

# GRAPES VINE

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## ***Greetings from Bishop Andrew:***

We are living in times that feel complex and unstable. The global pandemic continues to change that life in our communities, diocese and land. Political turmoil is in the news in the USA, our own relationship with Europe and the rest of the United Kingdom. It is a time that is causing much anxiety.

This anxiety that we may be feeling is entirely understandable. The virus is a very real threat to the health of our families and friends. The constraints that have been placed on life are also putting pressure on social interactions and mental health. Many businesses are struggling to survive as the economy remains restricted and customers keep away or are kept away by regulations. And the turbulent political situation, removed as it may be from our everyday life, is one where we want to feel safe and expect political leaders to take careful account of all those who are vulnerable in society. And when that does not happen and politicians appear to behave in ways that are self-interested or vindictive, it feels dislocated and unjust.

This is a very, very hard and troubling time for all. The world feels very different to how things were just a few months ago.

Our church life also remains very, very different. Most churches in the Scottish Episcopal Church have re-opened, although not all. The churches gathering to

worship have spaced seating, face coverings worn, no congregational hymns being sung, communion with only bread: a very different experience to our 'normal' life. But we **are** able to gather and worship. Eyes smile above face coverings as friends are greeted or the peace is shared. The familiar words of the liturgy are said behind those masks. In some churches a cantor has the big task of singing hymns and some of the liturgy.

The Scottish Government told us what to do to safely resume worship and we have done it. God is being praised! The eucharist is celebrated and salvation history recalled: the church is never closed, not even when the doors are locked. But now we are definitely gathered and open, online and in person! Churches have done so well at following the safety guidelines that, in Scotland, the current plans would allow worship to continue at even the highest levels of lockdown and restriction. That is a reassuring testimony to how well you have done!

Christian communities are also engaged in the political life

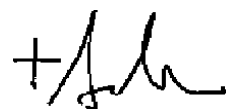
of our country and the wider world. Whether we are praying for just outcomes in elections or international negotiations, or are activists, involved in local politics, lobbying politicians or working in charities and groups to make changes, all Christians can have a part to play.

It is easy to shake one's head at the turbulence of modern world politics and just get on with our own lives as individuals or as church communities. But we can do more than that by becoming engaged! We believe that God loves all creation and all people and our engagement with world affairs can be influenced by that divine love.

The Christians who have gone before us over the centuries have trusted in God even when their worlds were dark and troubled. They have prayed, they have worshipped as they were able. They have engaged in the issues of their day. They prayed and waited for better times to come.

And we are called to do just that: trust in God. Pray. Worship as we are able. And this time will pass.

Bless you: please keep safe and be gentle to yourself and to others.



Andrew,  
Bishop of Brechin

# Buzz Words from the Moon!

On Christmas Eve 1968, a message was broadcast to Earth from the orbit of the moon: "And God said, Let there be light: and there was light." The words were spoken by Apollo 8 astronaut William Anders, as he and fellow crew members Jim Lovell and Frank Borman recited Genesis chapter one in a broadcast watched by one billion people.

The moving footage reveals an often ignored fact of the success of the subsequent Apollo mission to the moon, which took place 51 years ago: that it was one compelled by faith as much as science.

Many of the 12 men to walk on the moon were Christian. Two moonwalkers, Charlie Duke and James Irwin, went on to devote much of the rest of their lives to their faith; another returned to Earth convinced of God's existence, and a fourth was a Presbyterian minister.

The last of those was the wonderful iconoclast Buzz Aldrin, a man who shared his paperwork from the 1969 moon landing mission: a travel expense claim to NASA for \$33.31.

It was Aldrin who ensured that one of the first acts on the moon was a spiritual one. After landing on the surface, in the silence of the lunar module, he took out some bread and wine, and gave himself Communion. Among the first words spoken on the lunar surface were those of Christ.

Faith ran throughout the US space programme. John Glenn, the first American to orbit the Earth, said on his return from a second voyage: "To look out at this kind of creation and not believe in God is to me impossible." This is not surprising. The Apollo programme was so ambitious that it took men of faith to even entertain its possibility.

Neil Armstrong, for instance, whose parents were devout

Christians, defied the odds throughout his life. He flew fighter jets at a time when there was a 23 per cent probability that a Navy pilot would die in an aircraft accident. He brushed with death as a test pilot, almost died in an early space mission, and came two-fifths of a second away from death while training to go to the moon.

with a faith. Without it, they may never have tried the impossible.

The influence of the religious in space continues to this day. Muslim astronaut Sheikh Muszaphar Shukor had to work out the logistics of praying to Mecca while floating above the Earth on the International Space Station.

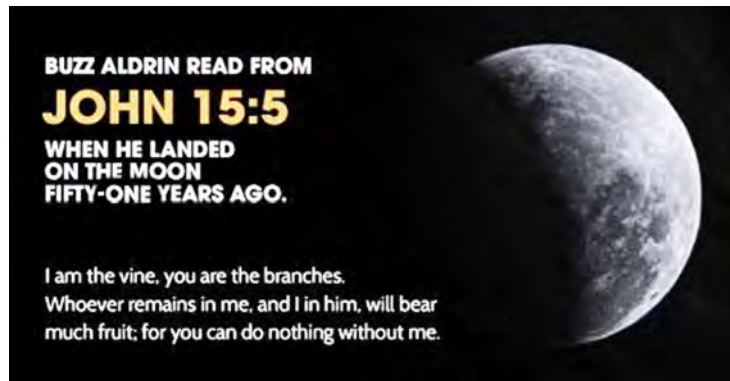
Tim Peake, one of the few British people to travel into space, said that while he is not religious, "there are many things in science that lead us towards the conclusion" that the universe was created from intelligent design. "From a point of view of seeing how magnificent the Earth is from space... it helps you to relate to that," he said.

This is a common theme: astronaut after astronaut has opened up to the possibility of God once they saw the Earth from space.

Retired Roman Catholic astronaut Mike Massimino said that as he gazed on the Earth, he thought: "God must love us to give us such a beautiful home... It just makes it so obvious that God created this beautiful place."

The Apollo greats who walked on the moon risked their lives to do what no living creature had done before. They did it though technological achievement, mathematics and complex algorithms. But the role of faith in sustaining their efforts cannot be overlooked.

"Science and technology got me there, but when I got there and I looked back home at the Earth, science and technology could not explain what I was seeing nor what I was feeling," Eugene Cernan, the 11th man to walk on the moon, said. "When I looked back home there was too much purpose, too much logic. The Earth to me was just too beautiful to have happened by accident."



Most astronauts rated the chance of the Apollo 11 crew successfully completing the mission at just 50 per cent. As the astronauts prepared to land, Apollo 11's Flight Director back in Houston, Gene Kranz, a Catholic, went to Mass and prayed for "wise judgement and courage".

That judgement was called upon as the lunar module descended to the surface of the moon, and the Apollo 11 computer began sounding a mystery "1202" alarm. Kranz's team made the call to ignore it, and the lunar module landed with seconds to spare.

Later, as the astronauts prepared to leave the moon, Aldrin accidentally broke an engine circuit breaker, leaving them potentially stranded on the lunar surface. No doubt saying his prayers, the church minister stuck a pen in the ignition, jiggled it around and managed to start the engine.

On a cold, rational reading of the maths and probabilities, Apollo should not have succeeded. There were too many points where the mission should have failed, where the astronauts should have died – but these were rocket scientists

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## 'The Peaceable Kingdom' by Edward Hicks

St Francis' *Canticle of the Sun* invites all creatures to praise God the Creator. But we live in a world of climate change and global warming. A thousand species are at risk of extinction in the United Kingdom alone. The richness of creation St Francis knew in his day no longer exists. We need to heed the urgent call to care for the biodiversity of our planet and its richness in plant and animal life. We can look at animals and birds – their grace and strength, their beauty and wonder – as reflected in art and scripture, and so learn to value the glory of Creation all around us.



Isaiah in chapter 11 had a vision of a special child who would bring paradise to the earth once more. He spoke of a world where the wolf would lie down with the lamb, and the leopard with the kid. It is the theme of 'The Peaceable Kingdom' by the American Quaker artist, Edward Hicks. This subject occupied all his artistic talent for he painted almost a hundred versions. Sixty still exist and this one is from 1834.

The foreground is occupied by not just one child, but several. They are innocent and free, playing with the animals around – lion, tiger, leopard, bear, wolf, cow and lamb. There is no sign of 'nature red in tooth and claw' here. All is peace and tranquillity. The bear and cow nudge each other in the bottom corner with no fear. That peaceful co-existence is echoed in the distance with William Penn and other Quakers working on a treaty with the Indians. The animals in the foreground symbolise the human traits we see at work in the background: leadership and power, sensitivity and gentleness.

Edward Hicks, as he worked on later versions, knew that this peace was not a straightforward achievement. Selfishness, pride and greed got in the way. But the vision remained. Through his art he is saying, "Follow the inner light of God's grace, and that harmony can be achieved. Cherish the world around and give thanks for its rich variety and colour."

Edward Hicks and St Francis are united in the aspiration to care for 'all creatures great and small.'

## A well-travelled hymn

Nowadays one of the hymns most frequently broadcast on television's *Songs of Praise*, the hymn *How Great Thou Art* took a long time and travelled a long road before it gained such popularity and came to be included in most English hymnals..

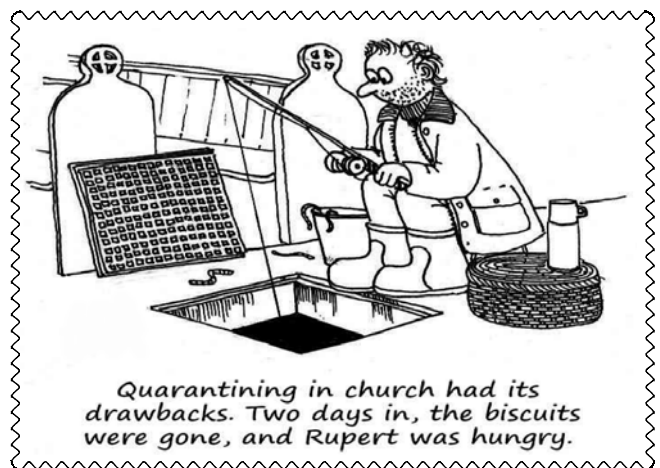
The original version was a poem written by a Swedish pastor, Reverend Carl Boberg in 1886, and entitled *O Stor Gud*. Boberg published the poem in his periodical *Sanningsvitnet*. Several years later he was surprised and delighted to hear his poem being sung by a church congregation, to the tune of an old Swedish folk melody.

Boberg's poem was soon thereafter translated into German by Manfred von Glehn, who entitled it *Wie gross bist Du*. In 1925, an American minister, the Reverend E. Gustav Johnson, translated the Swedish poem into an English version that is somewhat different than the one popular today. For instance, the first line of Johnson's hymn reads *Oh mighty God, when I behold the wonder...*

In 1927, I.S. Prokanoff translated Glehn's German version into Russian, to be enjoyed by that culture also. Throughout all of these translations, the original Swedish folk tune remained the same.

In 1933, English missionaries to the Ukraine, the Rev' and Mrs Stuart K. Hine heard the song for the first time, fell in love with it and sang it often throughout their missionary journeys. As they travelled the Carpathian Mountains, the couple was inspired by the incredible beauty to translate the first three verses of the song into English. When World War 2 broke out in 1939, the Hines returned to England carrying *How Great Thou Art* to its new home. After the war, they wrote the fourth verse and arranged the original Swedish folk tune to be published in English hymnals.

In the 1950s, the song was copyrighted and widely published in America, becoming more and more popular. When George Beverly Shay and the Billy Graham gospel choir, directed by Cliff Barrows, began to sing the song at virtually every crusade event, *How Great Thou Art* soon became one of the most recognised songs around the world. It was also recorded by several popular artists, including Elvis Presley.





## Address preached by Fr Paul McLaren-Cook, Warden of Ascot Priory at the Ordination of Gary Clink to the Diaconate, 27 September 2020

What a wonderful day! After years of preparation and an unexpected delay because of the coronavirus we've at last arrived, Gary, at the moment of your ordination. A delay which has its upside in that it makes it possible for you to be ordained almost as a gift for your mother on her 90th birthday.

Recently I was talking to a priest friend of mine and we were bemoaning the state of the Church, as seems to happen when clergy gather together, and we were putting it to rights. During the conversation he said, "I don't know, but who in their right mind would want to be ordained today?" And I must say I have a little sympathy with him. When you read, say in the Church Times, the advertisements for clergy positions, you hear such things as 'Someone who can plan strategically', 'To manage change', 'Collaborative leadership' and one that I saw only the other day 'Must be IT literate to accept the challenges of social media in a post-Covid society.' None of those things require ordination. They sound more like a religious social worker.

But before we get too depressed let's look at what Scripture says about ordination, particularly of the diaconate. And although I am addressing my remarks particularly to Gary, I hope you all will listen in.

First of all, Gary, you did not choose to be a deacon. You were chosen. Called by God, a call that has been ratified by the Church. A call that was there from before your birth, as we heard in the reading from Jeremiah, "Before I formed you in the womb, I knew you; and before you were born I consecrated you."

You are to be made a deacon. It is interesting that in the Book of Common Prayer in the ordination section we have the Order for Making Deacons, Ordaining Priests and Consecrating Bishops. You are today to be **made** a deacon, because it's more about what you are made than what you do.

In this sacrament you are **made** a deacon, an objective change in your being as profound and as indelible as your baptism. From today you not simply Gary, but

to become a holy man. A man who has as his main goal in life to become like Jesus. As Saint Paul said, We are to grow into the 'fulness of the stature of Christ'.

That means that you will be a man of prayer. Now, yes, that means the Daily Office, because as of today you will be duty-bound every day, whether you like it or not, whether you're on holiday or not, whether you're busy or not, to at least say Morning and Evening Prayer. But it's more than that. It means that you need to spend time in personal prayer and meditation on the Scriptures. And you are to do that not as it were to be an aid to your ministry but as the source and ground of your ministry out of which your holiness will grow. As you become immersed in prayer your heart will start to beat in rhythm with the heart of God. Your life will become prayer.

Secondly, you are to become a visible presence. Just as in the incarnation Jesus became man and dwelt among us so that we could see what God is

like. As one little boy said, "Jesus is God with skin on." Gary, you are to be God with skin on for the people among whom you live and work and to whom you minister. And that will mean you will need to take very careful stock of the manner of your life: the way you talk, the way you interact with people, the way you dress (and, yes, that means wearing a collar fairly frequently), the way you take care of yourself. It's no good in your preaching to tell people they have to live a balanced life when you're running around frantically chasing your own tail. You have in the words of the old Prayer Book "to be a wholesome example of the flock of Christ", a visible presence of Jesus.



The Laying on of Hands

Deacon Gary. Being a deacon will be part ... no, it will **be** your identity. And there will be no time in the future when you will not be a deacon. From today everything you do, or think or say will be done, thought or said as a deacon. And I hammer this point because being ordained is not like starting a new job. It's a way of life.

So what does this way of life look like? What sort of a person are you to be?

Well, first and foremost you are to be a holy man. We see in the Acts of the Apostles that when they choose the deacons, they choose those who are "filled with the Spirit". You, Gary, are to be filled with the Spirit and therefore

But most of all a deacon is called to be a servant. The Church at the moment seems to be obsessed with leadership to the extent that in England the Church of England has created what they call a 'talent pool' where people are selected, and I'm not quite sure what the criteria are but they are selected, and from that select pool are chosen the future leaders and they are trained for leadership.

But you, my dear brother, are called to be a servant. In the Gospel reading Jesus calls the disciples to him and says, "You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them. It will not be so among you; but whoever wishes to be great among you must be your servant, and whoever wishes to be first among you must be your slave." The servant is the one who is bidden to do his master's command. A servant is one who serves, who is obedient in service; and the slave, the household slave, not only serves but belongs to the master. You see, you are not your own, but you belong to Jesus.

Remember that Jesus said that if we want to follow him we must

deny ourselves and take up our cross and follow him. And that means obedience. Obedience to the Word of God, obedience to those who have legitimate claims and authority over you. That will mean the incumbent of the parish to which you are being sent; but I make the point it is legitimate authority, not a whim, or fancy. But you must be obedient, and I know, Gary, that will be difficult for you, as one who has been in a position of leadership.

But more importantly it's a matter of your attitude. It means putting the needs and welfare of others before your own wants. It means wanting God's way, not your own. It means humility. Can I remind you of the fifth chapter of the Rule of Saint Benedict where he says 'the first degree of humility is obedience without delay. This is the virtue of those who hold nothing dearer to them than Christ. If you hold Christ dear, then out of love of Christ you will accept humbly obedience'.

So perhaps by now you are thinking, Who in their right mind would want to be ordained today? The reality is, Gary, you did not choose this, but you've been

called by God and his Church to this way of life – a life of service. And never forget that, when God calls, he equips and empowers through the gift of the Holy Spirit that will be given to you by the laying on of hands.

And do you know, it is only by responding to this call with all your being that you will find fulfilment and joy.

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.



## Green grow'th the Holly

A music manuscript from about 1515 and attributed to King Henry VIII has the words:

*Green grow'th the holly,  
So doth the ivy,  
Though winter blasts ne'er so high  
Green grow'th the holly.*

The next three verses take us through spring, summer and autumn, so this is clearly not a Christmas carol, unlike the familiar 'The Holly and the Ivy'.

*Gay are the flowers,  
Hedgerows and ploughlands;  
The days grow longer in the sun,  
Soft fall the showers  
Full gold the harvest,  
Grain for thy labour.  
With God must work for daily bread  
Else, man, thou starvest.  
Fast fall the shed leaves,  
Russet and yellow,  
But resting buds are snug and safe  
Where swung the dead leaves.*

What may not be known is that holly and ivy are two of the very few native evergreens, and in past times must have been especially popular in providing greenery during winter months.

With its shiny spiky dark green leaves, holly is surely one of the most easily recognised trees in this country. Though often bushlike, holly can grow up to ten metres high with a straight trunk and pyramid shape. It is dioecious, meaning each tree is either male or female, explaining possibly why the one in your garden never has any berries!

Nowadays we associate holly with Christmas wreaths and garlands, cards and carols. Pre-Victorian times saw holly branches used as Christmas trees, with the spiky leaves

representing Christ's Crown of Thorns and the red berries as drops of blood. Holly brought into the house was regarded as protection against evil spirits and as a refuge for good 'faeries' who would guard the residents of the house in return.

It is interesting to note that where no person or animal brushes by a holly, the leaves lack all spines except the one at the tip. This includes upper leaves on mature trees. A bit like people – be nice and they won't be scratchy!

Back to 'Green grow'th the Holly'. The final verse ends:

*The God of life can never die,  
Hope! Saith the holly.*

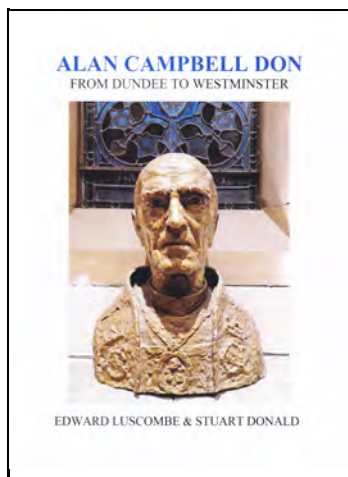
How wise. Where would we be without hope?

# Alan Campbell Don: From Dundee to Westminster

by Edward Luscombe and Stuart Donald

Over the course of its history the Scottish Episcopal Church has welcomed many clergy from England to minister in its parishes and dioceses, and there was even a time in the eighteenth century (the time of the 'Qualified Chapels') when the episcopal clergy in Scotland had to have been ordained in the Church of England. This may explain why the SEC is still sometimes referred to by Presbyterians as the 'English church'! Much less has been written about the many gifted Scots who over the centuries have travelled south to serve the Church of England. It is good that Bishop Ted and Stuart Donald are now reminding us of one most remarkable example.

Alan Don was born in 1885 into a prosperous Forfar family who had been faithful Episcopalians and Jacobites through the generations. Alan was educated in England at Rugby school and Oxford, and trained for the ministry at Cuddesdon, but in 1921 he came back to Scotland to serve as



a successful Provost of Dundee Cathedral. His reputation was such that in 1931 he was appointed Secretary and Chaplain to the Archbishop of Canterbury, Cosmo Gordon Lang (himself a Scotsman). These were the tumultuous years which included the Abdication crisis in 1936, the coronation of George VI, and the lead-up to the War. Don found himself at the centre of British constitutional life: he became Chaplain to kings George V and VI and to Queen Elizabeth. In 1936

he was appointed Chaplain to the Speaker of the House of Commons, in 1941 Rector of St Margaret's Westminster, and in 1946 Dean of Westminster. He was responsible for organizing the coronation of Queen Elizabeth II – and had to deal with the scandal of the theft of the Stone of Scone. He is remembered as one of the most loved and distinguished Deans of Westminster. Though he retired to live in Canterbury perhaps his heart remained in Scotland because the only book he wrote was on the Scottish Book of Common Prayer of 1929 (SPCK 1969).

Anyone wishing to learn more about this remarkable Scotsman and the times he lived through could turn to a new publication, *Faithful Witness: the Confidential Diaries of Alan Don, Chaplain to the King, the Archbishop, and the Speaker, 1931-1946*, ed. Robert Beaken, London SPCK, 2020, foreword by Archbishop Justin Welby.

Rev'd Dr Ann Shukman

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## Psalm 122 and Advent

*I was glad when they said unto me, 'Let us go to the house of the Lord. Now our feet are standing within thy gates, O Jerusalem.'*

These opening words of Psalm 122 inspired Hubert Parry's great Coronation Anthem 'I was Glad.' As one of the Songs of Ascent (Psalms 120-134), it was used by pilgrims going to the great festivals in Jerusalem. For the Jews this represented 'coming home' to worship at the Temple, the place of God's presence.

As God's people today, we are also called to worship in praise and thanksgiving: *Thither the tribes go up – to give thanks unto the name of the Lord* (verse 4).

Of course, currently our coming together in church to praise God is greatly restricted, and singing is not allowed. We are a scattered

rather than a gathered community. However, as individuals, we can still offer God the worship of our lives using the resource of psalms like this one.

The psalm encourages the pilgrims to pray for the peace of Jerusalem: *O pray for the peace of Jerusalem: May they prosper that love thee*. (verse 6). The peace referred to here is more than simply an absence of conflict. Peace speaks of wholeness of life in every aspect. This must be our prayer as we continue to struggle with the effects of the pandemic and as we seek the prosperity of the wider community: *I will seek to do thee good* (verse 9).

Advent which began on 29 November is the season when we affirm the hope of Jesus' return. As we pray for peace, we know

that it is fulfilled in the coming of God's kingdom in Jesus. Despite living with so much uncertainty, we have the assurance of God's future purposes for our lives, churches and the world.

The promise of Advent is expressed in the following prayer taken from the Gelasian Sacramentary dating from about 500 A.D., the oldest official prayer book of the Western Church.

*Stir up our hearts, we beseech you, to prepare ourselves to receive your Son.*

*When He comes and knocks, may He find us not sleeping in sin, but awake to righteousness, ceaselessly rejoicing in His love. May our hearts and minds be so purified, That we may be ready to receive His promise of eternal life.*

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# Ordained to the Priesthood

On Saturday, 26 September Roxanne Campbell was ordained priest at St Ninian's Church, Dundee, where she had been serving the initial part of her curacy. Numbers able to attend were restricted because of current regulations, but it was for all a joyous occasion.

Here she reflects on experience of ministry so far and looks forward to its development as a priest attached now to St Mary Magdalene's Church, Dundee.

It was interesting to begin ordained ministry toward the end of 2019 and just a few months later to have lots of the things an ordained person would usually do taken away by the pandemic.

Serving as a transitional deacon at St. Ninian's during this time was fortuitous as there was a lot of 'service' to be given and volunteering opportunities during lockdown which allowed me to learn about and reflect on these areas of ministry.

Given all that has been postponed or missed this year, I was thankful that the Michaelmas ordinations could go ahead and my own priesting was able to happen at the end of September.

There were practical challenges around the service – such as the restrictions on numbers, not being able to hug friends or share

refreshments post-service. All necessary, of course, and ultimately loving actions in the face of an infectious pandemic, but nonetheless lamentable. However it was a blessing that we



were able to livestream the service – meaning friends who would not ordinarily have been able to join us were able to be present. I am very grateful to Bob Main for giving up his Saturday afternoon to enable this to happen. The team at St. Ninian's were also wonderful – ensuring that all of the appropriate COVID safeguards were in place and that this was done well.

Lots of people have asked how

being a priest feels. A recent post from a new priest in another province resonated well. They said something to the effect that their ordination to the priesthood felt 'like wearing a made-to-measure suit for the first time'.

And in some ways it does feel just like this: it feels just right. But, as with a new suit, there's work to be done – working out how to wear it, what I can and can't do in it. Where it might chafe and need to be worn in.

After all of the study and the reflection leading up to this point it might be tempting to think: Well that's it, I've arrived at my destination! But there's never any such finality! Just like entering ministry training, and my diaconal ordination, the discernment and reflection does not stop with my priesting. Curacy is still about formation, and indeed, as we are often reminded, formation is lifelong. Now is just the beginning!

Since my priesting, I'm now placed at St Mary Magdalene's where I'll serve the rest of my curacy. I'm grateful to have spent the last year at St Ninian's. I'm excited to begin this new chapter in my ministry and to be alongside and learn from Kenneth and the people of St. Mary Magdalene's as they discern their next steps in their journey.

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## Praying Hands

The traditional clasping of our hands together in prayer suggests begging or pleading. We petition



God with hearts and hands in a posture of poverty and diminish-ment. We kneel in a similar posture of deep need.

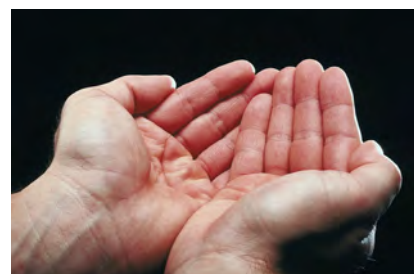
Our reception of the Eucharist is the acceptance of the always-present offering of Life into our hands, received while standing. Open hands speak of an abiding sense that the divine generosity is available and expected.

As we prepare for celebrating this Divine Presence, we might practise open-handed praying and receiving of all the other ways the Divine Generosity is revealed. We can pray with open hands with what has already been offered and maybe not totally accepted just yet.

We can live prayerfully these

days with the increased awareness of all the other presences of God which can quite easily slip past our closed hands and hearts.

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# CHURCHES AND THE PANDEMIC

*an initial reflection by Bishop Andrew*

There have already been books published, blog posts written and much reflection, written and online, on what has happened to faith communities in the past few months. For this edition of *Grapevine*, written while we are still firmly within the pandemic, some of this work feels a little bit premature. Can we really say what has happened to faith communities in a pandemic before the pandemic is over? But I felt I might offer some of my personal observations on what has been happening to us, so far.

## Predictability and Security

It has become very hard to predict what is going to happen. This is true for a virus spreading through the world but it applies even more so in terms of what we are allowed to do, how long we have to change the way that we live and what we might look like in the future. For most churches pre-Covid, life was relatively stable and predictable. Services are held on Sundays and some other days, liturgies change slowly. Rectors generally tend to stay for quite a while. The congregation changes but generally quite slowly. Social events are held, with a bit of variation, with a broadly similar pattern in most years. We can predict pretty accurately what will happen through the church's year.

Then, back in March 2020, at a few days' notice, we were told to

close. We 'lost' our usual Holy Week and Easter. Then we were, eventually, told we could start to open, but that we might have to close again at short notice. Now at a certain government 'level' I might not be able to travel any more to worship in a nearby local authority. How will we know if that is going to happen? And if key people in the church fall ill, or have to self-isolate, or really don't feel safe to leave the house, how will we cope?

Church life has become hard to predict, which is not a comfortable place to be. The SEC responded with patterns: a broadcast act of worship every Sunday on YouTube. A weekly bulletin in this diocese. Churches as they open starting a pattern of regular worship with the same, safe mitigations each time. A new, predictable pattern is emerging. But we are now aware how vulnerable this is to a spike in cases or a government edict. It all feels a bit less secure.

## Loss of Control

That lessening of predictability and security is related to the loss of control that we have all felt. At the height of 'full' lockdown we were told to stay indoors, at potential risk of breaking the law. That is an extraordinary loss of personal control, and loss of control of our right to have worship in our churches. The government took control of our lives from us.

After that initial shock, that can become quite a comfortable place to be. Faced with a deadly virus, removing our control to judge risks and make decisions can make some aspects of life quite easy. The government acts as a parental-figure, setting our boundaries.

The isolation and damage to livelihoods of lockdown cannot be overestimated: but not having to make our own decisions can be comfortable.



An unfamiliar welcome in the cathedral

Many churches and church leaders in other countries reacted very strongly to this loss of control, to the extent of ignoring the legal constraints or taking legal action to challenge the loss of control. It has also been a complex process to be gradually given control back. Churches had to decide for themselves when it was the right time to re-open. Even now, a church could decide to suspend worship or other activities again. But how does one decide what is safe?

The SEC has carefully followed the government guidance to the letter, informing all churches of what they can do and when they can do it. But the delicate process of each church choosing the right time and the detailed solutions to hygiene and safety has been a process that has been very individual and matched to each church community's leadership and collective views of risk. No timings or answers have been wrong but the way that churches have accepted control of their lives back again has been a fascinating exercise in self-identification and self awareness.



Preparing to broadcast a Sunday service



## Inward and Outward Focus

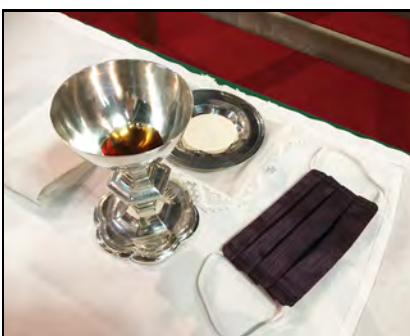
The self-identification and self-awareness of each church community has also thrown up differences in inward and outward focus.



Pews taped off to maintain social-distancing

Every church managed inward focus well: pastoral care systems were put in place when physical meeting was banned. Communication with members and ways of worshipping using technology were creatively and effectively developed.

But some churches also kept an eye on what was happening outside their community boundary. Food projects continued, in different forms, as the lockdown made food insecurity even more extreme. The Lent Appeal in this diocese did even better than in previous years, to support the start up of an ecological and economic bee project in the Diocese of Swaziland.



Familiar eucharistic elements – unfamiliar mask

That outward focus was very strong. Some of the online worship offerings on social media started to attract worshippers from outwith the parent churches. Several Brechin Diocese churches have reported new members joining

since emerging from lockdown: maybe a sign that an outward focus has connected with others even in lockdown. Inward focus is essential, to take care of those who look to us: but outward focus can bring new life and creativity!

## Strengths and Weaknesses

The observations on inward and outward focus of course apply in normal times as well as in a pandemic. The pandemic has made these issues come into sharper relief. The strength and weaknesses of a church community seem to have been intensified by the pandemic. The churches with a strong pastoral care network, or where the building blocks for this were in place, have remained well connected. Some churches have not been able to keep contact so well.

Financial strength (a relative term in a small, tightly balanced church like the SEC) has also come into a harsh light. Some other denominations have very publicly stated the multi-million

pound deficits that the pandemic has produced and suggested that e.g. church closure programmes might accelerate. The churches that have continued to pray and worship together, online and in person, seem to have been given a resilience and a positive sense of God in their communities. The spiritual strengths of churches have seemed strengthened by the pandemic.

## Grief and Hope

But things have changed. People have died, some of Covid, but all without the chance for a 'proper' funeral and send-off. The experience of gathering to worship without being able to sing, to hug, to see the smiles on the faces of friends are experiences that

include painful loss. When faced with this loss, and over such an extended period of time, grief is an entirely normal reaction. Grief can come out in anger, in depression, in numbness, in busyness.

We may have found reactions like this in ourselves and in family and friends. But there is still a sense of hope in all of this. We know (even if it seems hard to believe) that we will emerge back into a world that feels more 'normal' than the pandemic limitations. There is a mixed sense of hope.

Some want to return to being in control and being 'normal', to predictable and safe ways of being a church community that look pretty much as they did before. Some wish to try and change based on what we have



Zoom video conferencing has suddenly become a common experience: here a Jont Vigil for Racial Justice held in June

learned about ourselves, our balance of inward and outward focus, rejoicing in our strengths but being self-aware of our weaknesses.

But overall, my prayer for the church as we do regain control and return to a steady pattern of life is that all that we do will continue to be for the kingdom.

There is still a great to learn about ourselves as the weeks and months of this pandemic continue. Everyone's experience is different and the reflections above are just what I feel at present, some seven to eight months into this season. Those reflections are bound to change, and I look forward to discussing and exploring them with you as we journey on together.

# "I want to hear the chains falling off"

I remember with a sense of joy being asked in 2007 to preach at the Installation of the Very Reverend Ian G. Stewart as Dean of the Diocese of Brechin. Ian and I had worked together at St Martin's in the Hilltown in Dundee, while his wife May together with Iain Turnbull ran the vibrant Sunday School in the Church Hall.

At the Evensong Service, I started my sermon with a question: "How is your sex life?"

After posing the question I paused and, on that evening never mind that you could 'hear the chains falling off' (words I heard in a sermon in Sabah, Malaysia), you could hear a pin drop after I posed my question, and there was a sense of panic as many awaited my answer to the question. You will not be surprised that those who already knew me understood that the purpose of the question was to capture the congregation's attention – and it certainly did!

At the core of my sermon was the encouragement to talk about hard subjects in the life and work of the Church, and to apply the nature of God the Trinity to such discussions and the generosity of love that exists within the Godhead and which we are called to practise as Christian Disciples.

I have heard it said that, within the Scottish Episcopal Church, we are often too comfortable with the concepts of "inclusion" and "diversity". We talk about the inclusivity of our Church and the diversity of our congregations, and you will find this above the door as you enter some of our churches. However, this area is often focused around the discussion and positions taken on "gay Christians" or "gay Clergy" or "gay marriage" – as if we have cracked and understood the inclusivity of women into the Ministry of the Church.

There is no doubt that many gay people experience homophobic behaviours in our congregations – although many of us would try to deny this – and that these behaviours range in degree and complexity. Gay

people are still often prayed for or tolerated, as it is easier to do that than to challenge the changes that are taking place. The culture and behaviour of a congregation and its leadership can create in many gay people a continuing sense of "gay shame". Do we really have such inclusive congregations that we can "hear the chains falling off" at the mention of this subject?

We can, of course, rightly say that we have moved forward and the creation of the Canon on same sex marriage within the Scottish Episcopal Church expressed this in a tangible way. But do we really listen to the stories of those who want to belong but are overwhelmed by a sense of recurrent and chronic humiliation by the Church? This may be a hard message to hear, but reflects the experience of many young gay people within the Church today. We do not talk about this subject enough. We simply talk about how much we have progressed and what we have done. However, we do not tackle the underlying culture that creates the hostility in which many people who come to our Church live with the feeling and secret of their "gay shame".

Turning now to another aspect of our so-called inclusivity, for decades now we have celebrated the richness which many women have brought to the ordain ministry and the wider ministry of the Church. In reality, the Scottish Episcopal Church could not survive liturgically without the God-given gift of the ministry of women.

Yet still some congregations will deny women the opportunity to share God's generosity in the administration of the Sacraments. This is an area of Church life which those who are against the practice of women's ministry in the Church appear to find difficult to deal with. However let me make it quite clear, for those of us who do not hold that view, that it is equally hard not to be able to express disappointment and, in some cases, revulsion at the position taken in excluding women from

the practice of ministry within the Church.

Where can we hear the chains falling off in this aspect of the diverse nature of our Church? For me, all of this is about spirituality in its broadest sense, as it is concerns the connection with something that is bigger than ourselves and expresses ideas about more than just the question of who can be ordained or who can be admitted into Church life.

This hard subject could be expanded in many different ways and many would say that the nature of inclusivity is endless, but we all know that, as the inclusivity and generosity of God is endless, so our work to try to solve these issues and to be more expressively open is a part of Christian Discipleship now.

In 2018, I was asked – to my surprise, as I had not seen myself as belonging to the 'older persons' group – to give the Annual Malcolm Goldsmith Lecture on the subject of age and spirituality, and I chose as my title "Ancient but ever growing". It appears to me that one of the hard discussions that we need to hold around inclusivity concerns the pastoral care and inclusivity of those older members of our congregations who, through their person and resources, have faithfully supported the life and work of our Church. Is the care we offer and the inclusive nature of our approach sufficient to make them feel, as they grow older, part of the celebration of the nature of the Trinity? For me, the challenge of inclusion is a theological essential, as it makes real in our daily lives the relationship in the Trinity between the Father and the Son, as expressed in that very special bond we know as the Holy Spirit and shown in God's generous love toward us.

So, let me again pose the question: "How is your sex life?"

Let us not dodge the hard questions but let us hear the chains falling off.

*Dr Joe Morrow*



# Faith of our Fathers

Fancy some healthy outdoor exercise? Then why not drive up Glen Esk from Edzell and take a walk into the Episcopal Church's history in Tarfside? You can stand within the remains of the church destroyed over 270 years ago. But that was not the first building.



Remnants of the church's walls

The Second Church was probably built near the site of the First St Drostan's Church. The 2nd church was burned down by the Episcopal congregation following the 1745 Rising, they having been persuaded to do so by the anti-Episcopal Parish Minister on the assurance that they would be spared a visit from the redcoats. The Hanoverian soldiers came nonetheless.



The Cross Stone - a piece of Pictish work



Map showing (l. to r.) the 2nd church, the Cross Stone and the present church all picked out in red

Shortly after the arrival of the Rev'd James Brown in 1763, the building of the 2nd Church was begun and completed by 98 men of the congregation. They collected stones from the hills and within a week had the walls standing and, within 3 weeks, the roof was thatched with heather, and the floor laid with earth and gravel. It was 74 ft. long and 14 ft. wide and was used until the 3rd Church was opened in 1811. (The 3rd Church was located near where the Lodge is now).

To get to the 2nd church take the path through the field gate to the west of the present St Drostan's Church. The Cross Stone is approximately 800 yards on the left side along this path. Then follow the rough path to the right over the heather with the Hill of Rowan opposite.



Another view of the foundation walls with a marker stone

## Crossword Result . . .

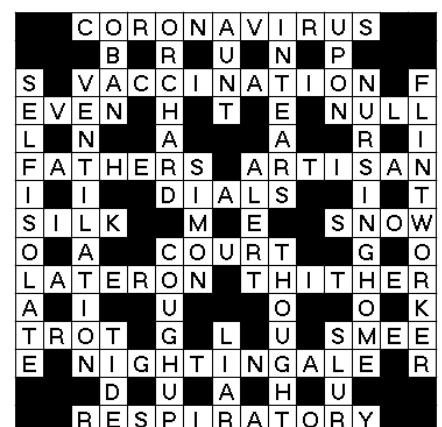
Following the dearth of entries for the previous edition there was the largest ever number of entries for the last crossword, and they came from far and wide. Perhaps restrictions on movement encouraged more sedentary pursuits.

The winner picked out using a complex algorithm (appropriate in

this virus-ridden age) was Malcolm Webb of Gillingham, Kent. (He has a sister living at Inverbervie). Very well done to him!

Another crossword (free from infection, but possibly mildly addictive) is on page 13.

The correct solution was:



# The Church of St George the Martyr in Penang



My work takes me to many parts of the world, and through that travel I am reminded of the international and global impact of Anglicanism. In 2018 I was privileged to visit the Island of Penang in Malaysia. I went there primarily to speak at a conference, but also to sample the magnificent local cuisine, which incorporates culinary influences from many parts of the world.

On my first Sunday in Penang, I was taken to Sunday service in the Church of St George the Martyr. There was a celebration of the Sacrament of Baptism, at which five babies from five different ethnic backgrounds were baptised and grafted into the Church.

This Anglican Church was established in Penang when the island came into the possession of the British, who occupied the Malay States in 1786. The island was acquired by the East India Company, and the first Anglican spiritual leaders in the island were sea chaplains of the Company.

From Penang, Anglicanism spread to the rest of Malaysia, and in 1855 the Diocese of Singapore, Labuan and Sarawak was created, which became the Missionary Diocese of the Archbishop of Canterbury.

Today the Diocese of West Malaysia could rightly regard many of the UK dioceses as ripe for missionary activity. On the Sunday I attended, it was evident that the Church of St George the Martyr had a thriving congregation with a thirst for studying what it meant to be a Christian Disciple, as well as engagement with the local community.

The building was clearly recognisable as an Anglican Church, when upon entering the building you saw the High Altar, raised up to occupy the principal position within the Church, emphasising the theological prominence of the Sacrament of Holy Communion.

The architect of the Church was Colonel J. L. Caldwell, who also designed St George's Cathedral in Madras.

On 31 August 2007, in conjunction with the celebrations for the 50th Anniversary of Independence Day celebrations of Malaysia, St George's Church was listed as one of Malaysia's 50 National Heritage Treasures.



However, for me the Church is an international treasure, whose worshipping congregation is firmly rooted in the local community and is a living testimony to the unity of God's people.

*Dr Joe Morrow*

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## Dedicating the 'wild waves' of life to God - a Pilgrim's Plea

Shall I abandon, O King of mysteries, the soft comforts of home? Shall I turn my back on my native land, and my face towards the sea?

Shall I put myself wholly at your mercy, without silver, without a horse, without fame and honour?

Shall I throw myself wholly on you, without sword and shield, without food and drink, without a bed to lie on?

Shall I say farewell to my beautiful land, placing myself under your yoke? Shall I pour out my heart to you, confessing my manifold sins and begging forgiveness, tears streaming down my cheeks?

Shall I leave the prints of my knees on the sandy beach, a record of my final prayer in my native land? Shall I then suffer every kind of wound that the sea can inflict?

Shall I take my tiny coracle across the wide sparkling ocean? O King of the glorious heaven, shall I go of my own choice upon the sea?

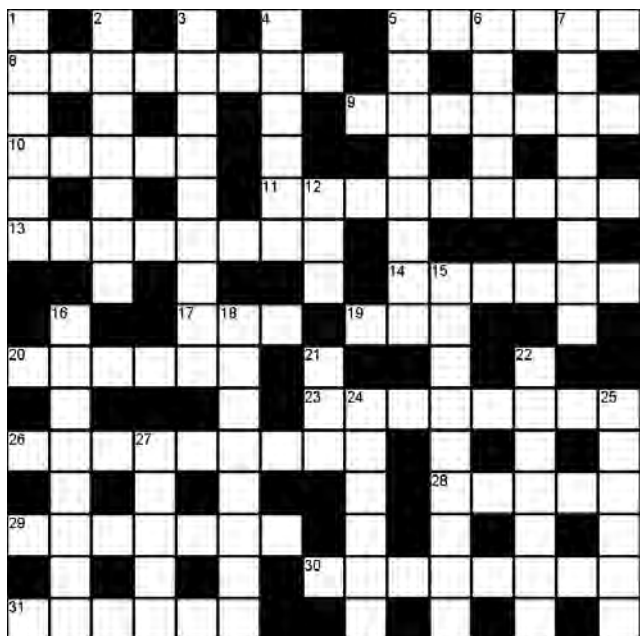
O Christ, will you help me on the wild waves?

*Attributed to Brendan, Irish abbot and friend of St Columba; he died in 573 A.D.*



# CRYPTIC PRIZE CROSSWORD

Eleven answers will be found in the account of the visit of the Wise Men (traditional translation). Send your entries to the editor at the address on the back page by Friday, 26 February.



## CLUES ACROSS:

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| 5 Hunt for a car she wrecked (6)                        | 13 Got in and changed to acting as a benefactor (8)                  |
| 8 It seemed little Edward finished a crumpled paper (8) | 14 She holds policeman back for ages (6)                             |
| 9 Transfixed MP in false ideal (7)                      | 17 Paddle round a river (3)  |
| 10 Silky fabric woven in one piece (5)                  | 19 Capt.'s subordinate (3)   |
| 11 What a recidivist does (9)                           | 20 What that goes without (6)  |
|   | 23 Was pleased about little Joanne being put in charge of Edward (8) |
|   | 26 Elizabeth arrived at the French border town (9)                   |

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| 28 Youngster scolded for hiding fifty (5)                  | 6 Dream disturber (5)                                      |
| 29 Ladies bend one harp in making it for your coiffure (7) | 7 Sounds as if these cats aren't faithful (8)              |
| 30 The full 50 enter to take part in the event (7)         | 12 An early bird? (3)                                      |
| 31 Pet for the ancient mariner? (3,3)                      | 15 All you can think of before you move in (9)             |
|  | 16 Cut the price of decorative fabric? (8)                 |
|  | 18 One dressed in green with silver trim is in harmony (8) |

## CLUES DOWN:

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| 1 Andrew was cautioned (6)                                 | 21 Bit of a Swedish crown (3)                            |
| 2 Opportunity to start batting? (7)                        | 22 When Britney Spears cries it disturbs the writers (7) |
| 3 Flower people following vehicle (9)                      | 24 Hire me with a cunning plan (6)                       |
| 4 Hand back profit (6)                                     | 25 He was artful in a novel way (6)                      |
| 5 Called two thousand and one into the south of France (8) | 27 Ruler of a wild horde (6)                             |

Name .....

Address.....

## I'll sing to that...

There was a church where the new minister and the organist were not getting along. As time went by this began to spill over into the worship. One week the minister preached on commitment and how we all should dedicate ourselves to the service of God. The organist played: 'We Shall not be Moved'.

The next week the minister preached on tithing and how we all should gladly give to the work of the Lord. The organist responded with: 'Jesus Paid it All'. The third week the minister preached on gossiping and how we should all watch our tongues.

The organist played all verses of: 'I Love to Tell the Story'.

By now the minister had become very discouraged with the situation, and the following Sunday told his congregation that he was considering resigning. The organist closed the service with: 'O Why Not Tonight?' As it came to pass, the minister did indeed resign.

The following Sunday he informed the church that it was Jesus who had led him there and it was Jesus who was taking him away. The organist then outdid himself with: 'What a Friend We Have in Jesus.'



# A visitor from Mars - a story

The Ellipse had returned from Earth and the Committee had spent that day examining the captain on the details of his journey. The main purpose of the flight had been to recover a spy landed there some years ago. Of course, they had received pictures of the flight to Earth as it happened but there were aspects beyond what one could see which had to be investigated.

Now, time had to be spent debriefing the spy who had, with great difficulty, assumed the form of a human and spent five years on Earth gathering information on the way the humans lived. The committee was drawn up in a horseshoe with the spy seated on a chair at the focal point.

"So you think you have a grasp of how the humans live?" asked the Chairman.

"Yes," replied the spy, "but only up to a point."

"Why is that?"

"Well they are so irrational and unpredictable and they have values vastly different to ours which are often hard to understand," said the spy.

"How did you go about it?" the Chairman asked.

"It's a very long story. I decided to take the path of the more fortunate humans so I enrolled for Oxford University and concurrently studied the sciences, arts, social sciences and joined most of the clubs and sports societies. By using our Quick Learning App I had no problems in taking in all that knowledge except I had to wait for the normal times between exams. I expected this would help me advance my understanding of how humans behave. Then I pursued a few professional qualifications and climbed up the ladders of power. That was tricky."

"Why so," asked the chairman.

"Well, I the academic disciplines I had studied did not help me much. Life was conducted at a much lower level. The continuous repetition of unreal values in advertising and other entertain-

ment on TV and elsewhere in the media diverts the widely held cultural values away from reality. I found that decision making on Earth is not very closely aligned to rational thought. The ways of selection for positions of power and government, which differ between countries, is a good example. It usually involves much pandering and discreet lying and pretence. It is also a problem trying to find out what the voters really wanted before you could offer it to them. Often you had to tell them what to think. The more successful candidates produce short slogans expressing what they think the people want. They repeat these at every opportunity, a bit like advertising, till that is all the people have in their minds. They do not question it and so they follow it when they vote. It is hardly surprising that it is pure chance if, from such a system, someone emerges who is actually fit to govern in the national interest. Once in government you find you are mainly expected to do what you are told and vote the way the leader tells you to."

"But you managed it?" said the Chairman.

"Yes I think so, I got very near to the seat of power, but it was necessary to do daily mental exercises to prevent my becoming like them," said the spy.

"What are your conclusions?"

"Earth is divided into nations. There are international bodies such as The United Nations and the European Union, but the members are always squabbling, seeking what is best for their own country rather than the right answer or the common good. What counts is the relative power of countries rather than rational decisions concerned with solving the problem in hand. The more powerful countries offer bribes or threats to get support for what they want and they often interfere in other countries in various ways, sometimes by force. The same is the case within nations. There the governing parties are usually more concerned with their own

self-interest, which is getting elected, than the national interest.

"There are systems which they call 'democratic' where each citizen has a vote but citizens are generally poorly informed either through their own laziness or perhaps deceived by prejudiced news sources or political parties which are supposed to represent voters' interests. Some other nations may pay lip service to votes by citizens but are really ruled by self-perpetuating oligarchies or even monarchies which change the law to suit themselves. And it's all confused by being built on different historical backgrounds. For example, one small country has a Second Governing Chamber of 800 people none of whom are elected. 75% are well past the usual retirement age necessary, and many of the rest have only the vaguest knowledge of government. Some are even there only through an historical anomaly because their forbears got rich through war or the slave trade."

"This is really confusing", said the Chairman. "It sounds like rule by the elderly unemployed supported by the unemployable. Can you give me some concrete examples on serious topics?"

"Well, recently there was, the spread of a lethal illness across the world. Each nation followed different paths to try to stop it spreading. There was little co-operation or a plan to defeat this pandemic. Yet it was in everybody's interest to defeat the illness. At one extreme there was no action at first hoping, without evidence, that people would become immune as the disease spread. Only when the number of deaths threatened to become really large did they change to some form of isolation. At the other extreme some locked their people in their homes, surrounded them with barbed wire and only released them when the threat had passed.

"But nearly everywhere protecting health was in conflict with economic activity which is



difficult to conduct with lockdown. They gave up any idea of eradicating the virus and pursued policies of containment within what health authorities could manage though many who caught the disease died. So they relaxed isolation and even allowed people to fly off to other countries for a holiday so as to release the pressures of lockdown and save the aviation industry."

"Let's get this right," said the Chairman. "People from some nations with the virus were allowed to travel to all manner of other countries which mostly had the virus. Can you think of a better way of spreading the contagion and promoting new mutations?" asked the Chairman.

"Well, no, though there were some countries where people could not go because they were so infected and less controlled," said the spy. "Furthermore, they allowed them to travel in aeroplanes where close contact is almost inevitable. People using the planes did not always obey the instruction to wear masks and keep to their seats. You see they could not change their normal habits. All this was going on just at a time when they had an even more serious problem of climate change through the release of carbon and other greenhouse gases into the atmosphere. That seems to have been forgotten"

Having discussed the nature of Climate Change, the Chairman said, "But presumably most of the humans were not aware of such consequences?"

"Ah, but they were. They have known about the warming effects of burning carbon for thirty or forty years. But they also know that after a certain point climate warming will be out of control; natural forces will produce greenhouse gases and there will be no way of stopping it.

"They have done some things. Against the interests of some powerful organisations and a lot of fuss, they have gradually expanded renewable sources such as windmills and solar energy to produce electricity to replace the burning of coal. They

have improved insulation of their houses to save heat, but much more is required. However, at the same time some countries have been creating new huge open cast mines for coal to burn because it is in their short term interest. Other countries plan to open even more mines and sell the coal, but claim responsibility for the consequences lies with the users.

"You see people and countries by and large still pursue self-interest in spite of the longer term effects. Governments even sign up to reaching nil net carbon use by 2050 and at the same time increase the capacity of airports and rail systems which would involve burning even more carbon. Consistency is not a strong point with humans. Even when they have suffered huge floods and massive forest fires, they simply bemoan the losses of life and environment, and then go on as before. They seem incapable of doing anything else."

The Chairman knocked on the table to restore order over the gasps of incredulity from the other members. "It all sounds very irrational to me," he said.

"Well, it is," said the spy. "It's all very primitive and tribal based. Deep in their natures is the driving force of self-interest. It is true that this driving force has been behind change which for many years has produced benefits for many. However, the driving force is for personal gain rather than the common good. This has meant that wealth is more and more concentrated in the hands of a few who still work to get more and more wealth and this opens up an ever growing gap between rich and poor. Even when long term interests are common to all, as with climate change, people and companies are unable to suppress their own short term, personal interests. Some still maintain that climate change is a fiction. This also applies to governments which rarely last or see beyond the short term.

"Another example of confusion and the use of power is taxation. That is a way of collecting funds to meet the cost of such things as

defence, police, and social services incurred to benefit society at large. Sometimes it may be used to counter recessions though this is very unpopular in some circles. Rates of tax are decided through the democratic process and are in some ways progressive and in others regressive so that they impact more on the poor. But most large companies and many rich individuals avoid it by placing the apparent source of income in a small, well-controlled foreign country where the funds are safe and tax is low or non-existent. There are nominal attempts to prevent avoidance and evasion but they are largely ineffectual and such practices these days are widely practised by most countries. Indeed, some countries deliberately encourage those avoiding tax to come to live with them. Sometimes those in power are beneficiaries. It is an international problem but there is little attempt to change things."

"Well, it really does seem to be quite a mess," said the Chairman.

"Yes, I am afraid so," said the spy. "Over my five years there I became quite fond of humans. They have many attractive qualities. In spite of all I have said they can still be very kind and concerned for each other. In spite of self-interest many of them devote themselves in many ways to the good of the poor, the sick and their neighbours. However, I am afraid if we tried to help they would only respond with war."

"War, what's that?" asked the Chairman sharply.

"War, don't let's go there. It is something they do to each other when they can't find another way to get what they want. It destroys cities which have taken years to build up. It involves killing many humans most of whom had nothing to do with the disagreement. Then they have to clear up the mess and start all over again," said the spy.

"I think we have heard enough for now. It's hard to take it all in," said the Chairman. "Maybe we should have a break and think all this over. Pass round the Mars bars, please."

*H. I.*

# Andra

(written for St. Andrew's night, 30th November)

We're really proud that wan o' the twelve is Scotland's patron saint,  
But much o' what we hear is simply tales and legends quaint.  
Whit do we really ken o' him, that we should a' remember?  
Weel, twa things staun' oot in ma mind on the thirtierh o' November.

Wan is the day at Jordan's side when first he met the Lord.  
He'd been wi' John the Baptist. (It tells us in God's word.)  
Now that he followed Jesus (fur he c'd dae nae other),  
Not only did he come himsel' – he went an fetched his brother.

The ither day in Andra's life that stauns oot clear fur me  
Wis when the sun shone brightly by the sude o' Galilee;  
An' mony folk had come frae far, to hear the spoken word,  
An' rnony folk had gaithered roon' tae listen tae the Lord.  
Nou Andra lookit roon', an' thocht that there (for a' he kent)  
Wis thoosan's o' fowk wi' naethin' tae eat, an' the day wis now far  
spent.  
An' while he wunnert whit tae dae, tae care fur everybody,  
He realised that by his side wis staunin' a wee laudie.

"Hullo, I didnae notice you," said Andra, lookin' doon.  
"Sir," said the boy, "I wunnert if ye c'd share ma piece aroon'."  
Jist fur a moment Andra paused, astoodit at this word,  
Then said, "Gie me yir haun'. We'll gang tak it tae the Lord."  
Weel, ye ken the rest o' the story. Ye've heard it a' yer days.  
The meeracle wis nae Andra's: an he widnae want the praise. .  
But the story in the Gospel nicht no be jist the same,  
If the bairn had no pickt Andra as the wan tae whom he came.  
For some folks wad hae chased him, an' some folks wad hae laught.  
(Some wha saw the bairn and Anndra thocht the baith o' them wis  
daft.)  
But Andra wis a kind big chiel wha kenn't that this wee laud  
Wis daein' jist the kind o' thing that pleased the hert o' God.  
They took the food tae Jesus, an' he does a' things well,  
An' this is **THE ONLY MEERACLE** that **ALL FOUR GOSPELS** tell.

Weel, that's a tale o' kindness (than which there's naethin' sweeter.)  
His ither deed wis the bringin' o' that great man, Simon Peter.  
If that wis a' that Andra did, I'm shair ye will agree,  
He did far mair fur Jesus than either you or me.  
He brocht the first church leader. He fed a starvin' crowd.  
He is the kind o' Patron saint of whom we can be proud.

# Lord, prop us up!

There is a story of an old farmer who always prayed  
the same prayer at his church meeting. 'Lord, prop us  
up on our leanin' side'. After hearing this many times,  
his minister asked him one day quite what he meant.

The famer replied: "Well, it's like this... I've got an  
old barn out in one of my fields. It's been there a long  
time, and gone through a lot of storms. One day a few  
years ago I noticed that it was leaning to one side a  
bit. So, I went and got some poles and propped it up  
on its leaning side, so it wouldn't fall. Then I got to  
thinking about how much I was like that old barn. I've  
been around a long time, and seen plenty of storms in  
life. I was still standing, but I was also leaning a bit.  
So, I decided to ask the Lord to prop me up, too, on  
my leaning side.

Our 'leaning side' is where we are weakest in  
ourselves. Sometimes we get to leaning toward  
anger, bitterness, bleakness in life. Then we too need  
to pray for God to prop us up, especially on that  
leaning side. He wants us to stand tall and free, in  
Him.

## Torches

A trusty torch on a dark night,  
Proves to be a faithful light –  
Revealing gutters and sharp bends  
(these it's best to apprehend).  
It shines on sticks and other mess,  
Which can cause unpleasantness.  
No need to pause or be afraid;  
Step by step progress in made –  
Confident the light will show,  
The destined place I need to go.

The Bible gives essential light –  
Life's torch on a stormy night;  
Enfolding wisdom from above,  
Telling of a Saviour's love.  
Above the noise and clangour heard,  
Grant us grace to heed 'the Word'.  
Encouraged by the Spirit's might,  
Help us choose what is right –  
Search daily for the one true light,  
As New Year merges into sight.

Margaret Couper

The next issue of **Grapevine** will be coming out for 28 March 2021.

All articles, letters, comments should be with the Editor by Thursday 4 March 2021.

Preferably articles should be no longer than 500 words.

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