

Black Isle East Church of Scotland

Newsletter 2

Summer 2024



William Mather
williammatherart.com

‘Before you finish eating breakfast in the morning, you’ve depended on more than half of the world.’

Martin Luther King



Black Isle East: a FAIRTRADE church

In the words of the Fairtrade Foundation:

‘Churches, mosques, synagogues and other places of worship across the UK have been at the heart of the success of Fairtrade – putting faith in to action by using and promoting Fairtrade products, and leading public conversation about justice for the farmers and workers we rely on. We are

calling on places of worship....to commit to support for a fairer trading system that values people and planet, and pledge to undertake some simple, practical actions with Fairtrade.’

Fairtrade Place of Worship Goals

There are lots of ways to support Fairtrade but just two core requirements to be awarded Fairtrade Place of Worship status:

- Use Fairtrade products wherever possible (at least tea, coffee and sugar) and to share this information with the wider congregation.
- Integrate Fairtrade into the life of your place of worship at Fairtrade Fortnight or other times of the year through other activities, sermons and services.

So, that's what, as a congregation, we have committed to by becoming a Fairtrade Church.

But what exactly is Fairtrade? The Fairtrade organisation works with farming co-operatives, businesses and governments worldwide to make trade fairer. Together with Fairtrade farmers and workers, there is a vision: a world in which trade is based on fairness, so that producers earn secure and sustainable livelihoods.

Clearly, if we here in Black Isle East embrace the Christian message of loving our neighbour as ourselves (albeit a neighbour who happens to be in some faraway place on this planet that we share as our wider home) we embrace the message of social justice, and one way we can do that is by supporting Fairtrade products. And that's our Fairtrade aim, whether in church or at home.

Fairtrade standards include protection of workers' rights and the environment, minimum prices for companies – and the additional Fairtrade premium can contribute to the building of local clinics and schools to improve the life of communities.

The Martin Luther King quote. 'Before you finish eating breakfast in the morning you've depended on more than half of the world' offers an interesting thought: tea, coffee, sugar, bananas, chocolate, cut flowers... The list goes on - all products we enjoy and have come to depend on.

At the same time, we have so little knowledge of the people on the ground who produce them for our wants and needs, when they themselves may have a low energy diet because so much of the land where they live is given over to supplying the wants and needs of the developed world... That's us!

And spare another thought for those small farmers, for example in parts of Africa where patterns of local weather have become more and more erratic in the all-important times of sowing, planting, and cultivating crops. As it happens, both of us have been in Malawi. Over the past thirty years and many visits to Ekwendeni Mission in the north of the country, Douglas has heard from local families and seen on the ground how global climatic disruption has come into daily lives in that part of Africa.

Ironically, it has been the over-consumption of the developed world nations (ours not excepted) that have contributed to the misery caused by catastrophic flooding, drought, and soil erosion. The impact is at its sharpest among the poor, among whose ranks are the small farmers who produce so many things to satisfy our lifestyle.

The thinking on how we should respond to the challenging needs of developing countries has changed considerably in recent times. Fairtrade represents a way of helping small farmers maintain their dignity, while improving the lives of their families in a sustainable way.

Through Fairtrade, many people in many countries are benefitting from improvements in living standards by getting one more rung up the development ladder. By purchasing some Fairtrade items regularly - or even just occasionally - it'll all add up to a better life for a global neighbour, even though we're maybe never going to meet up!

Linda Simpson and Douglas Willis





Eric Liddell 100

The month of July 2024 marks an important anniversary. The Olympic Games in Paris take place one hundred years on from those in Paris in 1924! As a result this summer is the 100th anniversary of the gold medal win in the four hundred metres by the renowned Scottish athlete and later missionary Eric Liddell.



Liddell (right) has been the subject of the well-known film *Chariots of Fire* (directed by Hugh Hudson), and a biography *The Flying Scotsman* (written by the broadcaster Sally Magnusson). What is less well-known is the fact that he was a member of the London Missionary Society who had worked in China for years as an educator who shared his life and his faith with those around him. In the 1940s, when the Japanese army was in China, British nationals like Liddell were placed in an internment camp. The camp included children and missionaries from the China Inland Mission including David Michell from New Zealand who wrote a book about his experiences *A Boy's War* and spoke at the University of Edinburgh when they opened a Sports Centre name after Liddell.



Liddell, sadly, died of a brain tumour in the camp some five months before liberation, but he was a wonderful inspiration to the young people in the internment camp in all kinds of ways. The ecumenical theologian Langdon Gilkey said of him,

“He was overflowing with good humour and love for life, and with enthusiasm and charm. It is rare indeed that a person has the good fortune to meet a saint, but he came as close to it as anyone I have ever known.” (Shantung Compound, 1966: 192)

Since last year, I have been interacting with the Eric Liddell 100 charity whose website says: “The story of Eric Liddell is important not only because of his sporting success but also his values and the good he brought to those he met. The story of his remarkable life and work continues to inspire people today.”

Eric Liddell 100 exists to remind a wider global audience of Liddell’s life and values – and to encourage the next generations to be inspired by Liddell’s example and to build on the historical connections to international groups that occurred due to Liddell’s life and encourage global friendships.

The charity has three workstreams – Educational, Sporting and Physical Activity, and Cultural. The first of those wants to help youngsters "to gain knowledge and experience of and be inspired by

Eric Liddell" and "help to develop the three Eric Liddell 100 values; passion, compassion and integrity." The sporting side encourages programmes, resources and facilities; the Cultural dimensions are working on an Eric Liddell Exhibition to take round the UK and also possibly China and Hong Kong. <https://ericliddell.org/eric-liddell-100-workstreams/>

Key events this year include a a major exhibition 25 July to 12th September (see website) and a day conference held in February 2024 with talks on Eric Liddell's connections to China – "Eric Liddell and Chinese Christianity" <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uN80I2d5CdY>

Eric Liddell was a very inspiring figure in Scotland both as an athlete and as a Christian educator who was willing to take his skills and use them for God in a distant country. It is fitting that on this 100th anniversary, his example and legacy inspire us as Christians in our contribution to our own society, to the wider world and to cultures that are less familiar. In the light of that, our Summer Sermon Series is going to use the anniversary of Liddell's Olympic gold medal to look at a range of biblical themes connected to Liddell's experiences and motivations as a source of inspiration for our own lives as Christians in today's world.

Warren

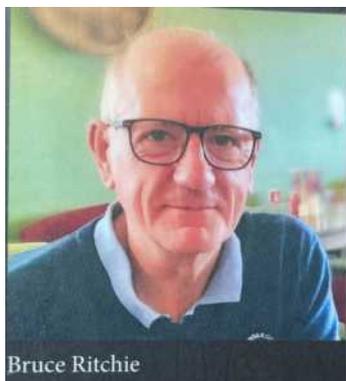
'A man whose Christian faith illuminated and advanced scientific thinking'



When Albert Einstein made his first visit to the UK, he was asked if he stood on the shoulders of Isaac Newton. Einstein replied, 'That statement is not quite right. I stood on Maxwell's shoulders.' That is some accolade for a man whose name is much less known in Scotland, far less further afield, than either Newton or Einstein.

Rev Bruce Ritchie, formerly of Castle Street Church, Dingwall has addressed this gap with a comprehensive and highly readable biography of James Clerk Maxwell (1831 - 1879), one of the world's greatest scientists, born in Edinburgh and brought up in Kirkcudbrightshire.

Bruce Ritchie (left) immerses us into 19th century social, religious and scientific life as experienced by James Clerk Maxwell, introducing us to interesting characters, contemporary debates and hugely significant scientific breakthroughs. It is a compelling read.



In a 'Reflection and Appraisal' section towards the end, Bruce Ritchie writes: 'Maxwell's theology was mainstream Christian doctrine, set within an evangelical framework. From that context he pursued his science as a natural extension to his faith, seeking to understand God's

handiwork.....Christian faith ***demand***ed science. The image of God in men and women ***necessitated*** that humanity study the works of God. In return, science ***required*** religious faith since, for Maxwell, the universe was inexplicable without God....The scientist's task was to seek the God-given ***natural*** cause for each phenomenon, and the natural world had no sense apart from God, with the origins and structure of matter inexplicable without him.....'

CM

1st Missionary Journey

At the end of his sermon on the first missionary journey, the minister looked at the application of what Acts 15 stressed about what was important in terms of the gospel for both 'Jews' and 'Gentiles'. In doing so, he contrasted matters of secondary importance and what was at the heart of what Paul taught.

1st Missionary Journey

• Council of Jerusalem (Acts 15)

⇒ key lessons for modern Christians – around culture

What is most important?

- building style
- interior decoration
- languages we use (or the 'register')
- kind of music we sing
- the form of baptism
- frequency of the Lord's Supper
- the clothes the minister or leaders wear
- the clothes the congregation members wear

ANSWER

⇒ NO ...

1st Missionary Journey

• Council of Jerusalem

⇒ key lessons for modern Christians

What is most important?

- **Paul says:**
- **"We believe it is through**
- **the grace of our Lord Jesus**
 - **that we are saved (in our Jewish culture)**
 - **just as "they" are (people of other cultures)"**

Art and Poetry

On 18th July as one of the church's 'Summer Specials' a presentation on 'Art and Poetry' will be made by William Mather in the church. It will include a number of poems and paintings by William and this is one of them. The poem was written during a camping holiday with Libby in Derbyshire and the painting is of Curber Edge in the same County.



Let the Paintbrush Dance and Sing

To stand with an easel out in a field
Letting nature her secrets yield
O Lord it is a wondrous thing
To let the paintbrush dance and sing
To be on the rocks with a view beyond
Trying to catch those moments fond
O Lord it is a wondrous thing
To let the paintbrush dance and sing
Seeing the sun set over the Dale
Gilding the clouds with colours pale
O Lord it is a wondrous thing
To let the paintbrush dance and sing
Walking for miles along a trail
Hoping this time it will not fail

O Lord it is a wondrous thing
To let the paintbrush dance and sing
The children playing a special game
Without such joy it's not the same
O Lord it is a wondrous thing
To let the paintbrush dance and sing
The evening air so clear and still
Drinking afresh creation's fill
O Lord it is a wondrous thing
To let the paintbrush dance and sing
A chance to stop and stand and stare
To know afresh that You are there
O Lord it is a wondrous thing
To let the paintbrush dance and sing **WM**

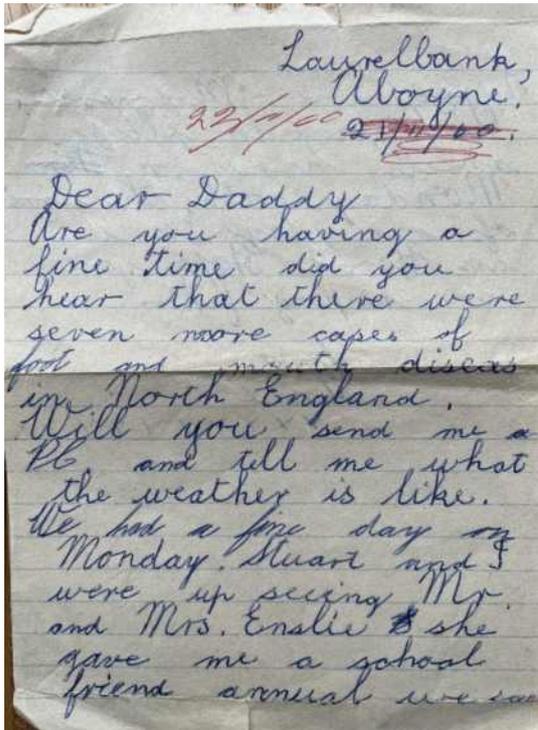
Anne's Bulletins



Anne's weekly Sunday bulletins go well beyond a simple order of service - the attractive cover, the intimations, especially for those of us who need a post-service reminder and, of course, the short anecdotes and well chosen quotes. It turns out that Anne has been a writer for a long time.

Hello, folks

When I was young (under 9) my father worked away some of the time. With no phone, I wrote letters telling him EVERYTHING that had happened....and also who did it. My dad kept my letters which I found after both mum and dad passed. I sometimes have a read through and think back to when things, in my eyes at least, were normal and everything was fun.



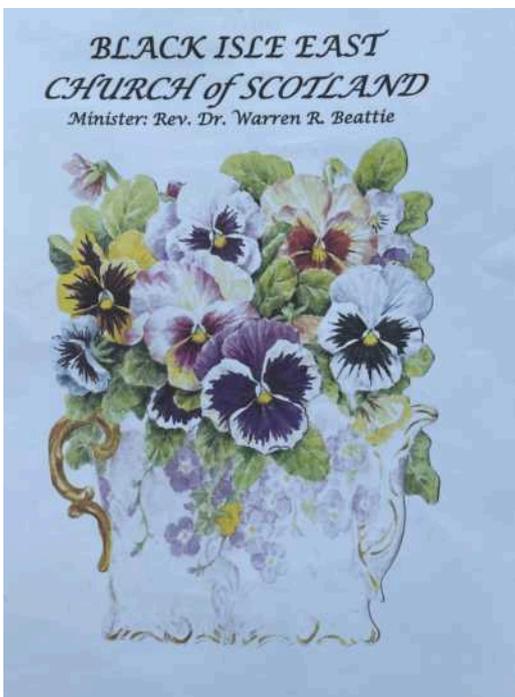
At school my favourite subjects were writing and art which, to me, go together – when you write, you can see pictures. It's the same as looking at a painting of something - you can use words to describe it. Anyway, this changed at secondary school in Broughty Ferry and a certain English teacher.

One day he was handing out our essay books but when it was my turn, he gave me one sheet of A4. He said I could fill it but no more. Me being me asked why? He repeated that I could write two sides of A4 but no more. Did I not understand? Apparently, he was fed up reading my 'books' as they had to be marked to which I cheekily replied, 'Is that not what you do?' Wrong. Very Wrong!

As a result, I stopped writing for years. In fact, it was after my brother Ken died twenty years ago that I fell in love with writing again. If there is a bad day, I take out my book and pen. I don't do Big Words but I do trachle on. For me, it's pure escapism.

My madcap family, aunties and so on have given me a great source of material to write a book. I have only written about dead relatives. Those who are still alive have been spared – so far!

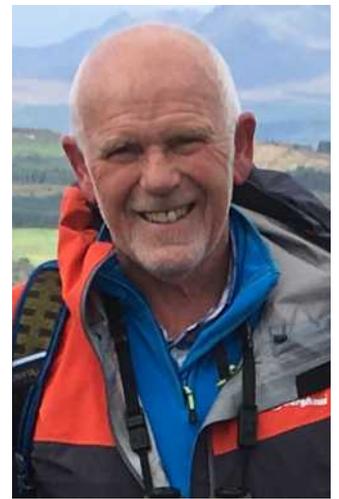
Taking on the Church Bulletin has been wonderful. Sometimes I just think of a topic and then get going. Google is a great source for quotes and Bible verses to go with them. I have learned so much more about the Bible and myself through doing this each week. Thank you to all who read the Bulletin **You do your best work if you do a job that makes you Happy.** **Anne Fiddes**



Grandeur



Scottish Highlands



The world is charged with the grandeur of God.

So wrote the Jesuit priest, Gerard Manley Hopkins, in his poem *God's Grandeur*. Now, grandeur is a word we perhaps don't use very much in everyday life but it's out there, nonetheless. You see it in the pages of travel brochures about the north, as in 'The grandeur of Scotland's Highland hills.' Meaning magnificence, the word is often associated with high places, though perhaps not quite so much with lowlier Ormond Hill, Hill of Fortrose or South Sutor of Cromarty, though all provide a scenic backcloth of our Black Isle East villages.

That opening line of Hopkins' poem makes acknowledgement of the magnificence of God's creation, wonderfully expressed in the world of nature in which we are set. When I re-read it recently, I wondered if perhaps some particular moment had prompted the poet to pen such a powerful beginning. That then caused me to reflect on my own thoughts on reverence for the Creation. Throughout my life, I've been really privileged to be in many stunning situations in different world locations. Each left its own mark, and they've not all been high mountain experiences, impactful though these have been. Sometimes, it's been in rather more, literally, down-to-earth situations that I can say I've experienced the most profound and lasting impacts.

From more than six decades ago I have a vividly clear recollection of one day on the Aberdeenshire coast, not far from my home. It was a favourite spot for me, full of wildlife interest and I'd been there many times before, summer and winter. On that sunny, cloudless day in late spring, I parked my bike behind a rough, grey drystone dyke and started by crossing through the spiky bent grass of the nearby sand dunes. A little brown pipit rose out of the vegetation, fluttering skywards before descending with its 'parachute' display, dropping slowly back down to earth. Offshore, under a cloudless blue sky, whiter than white gannets plummeted into the sea on their ever-vigilant hunt for fish. As I passed along the upper beach, masses of sea rocket released a beautiful fragrance from their countless, simple white and pale purple flowers.



Turning back inland, I could hear the beautiful trilling of a breeding dunlin (left), a tiny wading bird, and the agitated peeping of a nesting ringed plover, also a small wader, this one beautifully plumaged in grey-brown back, pure white breast and black neck ring. I soon came upon its clutch of three, heavily spotted small eggs neatly arranged in a simple scrape in the white, shelly sand, surrounded by the yellow flowers of creeping silverweed. The

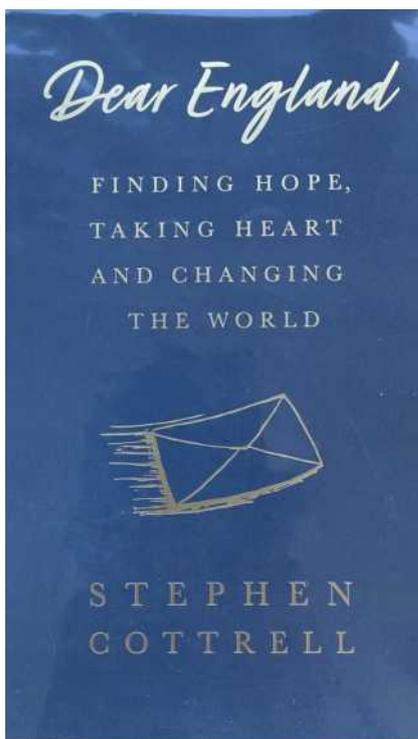
plant's leaves well merited the name as the breeze flipped them over from time to time to glint silvery in the sunshine, all against a constant sound background of oystercatcher piping and skylark singing.

I recall feeling strangely uplifted by that morning by the shore as I cycled back home. It had seemed so overflowing with the magnificence of the natural world and stunning in the exuberance and goodness of it all. I felt much the better of having being there. These were my latter days of school before going off to university and I wasn't given to any 'religious' way of thinking. Yet I was somehow totally bowled over by the experience that day and strangely moved by the impact of it, so much so that it can still be easily recalled decades afterwards.

In later times, I realised that what I'd experienced was a first real sense of the Divine around me; something that wasn't just an echo of a far distant creation account but a living, present, on-going creation communicating the goodness of the Creator. As life was later to show, the nature of that day's experience wasn't unique to that time and place but in the grandeur of that seaside setting and all it contained, the experience had been quite special and decidedly long lasting.

Douglas Willis

Finding Hope, Taking Heart and Changing the World



A few years ago, attending morning service in York Minster, I expected the Archbishop's sermon to be formal, carefully crafted and closely aligned to the lectionary. It was all of that but it was also powerfully passionate, direct and spoke to its diverse audience to such an extent it triggered a spontaneous round of applause at the end of the sermon.

Much of that passion and desire to share the gospel runs through *Dear England* by Stephen Cottrell, Archbishop of York. The book begins with a Café Nero barista spotting his dog collar as she prepares his flat white and asking him why he became a priest. The short answer was that he believed in God, believed that God was made known in Jesus, believed that God wanted, through Jesus and through him, to change the world and that God was going to do it by changing his heart.

The longer answer is the subject matter of this compelling vision of a better world. The Gospel is the beating heart of that vision: 'I want to remind us that our primary vocation is to share this story and to tell people about God and God's vision for the world. There are lots of other things we need to do as well – not least live it out each day – but it has to begin with the story itself: the amazing, inexplicable, challenging and lovely story of what God has done in Jesus Christ to change the course of human history and to win our hearts.'

Time for someone to write a *Dear Scotland* book?

CM

Saying Goodbye



I went along to the meeting not really knowing what to expect but I did know that people like me would be there. As I walked into Inverness Cathedral, I was met by a lovely woman called Siobhan. She took my name and asked how many children I was there for. She handed me three candles and a service sheet. I sat down.



There were prayers and singing by a girl from **The Mariposa Trust**. During the service we each took our candles, lit them and put them on a stand. Later a gentleman read out our names one by one and how many children we had lost. Two ladies rang bells for each one. I had lost three children early in pregnancy and always wondered who they would have been. But these things are taken out of our hands.

Miscarriage and still birth were not widely talked about back in the day. Having found out you are pregnant, your mind races and you, in your head, can see this baby and all the things you are going to do. In some cases, it all goes wrong and you have nothing. But you never forget. As others will know, as well as the sadness, you feel that you have let that baby, your husband and your family down. But, of course, you haven't.

When someone dies, we have a service and a burial. You don't have that with a miscarriage. I really wish I had heard of Mariposa before they started to come to the Cathedral to lead a service and afterwards an opportunity to speak to the team who have all lost a baby at some point. You can also sit quietly and reflect on your own if you prefer.

At the end of the service, I felt - at last – after 40 years I had been able to say goodbye and that my babies had been recognised. They will never be forgotten.

Anne Fiddes

The next Mariposa led service will be held in Inverness Cathedral on Wednesday 2 October at 7.30pm



The Mariposa Trust is a leading support charity primarily working within the field of baby loss. Established in 2012 and recognised as a charity in 2013, **The Mariposa Trust** has four key aims:

- creating global services of remembrance that allow people to grieve in a supportive environment;
- creating a comprehensive support structure allowing people to access the support they need;
- improving the care and support for anyone going through loss;
- changing the taboo nature of baby loss, allowing for more open discussion, acceptance and support.

More info at www.sayinggoodbye.org



Hope Explored

From 28th May we ran four Tuesday sessions on Hope. Bob Moore shares his reflections as an encouragement for others to join the next run in the autumn.



Hope is something enjoyed by Christians and can be defined as ‘A joyful expectation for the future, based on true events in the past, which changes everything about my present.’ The **Hope Explored** course uses Luke’s Gospel to underpin the points made - the tone is set in the opening verses:

1-4 So many others have tried their hand at putting together a story of the wonderful harvest of Scripture and history that took place among us, using reports handed down by the original eyewitnesses who served this Word with their very lives. Since I have investigated all the reports in close detail, starting from the story’s beginning, I decided to write it all out for you, most honourable Theophilus, so you can know beyond the shadow of a doubt the reliability of what you were taught. (The Message)

The course is divided into three sections which look at significant life questions, briefly outlined below.

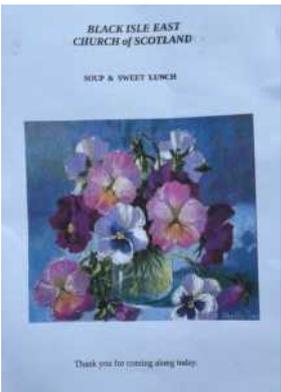
- **Hope** - how can we find hope in a world full of disappointment? Jesus calmed a storm on Lake Galilee and raised a dead girl proving he is a mighty God who cares for his world and wants to give people hope.
- **Peace** - is there any hope of us living at peace with ourselves and one another? We all want peace but the problem is we want it on our terms. The difficulty is more than horizontal - there is also a vertical element between us and our Creator. We should say, ‘Your Life, Your Rules’ but instead we say, ‘Our Life, Our Rules’. But there is hope. Jesus, the Prince of Peace, who, as he was dying on the cross, told the criminal next to him, ‘Today you will be with me in paradise.’ made possible because the criminal, acknowledges his wrongdoing, recognises Jesus as King, and cries out for mercy.
- **Purpose** - where can we find a sense of purpose which will fill our lives with genuine meaning? Jesus was crucified on Friday but on Sunday, when the women arrived at his tomb, it was empty. Two angels told them ‘He is not here, he has risen.’ This is hard to believe, then as now. The disciples initially dismissed it but in the years that followed, they gave their lives for this claim.

Each session consists of a well produced film followed by discussion and the second part of the film, concluding with the exploration of a bible passage. Christianity Explored ministries produce four courses, **Hope Explored**, **Christianity Explored**, **Life Explored** and **Discipleship Explored** - all will help to deepen our faith. When you attend you get the extra benefit of the discussion sessions. Even if you only listen and don’t take part in the discussion you will still benefit from having heard other views. Later this year we hope to run the **Life Explored** course, ‘An opportunity to consider questions of life and fulfilment and look at what the Bible says about them.’ Please join us - you’ll be made very welcome!

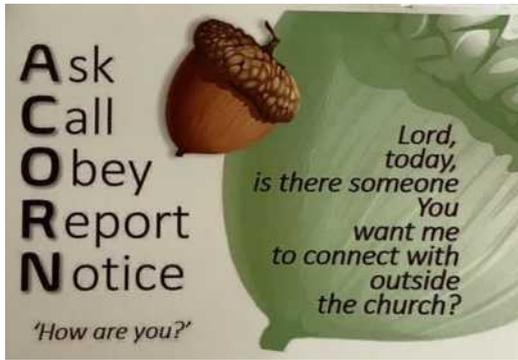
Soup and Sweet Lunch



Avoch Hall was a busy place between 12 - 2.30 on Saturday 22 June as people welcomed the return of Soup and Sweet lunches, so popular in the Avoch Hall for many years. A huge thank you to all who supported the event and raised a wonderful £552.58 for the Pastoral Care Team. However, the biggest thanks goes to the Pastoral Care Team themselves for providing - and serving - such a fine and appetising selection of soups and sweets. We are already looking forward to the next one! 😊😊



Acorn Moments



The number of people committing to creating to a short morning prayer, 'Lord show me someone I should get in touch with' and following through with a 'How are you doing?' call is on the increase. The initiative is beautifully described by William Mather as 'A lovely reminder to pray and create conversations that just have a lovely feel of God about them without being pushy or coming up with glib phrases.' They take many forms.

A Thank You

A gift of a plant at the door with a short message.

Thank you for thinking of me. Thank you for listening to all my worries. Thank you for taking me to Crofters for a coffee - I surely wouldn't have gone on my own. Just thank you.

A Short Quote from a Long Conversation

'You were meant to sit in that seat.'

'How so?'

'Well, we've had a conversation that wouldn't have happened if either of us had sat somewhere else on this train.'

'You mean it was fate?'

Laughs 'Maybe that's what it was.' *Pause.*

'All I can say for sure is that you've listened and you've made me think.' *Pause.* 'It seems that my agnostic cloak is a bit more threadbare than I realised.....'

A Meeting of Minds

It was supposed to be a paired walking discussion on a pressing social issue but segued into a sharing of a post-Covid personal crisis, the loss of a spouse, a parent with long Covid, a family crisis and a 'lost' sibling.

Two people from different Abrahamic faiths finding common ground and mutual understanding through supportive listening.

Appointment

'I can offer you an appointment for your nails next Sunday morning.'

'Sorry, but I'll be in church then.'

'You go to church?'

'Yes.'

'I used to go.'

'Why did you stop?'

'Don't know. Just did. It got boring.'

'Would you go back?'

'Don't know. Maybe. Not on Sunday morning though. I get more money working on Sundays..... I liked RE in school. I've still got questions.....'

A Chance Encounter?

'It's a lovely day.'

'Yes indeed - so good to feel the sun on your face thank God.'

'Can I ask you a question?'

'Of course.'

'Why do you say thank God?'

'Because I thank God all the time.'

'Not just a saying then?'

'Definitely not just a saying.'

'My gran used to thank God all the time. She used to mean it as well. I loved my gran.'

'When did she pass away?'

'Three years last Friday.'

'A special person?'

'Yes.....so good to me, so kind. She had something I don't have.....'

Better Off Dead?

I wonder how many of you saw 'Better Off Dead?' the TV documentary by Liz Carr (right), described as "an actor and disability rights activist," who, along with several of her friends discussed their experience of people asking them the question: "Wouldn't you be better off dead?" The programme also looked at the impact in countries where legislation had been changed to allow Assisted Dying and Euthanasia.



It was a fascinating watch, shocking and moving, punctuated by dark humour. Some scenes stay with me:-

Liz hurtling along in her motorised wheelchair looking up at a multi-storeyed modern Canadian hospital. There, she met a smiling doctor, with a bright personality, who assured her that helping people to end their lives was the most fulfilling work she had done in her career. She had helped put to death around 400 people ...

The man in another Canadian city who had become homeless, suffered poor mental health and had ended up booked on Canada's MAiD - (Medical Assistance in Dying) programme with a date set for his death a few weeks later. A TV reporter came across his story, interviewed him, broadcast his situation and members of the public raised enough money to allow him to rent a home, re-establish his life and cancel his scheduled appointment with death.

The distraught daughter who received a message explaining that her mother, after a relatively minor incident, had decided to end her life. The horrified daughter immediately contacted her mother's GP, both agreeing they thought this totally inappropriate. Despite their protestations, the assisted death went ahead.

The programme's final section where a group of Liz Carr's friends talked animatedly in a circle, all in wheelchairs, with varying degrees of disability, challenging the attitudes they had encountered - "Just because someone else has to wipe my bottom does not make me any less valuable as a human being ..." They knew their worth as people. They were, perhaps unknowingly, articulating the Christian truth that we are made in God's image and therefore have intrinsic value, whatever our abilities or disabilities. Liz Carr and her friends did not think they would be "better off dead"!

Now, dying is a very delicate and sensitive subject, especially for those of us who have witnessed the suffering of a loved one as they cope with a terrible illness or are approaching death. In the maelstrom of emotions and incredibly tough challenges which such events bring, it is easy to understand why some would like to be able to end their own life when they wish. However, improved care, discussion of options other than ending one's life and proper support may result in someone changing their mind and enjoying many more years of life. With proper palliative care, so much can be done to ease suffering, and some very special conversations take place in the weeks, days and hours before a person leaves this life.

Against this wider context, an MSP has brought a bill, euphemistically called the Assisted Dying Bill which will be voted on in the late summer/early autumn. The MSP is trying to legalise Assisted

Suicide in Scotland. For many who fear an agonising death, their support for the bill is an expression of their desire to have personal autonomy. However, as the documentary so vividly showed, wherever this type of legislation has been brought in, it has become a 'slippery slope', where the original safeguards are undermined. As a result other groups of people, young and old, can apply to end their lives. Liz Carr talked with Times journalist Melanie Reid, herself in a wheelchair following a riding accident, and noted what is a personal elective choice for some, can become a threat to other groups in society. As Liz Carr put it to Reid and her desire for 'control': "Your 'choice' threatens my existence."

In the Netherlands where euthanasia was legalised in 2004, initially only for those with 'terminal conditions', it is now permitted for the disabled, the mentally ill, those with anorexia and even children. As Liz Carr and her friends realise, such changes in legislation have chilling and widespread social effects. The vulnerable come under pressure to avoid being a burden, to slip away conveniently, saving families and the state so much in terms of time, money and care.

Not only is the MSP seeking to legalise Assisted Suicide, he is also wanting doctors to be very involved in the process. Doctors, who have promised to care for, not harm, their patients, are now being asked to enable a patient to take their own life. Freedom of conscience is mentioned in the bill as a protection for health professionals but, as history has shown, this protection is often eroded.

In a society, where individual rights and choices prevail, many feel that such positions on euthanasia are completely acceptable and even desirable. However, the idea that deaths can be "assisted" and individuals at vulnerable moments or categories of vulnerable people can be swept into unwanted euthanasia raises a number of issues.

Firstly, for Christians, such approaches do not reflect Christian ethical stances. 'Being made in the image of God' means that life is valued. This Christian world view means that medical science practiced wisely by competent compassionate practitioners must be used to bring palliative care and dignity to those who are suffering from all kinds of illness and pain including terminal illness.

Secondly, it raises enormous ethical challenges for medical doctors who could come under pressure to be unwilling participants in the ending of life rather than the care of life.

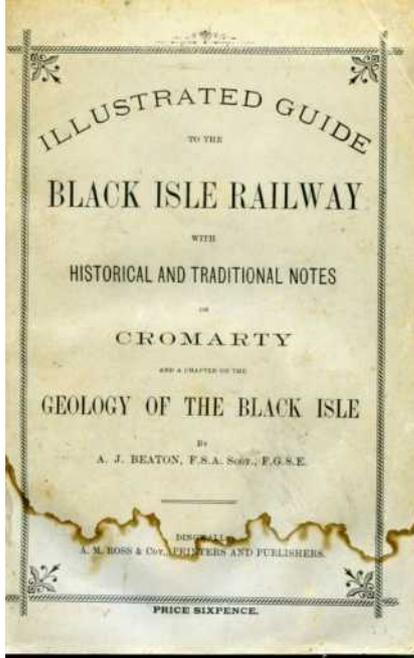
Thirdly, there are the pressures that forms of euthanasia can be used coercively, targeting vulnerable groups – seen in a society drawing only on utilitarian values – as a convenient and frankly 'cheaper' means of avoiding the provision of high quality palliative care. Currently in Scotland, there are more MSPs than there are doctors in Palliative Care Medicine.

Such chilling scenarios are no longer the stuff of science fiction – countries like those mentioned above have seen shifts in legislation and a widening of the noose of euthanasia to groups and people in ways that would have been considered, even ten years ago, unthinkable positions in our society. Personally, I am writing to all my MSPs to express my concerns but, more importantly, please pray that we would improve how we care for the people of Scotland, not how we kill them.

For more information, please see <https://carenotkilling.scot/>

Rosemarkie Church 1894

130 years ago, in July 1894, following the opening of the railway from Muir of Ord to Fortrose in February, there was published the *Illustrated Guide to the Black Isle Railway* by Angus J Beaton. It provides a fascinating insight into life here at the close of the nineteenth century, when membership of Fortrose & Rosemarkie 9 hole Golf Club cost five shillings (25p) for a year,



while the hire of the commodious Fortrose Volunteer Hall for a concert or a political meeting would cost over four times that (one guinea or £1.05) for an evening!

The author describes several villages and buildings in the Black Isle as well as Fort George which was easily reached by ferry from Chanonry Point, giving much in the way of historical detail. The portion dealing with Rosemarkie Church is worth quoting verbatim:

The old church of Rosemarkie occupied the site of the present Parish Church and was founded in the seventh century by St Boniface. It is chronicled that in the winter of 716 Pope Gregory II founded Rosemarkyne in Ross, sending Saint Boniface to live there, Anastas being then Emperor of Rome and “Nectan Derly” reigning over Picts in Scotland. Maluog or Lagaduis, an abbot and bishop of Lismore, who died in 577, is said to have founded a Columban Monastery in Rosemarkie.

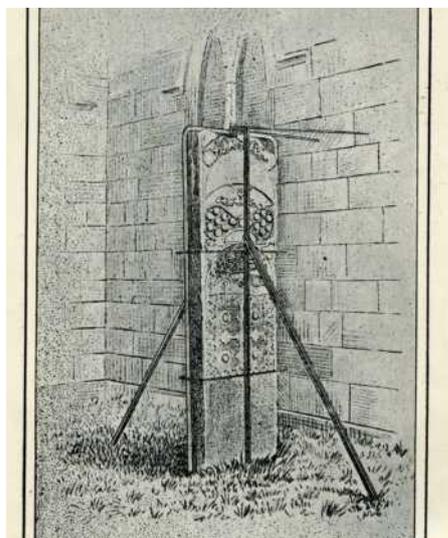
Note – The Church of Rosemarky, dedicated to Saint Boniface, stood in the town of Rosemarky on a bank of sand near the sea-shore. In repairing it in 1735 there was found in a vault, under an ancient steeple, some stone coffins of rude workmanship. – Origines Parochiales Scoticae.

A well at Rosemarkie is still known as “St Boniface’s Well.” Perhaps the most interesting and valuable discovery we have recorded was made at Rosemarkie in the finding of the cross, or sculptured stone, which was found under the flooring of the Parish Church of Rosemarkie. The stone was appropriated by the contractor and afterwards laid on his grave. It was substituted by a new grave-stone by a few interested antiquaries, and placed in its present position, at the north-west corner of the Parish Church. There is a story current that a crozier, or “bachiul mhor”, a ring, and crystal ball was found under the stone, raising the supposition that Moluag was buried there, as St Columba gave such symbols of authority to this disciple only. The carving on this stone is very elaborate and intricate – the principal feature in the design is the prominence given to the cross, although the spectacles, mirror and other decorations peculiar to Celtic designs are represented. A peculiar and intricate design of knotted work covers every portion of the stone not occupied by the other ornaments. It seems a pity to have so rare a specimen of Celtic art exposed to the defacing action of the elements – could it not find a spare corner inside the Church, or a small ornamental covering made for it in its present position?

In 1787 several silver coins were found in a small cairn of stones near Rosemarkie. They were mostly shillings of Queen Elizabeth, with a mixture of other coins, and particularly some of the time of James I and Charles I.

A circular mound once existed on the terrace above the town, towards the west end, but was considerably defaced, if not entirely destroyed, some years ago by erecting houses thereon. It was called Court Hill, and no doubt was the court where justice was dispensed in olden times.

The Rev James Macdowall, parish minister, informed me that the early session records of the parish prior to 1730 were destroyed. There are two interesting silver communion cups belonging to the parish, given by Countess Isabella of Seaforth, for the Church of Rosemarkie in 1686, bearing the following Latin inscription:- DONUM HONORAB MAE ISOBELAE COMITTSSAE DE SEAFORT IN HONOREM DEI ET USUM ECCLESIAE DE ROSMARKIN Ao Dni 1686.



The market cross (left) stood at the west end of the High Street, near the middle of the road. It was knocked down about fifty years ago by a load of hay and broken to pieces. No trace of the fragments can now be found. It consisted of an octagonal sandstone slab with a cap on the top. The base of the cross was supported or built in a square box of stones, five or six feet square, and about two feet high. This support was removed some years previous to the smashing of the cross to build a well dug close by.

(end of 1894 description)

The above was written in the first half of 1894. No mention is made of the major alterations about to be made to the interior of the Church, principally the re-siting of the pulpit from the south to the east wall, the construction of the gallery and the creation of the vestry and the upper room. Contracts for this work were being sought at the end of March, so the work would not have been commenced when the book was written.

Mr Beaton would have been delighted that the Cross was eventually given fully sheltered accommodation, although it was in the open air for nearly a hundred years. Stuart Edmond in his history of the Parish and its Churches records that it was erected in an iron frame from 1880 to 1978 when it was moved to the Groam House Museum, where it can still be seen today. The article above states that it was at the north-west corner of the Church. It was situated to the right of the main entrance when looking at the church from the outside, immediately to the right of the double window on the west wall, which I think is best described as the south-west corner of the Church. From 1967 the grave of the late Rev Robert Blake Russell, the last minister of Rosemarkie before the union with Fortrose, lay beside the stone.

The 1894 Guide was illustrated by several photographs taken by the author during his visit to the area. Remarkably, and to my great disappointment, none shows the railway in its first weeks of operation! He did, however, photograph the cross. The stonework on the church building shown in the photograph can be easily traced today.

The communion cup referred to, now 338 years old, is still in use in the twenty-first century.

The Beauties of Nature

(Sung to the tune of 'My Favourite Things')

***Beautiful broom and glorious gorse
rambling red roses, sweet smelling of course.
wonderful woodbine entwining the trees.
beauties of nature our senses do please.***



***Sounds of the garden, the humming of bees
extracting the pollen from fragrant sweet peas.
birdsong resounds from above and below.
lambs bleat in fields, where the cows and calves low.***



***Golden sunshine, gentle rain
helps to grow the grain.
imbibe all these wonders created with care
and keep them for folk to share.***

***Osprey hovers above the cool water
competing for fish with a purposeful otter.
The osprey dives first and comes up with a prize
but certainly finds it too hard to arise***



Unsplash - Matthew Shwartz

***and so he drops it back into the water.
Oh rapturous joy it is seized by the otter
who carries it off for his family to share.
The osprey hovers once more in the air.***



Unsplash - Mark Stoop

***Such a lovely world we have here.
Management is clear.
Resources are precious, we must do our best
to nurture and guard it for all the rest***

Maggie Wynton August '20



Catching up with Pamela Masden (Pam)

A relative newcomer to Rosemarkie but already a regular attender at Black Isle East Church, it was great to meet up with Pam and hear something of her life story so far.



In your earlier years, where did you live, Pam?

I was brought up in Wath-Upon-Dearne, Rotherham, South Yorkshire. I have a twin sister, an older sister and brother and a younger sister and brother – six of us altogether. My parents were both hard workers and always taught us to do the best we could and to be kind, never intentionally hurting anyone.

You'll have many memories of that time.

Yes, I have many fond memories of walking to Grandma and Grandad Malpass for our tea on a Friday after school. They lived at the Woodman, Swinton about two miles away. After tea we would play in the Pottery Pond grounds (where the famous Rockingham Pottery was made). One kiln remains to this day. Another strong memory is the day when Mr & Mrs Mussett moved to a house on our road. They became like second parents to me, and their daughter, Paula, and I have been close friends for over 60 years.



Were you brought up in church life?

Yes, I was baptised at St Margaret's, Swinton and was brought up in the life of the church. We mainly attended All Saints' Parish Church, Wath-Upon-Dearne but sometimes we went with my grandma to the chapel in Swinton. From the age of two, I went to Wath Parish Church with mum and my siblings. When I reached my teenage years, my older siblings stopped going to church but I continued. I had a feeling of belonging and it was so much a part of me and of what I believed.

As young children we were taught the Apostle's Creed and I still say it daily. I have a prayer card in my diary with it on, along with a little verse I cut out of the Black East Church of Scotland Sunday Bulletin – *Jesus is the gift that perfectly fits the size of every heart*. Also the words of 1 Corinthians 13:4 – *Love is patient and kind; love does not envy or boast; it is not arrogant or rude*.

I was confirmed at Wath Parish Church; Geoff and I were married there; and our daughter Elizabeth was baptised and confirmed there.

What about school years and later employment?

My primary and secondary education was in Wath. Further higher education was at Mexborough Technical College, where I did a full time Secretarial Course. Here I gained all my

secretarial qualifications, and was awarded a Silver Medal in advanced Typewriting by the Royal Society of Arts (RSA).

My first job was as a junior secretary at the Rockingham College for Further Education, under the excellent leadership of the Principal Mr Lockyer. He had an inspirational effect on me as I didn't have any confidence in my skills but, thanks to his encouragement, I studied for, and gained, my teaching qualification and then went on to teach at various educational establishments.

I left teaching when my father was diagnosed with terminal cancer.

My career then changed direction and I went to work at International Harvester as Senior Secretary to the European Training and Education Manager, organising courses, etc for international students.

When I was pregnant with my daughter Elizabeth I had a second career break before going to work at Ridgewood School in Doncaster. I was there for 10 years before being asked to go for an interview at Hooton Pagnall All Saints' School as Secretary / PA to the Head Teacher. I remained there until my retirement.



From what you I know of you already, I sense you have many interests and hobbies.

Yes, I have many interests and have enjoyed horse riding, walking, swimming, reading, music and travel. Geoff and I enjoy travelling both at home and abroad in our motorhome and have the freedom to continue this in retirement.

And swimming includes wild swimming?

Yes, open water swimming or wild swimming is something I have done for approximately 30 years. It started by a chance meeting at Doncaster swimming pool by a gentleman named David Evans. He encouraged me to swim distances and I joined the British Long Distance Swimming Association (BLDSA) eventually being asked to join a Channel relay from Dover to Calais. Swimming is a time when I totally 'switch off' - I feel relaxed and at one with the world. It is amazing for my mental health! It is also a way of meeting like minded people.

I imagine the structure of the church services up here is different to what you were used to?

The structure is totally different but in a good way. In fact, the church in Rosemarkie is almost identical to the Methodist Church in Wath-Upon-Deerne, which is across the road from All Saints' Parish Church and where we held some of the united services.

When I walked into Rosemarkie Church the first time, it was as if I had walked into Wath Methodist Church. The building was almost identical and I felt it was just the right place to be in. Everyone was so kind and welcoming. It just blew me away. These have been the main factors towards helping me settle here in Rosemarkie.

Both Geoff and I feel really welcome and included in the community and I've never known him so happy. He is joining in with most of the Church functions – something he never did previously, and when Warren visited us at home, Geoff joined in the conversations and prayers.

What inspired you to come and live in the lovely Black Isle?

We came on holiday to Rosemarkie for a number of years when our daughter, as a young teenager, attended the residential courses at the Ecology Centre in Strathconon. These were run by the RSPB. It was at this time that we discovered and fell in love with Rosemarkie campsite - I would go swimming and Geoff, as a beach fisherman, would fish. Each year, after we dropped Elizabeth off at Strathconon, we returned to Rosemarkie and this continued even after she went to University.

In September 2022 we saw new properties being built in Rosemarkie and, although we had no intentions of moving, within a very short time, our bungalow was sold and we moved to Rosemarkie. It happened very quickly but I have no regrets. Another advantage to living on the Black Isle is that our daughter and family are much nearer.

Now that you have both settled in, what's your next plan and do you still have your motorhome?

We are planning to have one last long journey in our motorhome, at the end of September. We are taking a trip to Spain, visiting friends en-route. I have a special friend, Pat, who is 92 and I'd like to see her soon – she still swims! When we come back, we plan to sell the motorhome, as we feel the time is right.

Thank you for your time, Pam. We wish you and Geoff safe travels on your big trip!

A Winter's Tale

One wild winter's morning, Old Jock left his croft and headed for the kirk. The wind howled. Flurries of snow stung Jock's face. Drifts started to build up at the sides of the road. Old Jock battled on until he was at the church door. There he found he was the only person present.

Nevertheless, he went in and sat in his usual seat. Shortly afterwards, the minister came in from the vestry, looked around, went up into the pulpit and started the service. The call to worship was followed by prayers of approach, two long bible readings, one psalm, four hymns, a half hour sermon, prayers of intercession and, finally, the sending and blessing.

The minister climbed down from the pulpit, walked slowly to the door and as he shook Old Jock's hand as he left he asked Jock how he'd enjoyed the service. Jock paused and adjusted his cap before answering, 'Weel, minister, it's like this. If I only had one coo in the byre, I wouldna be feeding it the whole cairt o' neeps.....'

Contributed by 'Anon'

Craft Group

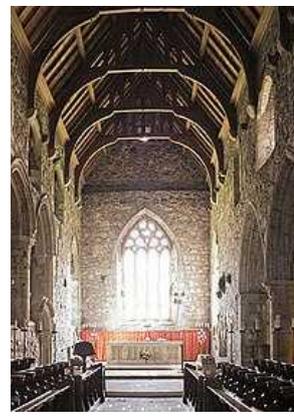
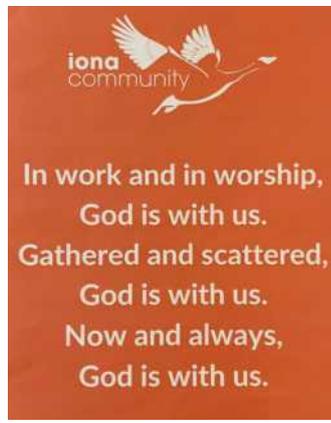
The Craft Group enjoyed another creative few months thanks to expert teaching, support and encouragement from Sylvia Brooks.

The weekly sessions were rounded off with a trip to Dalmore Farm for morning coffee and some retail therapy.....





Iona Community Revisited



'The man is little to be envied whose piety would not grow warmer amidst the ruins of Iona.' So said Samuel Johnson on his 18th century travels in the Western Isles. Two centuries later Rev George MacLeod who, along with unemployed tradesmen and trainee ministers, lived and worshipped together as they restored the accommodation at the Abbey, referred to Iona as *'a thin place where only a tissue paper separates the material from the spiritual'*.

It's a sense that many people have felt over the years, particularly in the evening after day trippers depart, the ferry ties up for the night and a hush settles over the island. Prayer, contemplation and reflection seem to come easily.

It was the same George MacLeod who established the Iona Community, an international, ecumenical Christian movement 'working for justice and peace, the rebuilding of community and the renewal of worship.' The Community runs a well-established programme of events and themed residential experiences, including Quiet Weeks in which participants experience life in community at the Abbey. This includes participating in regular worship, sharing in meals and joining in community tasks that contribute to a shared life. Our more recent visit was to a themed week in May and a wonderful, uplifting week it was too.

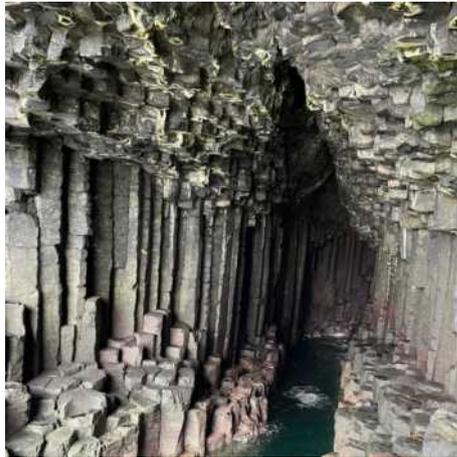
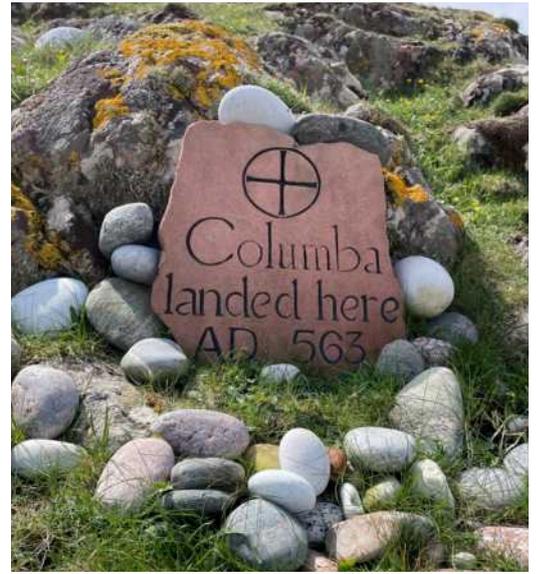


As a group we were 43 in number - only two Scots (us!) with most of the rest from the rest of the UK and the USA. But we quickly bonded, thanks to the skills of the resident staff, warmly welcoming us at the ferry slip, providing coffee and cake on arrival at the Abbey and generating a genuine atmosphere of welcome and appreciation. For the next 6 days we would eat together at long tables, worship together in the Abbey, listen and talk to each other inside and on foot as we explored the island.

Living in community within the Iona Community entailed shared domestic roles. Margaret was allocated to the after meals table clearing team. I got toilets. Specifically, toilet pans and floors. However, my two teammates (on sinks and showers) were female pastors from the USA denominations – their discussions were a real insight into expressions of Christianity in the USA.

Our days were bookended by worship. Each morning, we met for worship at 9am in the Abbey, led by one of the Community members supported by volunteers from our number – an opportunity embraced enthusiastically. On Sunday our service at 10.30 to allow day trippers arriving early in the day and pilgrims in local hotels and guest houses to attend a communion service.

The Abbey was packed. Each evening, our day finished with a 9pm service open to the public as with all services. Services were themed: Service of Welcome, Service of Quiet, Service for Justice and Peace, Service of Prayers, Agape Service and Service of Commitment. As with the morning services, we were encouraged to participate to become involved in conducting the service.



For many, the all day walk around key religious sites, including St Columba's Bay where Columba and his 12 companions are thought to have landed on Iona was a real highlight. So, too, the opportunity to visit the Fingal's Cave on Staffa and to meet the resident colony of puffins and their many avian neighbours



But most people acknowledged that they had chosen to be on Iona that particular week was to attend workshops with Rev John Bell on his chosen theme, **The Miracles Unboxed**. John Bell is well known as a talented hymn writer and a very fine preacher as the packed Abbey on the Sunday testified. He is also an expert teacher and not in the least daunted by the 'mixed ability class' of 43 Iona Community guests.

As befits a musician, his style is to 'conduct', drawing out insights from within the group by posing questions. Why do you think Jesus said.....? Whose voice did we not hear? But he also has a repertoire of activities that are simultaneously challenging and enjoyable. For example, take the healing of the blind man at the Pool of Siloam and, with a partner, recall the story. Then read John Ch 9 and see what telling details you have missed. I was paired with a retired Methodist minister and we were both embarrassed! Each two hour session passed quickly but the shared insights will remain in the memory for a long time. Will we go back to Iona? God willing, of course we will!



Women in Black

Douglas Simpson continues his series recalling the remarkable people met on trips to Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories (OPT).

When you think of examples of courageous activists, the image of elderly women dressed in black and standing in silence as taunts and insults are hurled at them might not spring to mind. But the most inspirational people we met on our travels in Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories were the Israeli Women in Black.

The first group was established in 1988 as Israeli women responded to what they considered to be serious violations of human rights by Israeli soldiers against Palestinian civilians. They still dress in black as a symbol of mourning and stand quietly in central Jerusalem protesting against the evils of occupation. They do so at great cost, often against the wishes of friends and family and invariably incurring the wrath, condemnation and hostility of passers by.

So, it was with a sense of apprehension but a feeling of great privilege that we were allowed to stand alongside them in Paris Square, Jerusalem on one of our visits. These courageous and principled women maintain they have no option but to make a stand despite the persecution and huge personal sacrifices this entails.

A recent communication from an activist we met in Bethlehem quotes Martin Luther King Jr
Cowardice asks the question - Is it safe? Expediency asks the question - Is it politic?
Vanity asks the question - Is it popular? But conscience asks the question - Is it right?



As always, we are indebted to all who have contributed to this newsletter and ensured a wide variety of articles. It is the congregation's newsletter - so please keep sending in articles - or ideas for articles - to calummacsween76@gmail.com at any point over the next few months. Thank you!

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In tribute to the snippets in Anne's Sunday Bulletin, we share news of a community who once planted out a church garden, starting with two rows of 'Peas': Peace and Presence followed by three rows of Squash: Squash negativity, Squash exclusion and Squash loneliness.

They then moved to rows of Lettuce, Let us be true to our convictions, let us be unselfish, let us be caring in our community, let us love one another. Finally, we all need Turnips. So, turn up with a smile, turn up an open heart, turn up ready to worship. Just turn up!