the lost (balls!).



On the first tee and full of hope



The perfect swing?



In her book, *Psalms Redux – Poems and Prayers*, Carla A. Grosch-Miller describes how she used a daily prayer book which contained scripture readings, devotional offerings, a hymn and a weekly psalm. She found the discipline of a daily pause for reflection helpful but often struggled over the weekly psalm.

Much as she enjoyed singing the psalms and appreciated the beauty and wisdom of the words, she stumbled over the metaphors and some of the language when she used it as a prayer. So she began to rewrite some of the psalms as prayers written in words that expressed her feelings in a more modern idiom.

She called these prayers Psalms Redux, using the word ‘redux’ to mean a restoration and refreshment of the original texts. From there she added prayers for different situations and circumstances. See what you think from the two examples below.

Psalm 23 Redux

This I know:
My life is in Your hands.
I have nothing to fear.

I stop,
breathe,
listen.

Beneath the whirl of what is
is a deep down quiet place
You beckon me to tarry there.

This is the place
where unnamed hungers
are fed, the place
of clear water,
refreshment.

My senses stilled,
I drink deeply,
at home
in timeless territory.

In peril, I remember:
Death’s dark vale holds no menace.
I lean into You;
Your eternal presence comforts me.
I am held tenderly.

A Prayer for Family and Friends

We pray for those closest to us,
the people whose lives
by birth and by choice
are intertwined with our own

We name them.....

Meet each at their point of need
and lift them in love.
Enable their growth
in wisdom and grace.
Bring each life to the fullness
of joy, purpose and peace
that You desire for all creation.

Where we have failed each other,
prompt forgiveness.
Where we have harmed each other,
provide healing.
Where we have blessed each other,
provoke thanksgiving.

So may we live with one another
in love,
awake to frailty,
grateful for grace,
tender in patience.

For the Young.....and the Young at Heart

The Old Man and the Precious Stone

There's a story told of an old man, who lived a simple life of, travelling from place to place herding a small flock of sheep and goats. All he required was access to grazing for his flock and access to running water.

Just before dusk one evening he found a place to rest his head under a tree, close to a stream and in the lee of a large mountain. He found a stone for a pillow.

He was a man of deep faith and settled to thank God for the day he had enjoyed and to seek his protection overnight. His evening prayers were interrupted by a young woman who appeared out of nowhere.



"I've found you!" she cried. "I've found you! I'm so happy! You see," she went on catching her breath, "I had a dream last night, an exciting dream, telling me if I could find a place with a tree, a stream, a large rock at the foot of the mountain, an old man would give me a precious stone that would make me wealthy beyond my dreams. I've been searching all day and I'm exhausted. But now that I've found you it's been all worth it."

The old man rummaged in his pack and pulled out a large stone that gleamed and shimmered in the setting sun. "I once found this in a cave," he said. "Is this the gem in your dream?"



"Yes, yes, that's definitely the one," the young woman shrieked excitedly, the gem sparkling and reflecting in her eyes.

"Then you must have it," said the old man, handing the gem over. "Here, take it."

The young woman headed home deliriously happy, bought extravagantly, celebrated lavishly and fell into a deep sleep. But in the early hours she woke up, feeling troubled. The whole of the next day she couldn't settle. She couldn't get the old man out of her mind.

A sleepless night followed. Just before dawn on the third day, she headed out to find the old man. A few miles on from the where they'd first met she found him. He was praying.

The young woman bowed her head and waited. When the old man opened his eyes, he found the gem stone being handed back to him. "Please," said the young woman quietly, "can I please, please exchange this gem for the special gift that enabled you to give away such a precious stone so freely?"

The Wit and Wisdom of the Young

Teacher: *Describe yourself in three words.*

Lazy. Donald (8)

I am a rebel. Stacey (8)

I'm not very good at counting. Liam (8)

Teacher: *If you could spend an hour speaking to any person dead or alive who would you choose?*

The living one, miss. Jenny (8)

Teacher: *How can we help people feel better about themselves?*

Everyone should have an alarm clock that says nice things to them as they wake up. Deirdre (7)

Everyone is good at something and should be told that every day. Greg (8)

We should compliment at least one different person for something every day. Like you do, miss. Jake (8)

Following Bob's fine examples of Haiku in the last newsletter a few more to inspire some summer writing. Remember, all you need are 17 syllables, usually - but not always - structured 5/7/5 over three lines.



**Nature's cycle
Preparing spring's apparel
Warmth and light returns**

Bob Moore



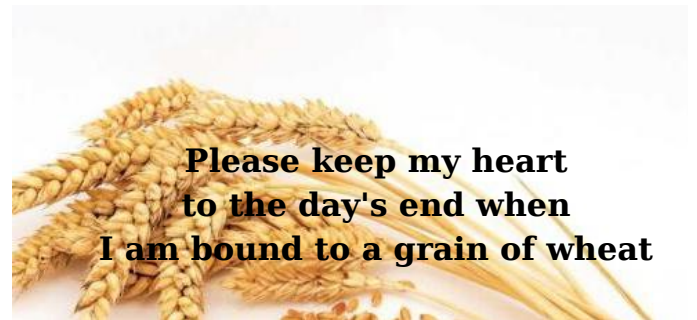
**Rousseau the artist
Inspired this lovely still life
for lockdown school work**

Maggie Wynton with art by grandson, Raphy.



**Fragile in the cold
Strength from the touch of the Sun
Power of the Light**

Jane Patience



**Please keep my heart
to the day's end when
I am bound to a grain of wheat**

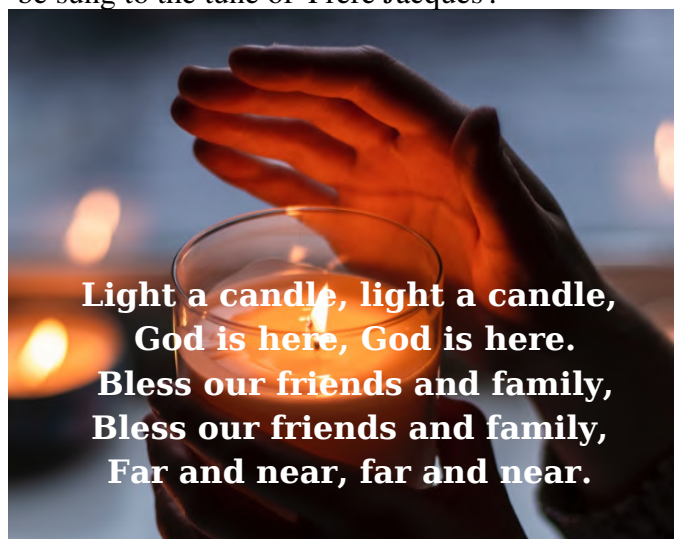
George Bruce 1909 - 2002

Finally, not a haiku but a short bedtime prayer to be sung to the tune of 'Frere Jacques'.



**Blue, blue, blue as sky
Bluebells amass in deep woods
Silently springs hope**

Linda Simpson



**Light a candle, light a candle,
God is here, God is here.
Bless our friends and family,
Bless our friends and family,
Far and near, far and near.**

Congratulations to Lewie and Jane Patience - 50 years on and still smiling!



Jane explains where it all began: "Lewie and I first met in Aberdeen in 1968 when Lewie was studying for his Skipper's ticket at Robert Gordon's and I was studying for an MA at Aberdeen University. We were both with some friends and cannot say we really noticed each other at all! Then in April 1969 I was home for the Easter Break and used to drop off my Dad at the F&R Golf Club so I could get his car for a few hours. When I went back to pick up Dad there were two 'young guys' chatting to him so we were actually introduced by my lovely Dad. This time we definitely did take note of each other!! The rest is history as they say."



When I took on the Christian Aid Challenge to walk 300,000 steps in May I thought £500 would be a great sum to raise. But when £1000 was donated in the first week I was astonished and humbled. It fairly spurred me on and the 300,000 steps were completed by 17 May and the figure had nearly doubled again.

I cannot thank you enough for your generosity and commitment to Stand with Rose and the many folk she represents. Clean drinking water close to home is a basic right. At the time of going to print, the total raised including Gift Aid was £2006. Thank you one and all. ❤️



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Ask the Minister

Do you have a Biblical or theological question that you would like answered?

Most of us do!

The minister has kindly agreed to respond to congregational questions in a new column that will run in every second newsletter.

Please contact Warren directly via email or phone (see panel on left) with the queries you would like answered.