

GRAPEVINE

No 123

Spring 2021

THE MAGAZINE OF THE DIOCESE OF BRECHIN

Bishop Andrew writes:

It is good to write this greeting for you as Spring 2021 emerges around us. At this time of year we would be working through the weeks of Lent, preparing for Holy Week and Easter. That can feel a familiar place to be and some of what we explore each Lent is how to avoid things becoming **too** familiar. That familiarity of Lent is, of course, stripped away this year by the ongoing pandemic. Our pattern of worship and discipleship has had to be online for most of 2021, with Zoom and other platforms letting us remain connected: just! The church has not closed but has changed its way of meeting. But that is not the same and we are missing many aspects of our common life. We are missing social interaction. We are missing being able to meet with others in our homes to study and to pray. We are also missing the eucharistic pattern that is vital to the life of Scottish Episcopal Churches of all traditions. There are signs of hope ahead, as vaccination seems to be making a big difference. But everything remains very constrained.

How can we make sense of our life as Christian communities as we continue to be restricted and constrained? There is the possibility and hope of restrictions easing, meeting with family and churches re-opening, but this is still a hard time. How do we keep on going, when this has become such a long and hard journey through a sort of wilderness?

The image of Lent as a time in the wilderness is something that we try to capture in the sparse decoration and stark appearance of our church buildings and worship in a 'normal' Lent. This year, that time in the wilderness is literal: we have been kept out of physical gathering and worshipping together. This wilderness has been a necessary thing, our government has

assured us, as all need to be safe and prevent the spread of the deadly virus. But it is a time of wilderness.

In the earliest days of the church men and women would deliberately spend time in the wilderness areas of the Mediterranean fringes. They were often fleeing the chaos and persecution of the pagan cities of the Roman Empire. As hermits who sought simple, ascetic lives, this developed into a monastic tradition, often referred to as the 'Desert Fathers (and Mothers)'. They might have started by fleeing from chaos, but in the desert they found ways to know themselves, to challenge themselves over the pride and foolishness that can often be found in any human community and, most importantly, they found new ways to encounter

God. The wisdom and inner strength from God they found in the time spent in the emptiness of wilderness has inspired generations of people in their exploration of God's place in their lives.

This pandemic is not an excuse to throw away the things about church and community that we maybe don't get on with. The challenges of emerging from lockdown and restriction and re-starting church life will be complex challenges. And we will make that transition. But this wilderness time can help us to reflect on what really, really matters in the life of our faith communities. And when that is restored, we can appreciate and value all the more the social, community and eucharistic life of our churches, even as we navigate a world changed by this extended period of 'pandemic Lent.'

We will journey together through the weeks and months ahead, as charges and as a diocese. And please be assured of the prayers of all your sisters and brothers as well as mine, as your bishop, in the times ahead. May this Lent come to an end and a true Easter of restoration lie before us all!

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



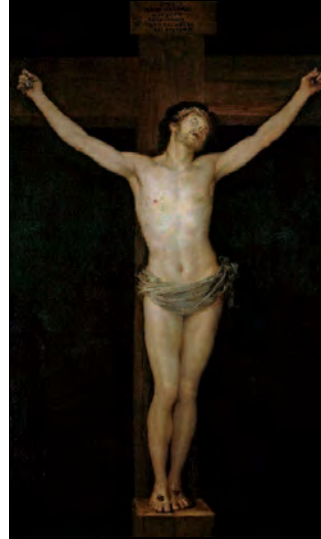
*Andrew,
Bishop of Brechin*

Heroes for our time ?

'Clapping for Carers' caught the imagination of our fellow-citizens for many weeks last year, but the idea in mid-January of a weekly 'clap for heroes' did not take off (many other factors aside, the cold and dark can hardly have helped). But the label of 'heroes' for some members of our society certainly has. Ask someone to name a 'hero' of the current crisis and they would likely identify doctors, nurses, and other hospital staff; or perhaps other workers such as supermarket staff and delivery drivers. And we can't overlook Captain Tom. But what kind of hero are we asking these people to be?



be introduced many centuries later by the Romans, who viewed it as a sign of the lack of true heroism shown by a figure who fought against the Trojans, legendary ancestors of the Greeks.



warriors in the battle against our common enemy – but the Greek model is hardly a good fit for the selfless service we are seeking to celebrate. And yet the Christian model carries its own dangers. For one thing, the New Testament agrees that Christ suffered and died so that we don't have to: his is not a model to be replicated.

And, most notably, who we choose to call heroes depends a great deal on how we think of our society. Are those who have faced the greatest dangers in the last year our soldiers who we will reward with the highest prestige in society in the years to come? Or have we decided that our healthcare and supermarket workers are christlike heroes who can face suffering and death on behalf of us all?

For the classical Greeks, heroes were the warriors of their myths and epics. Achilles, for instance, would prove the model for many later heroes. The son of a sea nymph and a king, and slayer of his enemy Hector outside the gates of Troy, he used his courage to serve his Greek people. For the Greeks, this was his heroism. The legend of the 'Achilles heel' – and what in superhero comics we have come to know as the idea that every hero has a fatal flaw – would only

The arrival of Christianity, however, put a spin on this model of heroism. Could Jesus be called a 'hero' in the manner of these Greek models? The answer, given by early Christian thinkers such as Origen, was 'no'. Christ was not just a great human; he was God. And he showed his virtue not through war and conquest, but through a victory of a different sort, through his suffering and death on the cross.

What kind of hero, then, are our doctors and nurses today? In some rhetoric they are our brave

There are many great deeds of care, compassion and service being performed across the world at the moment. Some will be told and celebrated in years to come; others will remain encounters known only to giver and recipient. Are these people heroes? Quite possibly. But the basis for this label is what matters: who are the heroes we want for our time?

Observations on modern life

Common sense is not a gift. It's a punishment because you have to deal with everyone who doesn't have it.

Save the earth. It's the only planet with chocolate.

A bus station is where a bus stops. A train station is where a train stops. On my desk I have a workstation.

The journey of a thousand miles begins with a broken fan belt and a flat tyre.

The darkest hour is just before dawn. So, if you're going to steal your neighbour's milk, that's the time to do it.

Don't be irreplaceable. If you can't be replaced, you can't be promoted.

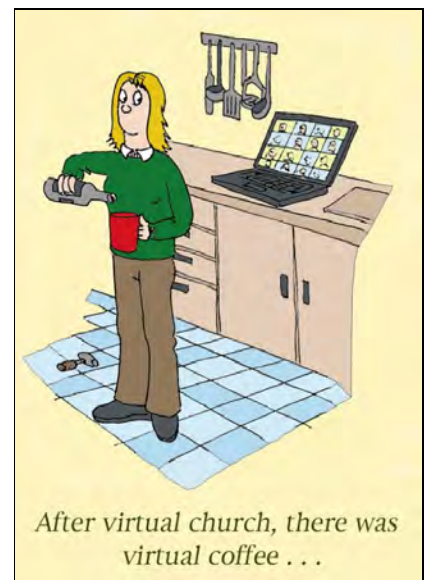
A hangover is the wrath of grapes.

When two egotists meet, it's an i for an i.

A filing cabinet is a place where you can lose things systematically.

Two choir members recently got married. They met by chants.

The most welcome guest is the one who knows when to go home.



The Darkling Thrush

by Thomas Hardy

I leant upon a coppice gate
 When Frost was spectre-gray,
 And Winter's dregs made desolate
 The weakening eye of day.
 The tangled bine-stems scored the sky
 Like strings of broken lyres,
 And all mankind that haunted nigh
 Had sought their household fires.

The land's sharp features seemed to be
 The Century's corpse outleant,
 His crypt the cloudy canopy,
 The wind his death-lament.
 The ancient pulse of germ and birth
 Was shrunken hard and dry,
 And every spirit upon earth
 Seemed fervourless as I.

At once a voice arose among
 The bleak twigs overhead
 In a full-hearted evensong
 Of joy illimited;
 An aged thrush, frail, gaunt, and small,
 In blast-beruffled plume,
 Had chosen thus to fling his soul
 Upon the growing gloom.

So little cause for carolings
 Of such ecstatic sound
 Was written on terrestrial things
 Afar or nigh around,
 That I could think there trembled through
 His happy good-night air
 Some blessed Hope, whereof he knew
 And I was unaware.

Writing probably in 1899, Hardy paints a bleak picture of the desolate winter landscape as night falls, which reflects his feelings. Like many of his contemporaries, he cannot look forward to the new century, being disillusioned about the established values and beliefs of the Victorian era. Developments in Science and Philosophy had shaken religious faith; Hardy, having read Darwin, Schopenhauer and Comte at a young age, had long since ceased to believe in a loving creator.

The image of the *corpse* and associated words and images in the first two stanzas illustrate not only decay and decline in Nature but also that of the last century and the anthropomorphic metaphor links it to the human spirit, which is *fervourless* with no hope of renewal: the pulse of life is

shrunken hard and dry. The use of so-called 'hard' consonants (c, d, g) often alliterated and the slow pace of the ballad form are appropriate to this, while the image of the broken lyre strings adds to the sense of disharmony.

The mood changes in Stanza 3 with the thrush's song. Contrasting with its poor physical state and gloomy surroundings, the bird sings with *joy illimited* and lifts Hardy's depression. Despite his loss of faith, Hardy (trained as an architect when young) had retained his love of churches and their rituals, as indicated in his choice of words – *evensong, soul, carolings and blessed*. The thrush's song almost persuades Hardy to feel Hope, one of the three Christian virtues, and therefore trust in renewed life promised by a benign deity. Sadly,

we know that his faith was not restored, much as he wanted it to be.

The poem seems particularly appropriate for us at the present time, as for a year we have watched in fear as our world has been devastated by a tiny organism which seems to have no positive use in the circle of life and which for a long time seemed unconquerable. It has raised many questions and some have struggled to keep their faith. However, the Pandemic has led us to reassess our values, which could lead to a better world; moreover, it appears that our scientists are, after all, empowered to save us from the worst effects of the disease. We might therefore be more convinced than Hardy of some blessed Hope.



Crossword Result

Randomly drawn out for last edition's cryptic crossword was Mr Grant Wilson's entry from Carnoustie. Congratulations to him.

The correct solution is printed here.

Another crossword appears on page 10.

W	O	C	R	S	E	A	R	C	H		
A	P	P	E	A	R	E	D	U	L	H	
R	E	E	R	T	I	M	P	A	L	E	
N	I	N	O	N	U	M	R	E			
E	I	A	R	E	C	O	M	M	I	T	S
D	O	N	A	T	I	N	G	N	A		
G	I	G	E	P	O	C	H	S			
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S	A	I	N	G	O	E	S				
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B	E	T	H	L	E	H	E	M	C	R	O
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H	A	I	R	P	I	N	L	U	B	G	
T	O	N	C	O	M	P	L	E	T	E	
S	E	A	D	O	G	Y	Y	S	R		

Diocesan Synod 2021

It has become a cliché in the last year to say that an event or experience is 'unprecedented', but, of course, that is precisely what the pandemic had forced upon the arrangements for the Diocesan Synod when it met on 6 March. First, those attending were present on computer screens and not in a geographical location. Secondly, business was completed faster, as we finished by lunchtime. Thirdly, when we broke into small groups for discussion there was no noisy interference from other nearby groups chattering. And lastly voting by electronic means was significantly quicker than by the counting of raised hands. So it was not all disadvantageous.

Apart from the regular synod business there were two matters upon which members were asked to give their views: a motion concerning environmental issues and a consultation on the manner in which our bishops are elected.

The late Ellinah Waukoya, Bishop of Swaziland, was well-known for her work in promoting concerns for the state of the environment and the present direction of climate change. The General Synod which met last year had passed down to Diocesan Synods for discussion the following motion:

"That this Synod, expressing the need for urgent action in relation to the global climate emergency, calls on the Church in Society Committee, working in conjunction with other appropriate bodies, to bring forward a programme of actions to General Synod 2021 to resource the Scottish Episcopal Church in working towards achieving net zero carbon emissions by 2030."

In the small group discussions that followed a wide range of reactions were noted. It was questioned whether a 9 year period to reach zero carbon emissions was at all achievable; on the other hand some saw a parallel with the nation's response to the Covid-19 crisis insofar as necessity has brought about a dramatic change of behaviour. There was some ambivalence as to whether the Church should be taking a practical lead in these matters or simply be giving an ethical comment on the issue. Perhaps the most widespread concern expressed by the groups was about buildings and the costs associated in implementing the motion's policy. Whilst it would be sensible to produce an audit of the current situation we are aware that our churches and halls are larger and higher than many other buildings and there is considerable cost in heating and maintaining them, so some anxiety was expressed as to the expense of installing alternative means and where the funding for this would come from given the limited congregational resources. There was some support for embarking on a theological study on matters relating to human impact on the environment and our individual and communal response to it.

The second subject up for discussion was Canon 4, Of the Election of Bishops to Vacant Sees. Since the 1980s there have been a number changes to the

procedure defined in the Canon and major re-writing on two occasions. Yet experiences of the process in recent years reveal continuing dissatisfaction. A Review Group was set up by the General Synod to suggest a way forward; Canon Fay Lamont has been a member of this group and so presented a consultation paper to the Diocesan Synod.

She outlined some of the background factors which have led to the current situation and the perceived or real drawbacks experienced. With this in mind the Review Group had produced alternative outline procedures for the way forward. When the Church through the General Synod had indicated which path was preferable the Committee on Canons would produce the text of a revised canon for the usual 2-year process of adoption or rejection.

The first option was for a significant revision of the present canon by taking account of the objections which had been raised. It would maintain the basic electoral involvement of all of a diocese's congregations through their Diocesan Synod membership, but this body would be convened at the time that an election became necessary thus avoiding the disenfranchising of some charges when personnel had changed.

The other option is to replace the Electoral Synod with an Electoral Council which would be a much smaller body. Although its membership would be weighted in favour of the diocese which had the vacancy, it would be made up of people who had skill in discerning the needs of the diocese and the gifts of prospective candidates. With fewer people involved confidentiality would be easier to maintain and only the identity of the person chosen would be made public.

Following the opportunity to discuss these options in small groups a secret ballot was taken of people's initial preferences. The result of this was 46% were in favour of option 1 and 36% for option 2, with 18% undecided. This, of course, was a straw poll and carried no authority. Individuals and groups can voice their views on an online form available at:

https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSeZ4nKIZ3N7Q4m3XztfD090jt_ya5kzkWyA33JSFGFlpz4MA/vi ewform

Responses should be made by 31 March.

Interleaved with these discussions was the normal Synod business.

Little could be read into the statistical returns sent in by the congregations, since the curtailment of worship had rendered comparison with any 'normal' year impossible. With the Mission & Ministry Report there was a bit to say, although there again what had been hoped for a year ago had been significantly affected by the pandemic restrictions. There had been some developments in the three diocesan Clusters, but not as much as had been anticipated. Planning and circumstances had, however, pushed along some transitional ministry posts and five charges are newly engaged in this work for change with confidence.

Looking to the coming year there will continue to be support for congregations and all personnel, hoping that there will be easing of restrictions in the near future to enable the momentum in developing the Clusters to be recovered and ministers recruited for those congregations which are in a state of transition.

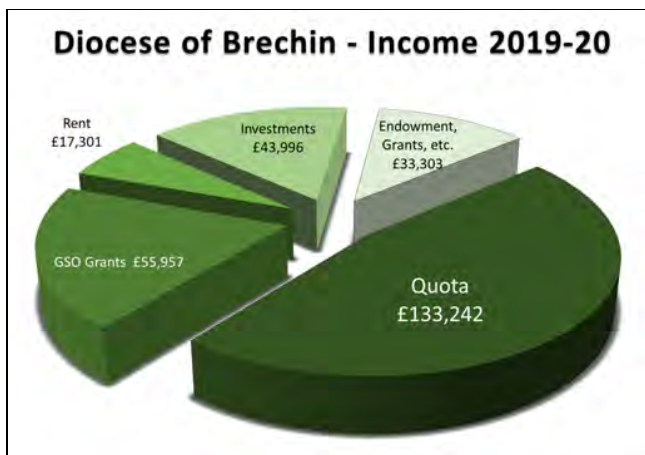
A report was also received from the Companion Links Officer highlighting in particular the additional challenges that the pandemic had brought to bear upon plans and projects, especially in eSwatini. Nonetheless some of these had flourished. Gratitude was expressed for all that Bishop Ellinah had done and pioneered during her episcopate and her untimely death was mourned by many people.

Though there was not much to say reports were given on the diocesan youth work and communication scenes.

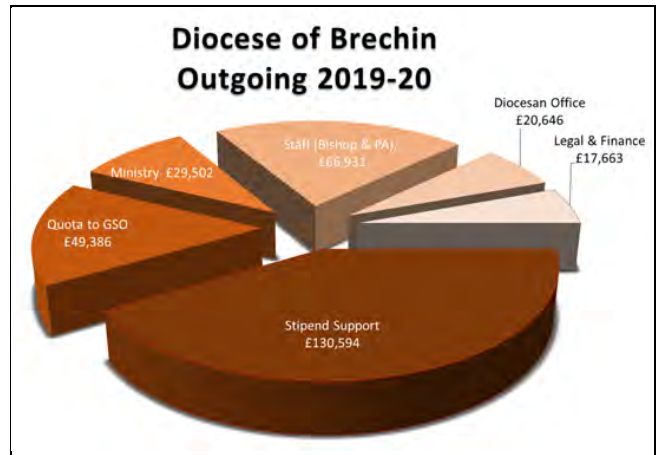
After a welcome break to stretch one's legs the Synod reconvened to consider the administrative facet of diocesan life, notably its financial aspect. The revised diocesan constitution had come into force and the Diocesan Council had had several satisfactory meetings, mostly through internet streaming by Zoom. The Diocesan Protection Officer said that the congregations had competely fulfilled their responsibilities with regard to the Protection of Vulnerable Groups and it was hoped that training sessions would be recommenced once circumstances permitted.

When it came to the electing of persons to various posts within the Diocese or Province, these were almost all satisfactorily filled.

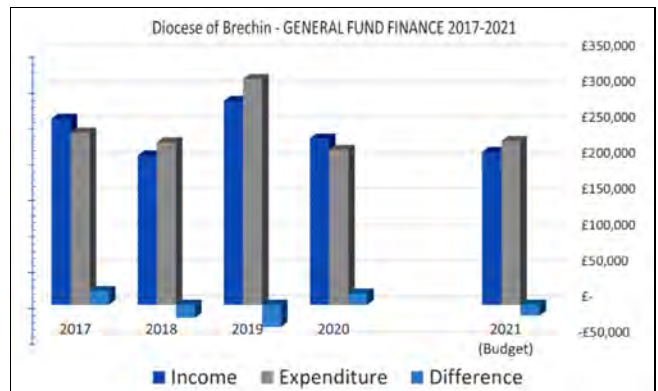
Moving to a review the financial situation of the diocese the accounts showed that there was a total income of £283,798. This comes from a variety of sources as is shown in the graphic below. Nearly half comes from the Quota, to which each congregation contributes proportionate to its own income (some of this is then passed on to the Province as the Outgoing figures show). Some of the income received is tied to particular purposes either by decision of the Diocesan Council or the wishes of the donor.



The overall expenditure for the year amounted to £314,722. The general breakdown of this is shown in next graphic. the largest slice (over 40%) of this goes to supporting the stipends of some of the clergy and most of this comes from restricted funds.



It is desirable that income and expenditure in the general funds of the Diocese closely equate. A great surplus would indicate that too much Quota had been sought from congregations; a high deficit would suggest we are not living within our means and costs are not being properly controlled. The following graphic shows that over the last few years the General Fund, which excludes monies for restricted purposes, has in fact roughly broken even. This shows prudent financial management.



Two financial elements have been advantageous in the past year. First, the investments held in the Church's Unit Trust Pool have increased significantly in what has been a volatile fiscal environment and the dividend paymets have thankfully been maintained at previous levels. Secondly, because of the impact of the pandemic in various departments there has been a lower expenditure than had been budgeted for. This was particularly noticeable in the Provincial accounts as reported at the General Synod 2020. The result of this is that the Province has lowered for the next three years the amount of Quota it will be seeking from the Dioceses.

This in turn has resulted in a reduction of £9,000 in the total that the Diocese needs in Quota assessments for the present year. This comes as a welcome relief to congregations whose incomes have been significantly affected by the current circumstances. So the proposed Diocesan budget for 2021 (which allows for a deficit of £15,000) and the calculations for Quota receiveable were put before members of Synod who unanimously approved them.

Following relevant votes of thanks the Bishop confirmed the Acts of Synod and everyone left their computer screens, ready for lunch.

The Synod of Whitby

An Easter Story

The small seaside town of Whitby, at the mouth of the river Esk on the North Yorkshire coast, has its fair share of claims to fame from literary inspiration for Bram Stoker's *Dracula* to being the port where Captain Cook first began his seafaring career on the Endeavour. Most significantly though for the Church it was the venue for one of the crucial moments in the evolution of the Church in Britain: The Synod of Whitby.



Ruins of the later Benedictine Abbey

Perched high on the cliffs, overlooking the sea, is the site of the old monastery, the venue for the synod. The ruins that dominate the headland at Whitby today are of the 13th century Benedictine Abbey that was built in its place following its destruction in 867 A.D. by Danish invaders.

The purpose of the synod was to decide which method churches in Britain should use to determine the date of Easter and other church practices such as which clerical tonsure (the style of haircut used by clergy) should be used. The idea that the date of Easter was an issue of debate may seem odd to us in 2021, but back in the 7th century it was a point of confusion and disagreement. To understand the issue we need to look back into the history of Christianity in Britain and how two traditions of the faith, both with their roots in Rome, had developed in the country and how these two traditions differed in their method of calculating Easter.

Following the Roman departure in the late 4th century, Britain had broken up into a group of separate kingdoms and the following years had seen invasions by Angles, Saxons and Jutes who brought with them their customs and beliefs. Christians had been marginalised and were predominantly settled in the west of the country, with paganism becoming the main form of worship in England. In Ireland in the 5th century there was Christian missionary work by Bishop Palladius, sent by the Pope to bring Christianity to Ireland and then more notably by St Patrick. In England, however, it wasn't until the late 6th century with St Augustine of Canterbury and his mission that Christianity began to take root in the pagan kingdoms of Britain.

These two branches of Christian missionary work developed simultaneously and, in many ways, along the same lines. Irish Celtic Christianity was influenced by the monastic traditions of St Patrick and St Columba. The English followed the Roman traditions brought by St Augustine. Both were fundamentally following the same faith, but differed in some practices and traditions.

This is where the problem lay: two very influential Christian traditions both celebrating Easter on different dates. The discussions surrounding this issue were not new but came to a head in 664 A.D. when the King of Northumbria (King Oswiu), called a meeting of both sides to decide the matter once and for all. King Oswiu was married to Eanflaed, the daughter of King Edwin (the former king of Northumbria) and Aethelburg of Kent. She followed

the Roman tradition and King Oswiu followed the Celtic which led to two different dates being observed for Easter within the King's household. This confusion was mirrored in the country with some observing the Celtic date and some the Roman date.

King Oswiu chose the monastery at Whitby, founded by Abbess Hilda, as the venue with Hilda as the host. Hilda was held in regard by both the Roman and Celtic Christians which was vital for all attending the meeting to feel comfortable. Representatives from both sides of the debate attended in the hope that a decision could finally be made that would unify the practices of the church.

The delegates for the Roman tradition were led by Agilbert, the bishop of the West Saxons, although his spokesperson was Wilfred (Abbot of Ripon) as Agilbert spoke little English. Wilfrid's role as spokesman enabled him to make a speech advocating that the Roman method for calculating the date of Easter should be adopted.



Abbess Hilda of Whitby

Bishop Cedd, who spent much of his early life at Lindisfarne under the guidance of the missionary Aidan, was asked to be the translator for both sides.

The Celtic side was led by Bishop Colman, a monk on Iona

who became the Bishop of Lindisfarne and friend to King Oswiu.

The opening speech made by King Oswiu set the tone for the debate that followed. In Bede's account, the King acknowledged that both traditions 'served one God' and both 'expected the same kingdom of heaven' therefore it was only right that they ought not to differ in the celebration of the heavenly mysteries. Both sides had come together to establish which tradition should be followed by all.

At the King's request Bishop Colman opened the debate by explaining which tradition he followed and how it had been established. He said the Celtic tradition had been passed down through their elders and their forefathers and was the same date that John the apostle was recorded to have celebrated it. This calculation was based on the lunar calendar (a calculation which had an 84 year cycle which had

been used by Rome until the 6th century).

The same question was posed to Bishop Agilbert who, through Wilfred, replied the Easter Date they held was also celebrated not only in Rome but in most of the world (including Italy, Gaul, Africa, Asia, Egypt and Greece). He made a point of noting it was only the 'Picts and the Britons' who still opposed this date, even calling them 'foolish' in doing so. The Roman Christian method for calculating Easter was in their view the correct method. This newer method was calculated using tables drawn up by Dionysius Exiguus (a 6th Century monk and scholar) that had a cycle of 19 years. The Roman tradition looked to the apostle Peter in their calculation with Wilfred quoting Matthew 16 'Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it, and I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of Heaven' in securing

the authority which they had.

King Oswiu asked Bishop Colman if he indeed agreed with the Roman tradition regarding the authority of Peter in this respect, which he did. After much thought King Oswiu decided (based on this very authority) that the church should follow the tradition of Rome. The practices with regard to the types of monastic tonsure were also unified.

The decision and important ruling by King Oswiu that was made at the synod was to be one of the turning points in unifying the church both liturgically and with its integration with Rome. Although both sides argued passionately for their tradition most people accepted the outcome. Bishop Colman returned to Scotland and continued in his Celtic tradition. Eventually, by the 8th century even Iona, the monastery founded by St Columba, had adopted the Roman tradition of calculating Easter and this unified Britain with the rest of Europe.

Signs of Hope

When I visited Taizé in the early 1990s, first as part of a pilgrimage from St Ninian's, and then just with the family, study groups were asked to identify signs of hope. I suspect that the question is still asked at Taizé, where the community's proper name indicates a dedication to reconciliation – surely one of the keys to any realistic hope. If I were asked about signs of hope now, I would certainly want to mention a recent initiative called 'The House of One'.

I'm intrigued by the name, which sounds as if it might have been translated from German, but which appears in English on the German language website. Does it mean the 'house of one-ness'? If so, why wasn't it called the House of Unity? Does it mean 'the house of The One'? If so, why not say so? Perhaps the name is intended to be tantalisingly vague – like the architecture? I'll leave somebody else to comment on that.

The house has been

described as a 'churchmosquagogue', and its purpose is to bring members of the three Abrahamic faiths together, but without any pretence that they're 'all doing the same thing really'. The three faiths have a common ancestry, but divergent understandings, and that sense of a shared but divided tradition is vital. One of the great hopes of Christian ecumenism was that churches acting in unity could bring communities together in a divided society. The vision of the

House of One is, if anything, even more ambitious. In the Western world, and as far East as Iran (further East, actually, but with further differences of background), communities are divided along religious fault-lines if not always for religious reasons. This gives religious people a responsibility or, perhaps, a vocation, to be an active sign of hope.

To quote the website, 'Berlin is soon to become home to something truly unique. Jews, Christians, and Muslims are planning to build a house of worship here – one that brings a synagogue, a church, and a mosque together under one roof. The three separate sections will be linked by a communal room in the center of the building. This will serve as a meeting place, where worshippers and members of the public can come together and learn more about the religions and each other.' For a more complete account, visit <https://house-of-one.org/en>



Ashley Cummins

Little Things Matter

I have been so glad during the periods of “lockdown” to have the television and radio. For Christmas 2020, I signed up to Netflix as a gift to myself and my household. The programmes and films have been a boost to the day, and I look forward every weekday to my regular slot of “The Archers” on Radio 4.

In recent months, there have been a number of highly charged programmes on television talking about sensitive issues of discrimination and abuse. These have had an impact on me, especially having more time to reflect (as we all have) during my time at home and in lockdown. These programmes range from “The Great”, highlighting the power of a Royal family in Russia, to the Channel 4 series “It’s a Sin”, which deals with the treatment of gay people and in particular those with HIV/Aids during the 1980s.

There have also been a number of very personal stories about women trapped at home with their abusers during lockdown and the increased number of physical and psychological assaults they have had to bear. I was taken aback by one morning programme concerning a person of small stature being attacked because of her stature. She indicated that a group of men – adults, not youngsters – had started to shout “Let’s kick the dwarf in the head”. They did just that, and she ended up in hospital unconscious. I would hardly have believed the story if the person had not been narrating her own experience of this deplorable behaviour.

Such aggressions, particularly against people with a disability, are easy for us to focus on and to actually condemn. No member of the Christian church or faith would want to have anything to do with such behaviour other than to denounce it. We are, of course, dealing with the idea that this is not the way in which we behave and that we have created open space for the inclusion of people from every background. I can almost hear the shouts “We do not

do this and we do not hold any views which would encourage such behaviour, as it is simply unacceptable to the Christian church”.

This may well be true, and the Christian faith has a positive record of fighting against discrimination. However, the work that we have to do in this area does not end there. There are many academics and practitioners who have linked this type of behaviour to the creation of a culture which allows the tolerance of what they call “microaggressions”. I am pretty sure that most of us will have experienced what this means in words and in action, both in the church and in the wider social context.

The psychologist W. D. Sue defined a microaggression as “a term used for a brief and commonplace action, verbal or behavioural or environmental indignities, whether intentional or unintentional, to communicate hostile, derogatory or negative attitudes towards stigmatised or culturally marginalised groups”.

While I am conscious that many of you may not like the nomenclature “microaggressions”, it is an important aspect of our daily life that we as Christians must reflect upon if we are not to add to the culture where microaggressions of discrimination take place. Little things can and do matter!

Our behaviour as Christians speaks of God – and we are all aware of the risks which God takes with us – however we are called upon to examine on a daily basis our actions, words and behaviours. This is part of the exercise of Christian self-examination.

Every day subtle, intentional or often unintentional interactions or behaviours that communicate this sort of bias – especially towards historically marginalised groups – are being accepted as an ordinary part of everyday life. These ‘little things’ matter and contribute further to the culture of aggression

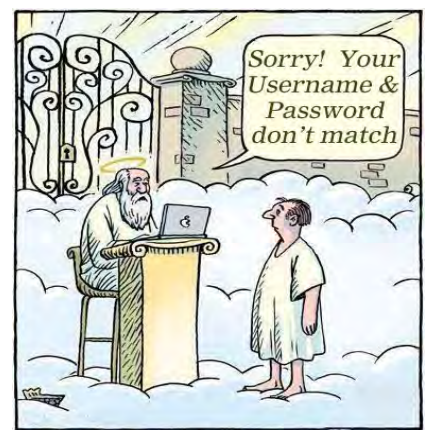
that has developed within our society.

Making a colloquial comment based on sex or race or an assumption based on sex, race or other forms of discrimination – this is something we need to be self-aware of. Even jokes fall into the category of microaggressions, and we must be conscious of the use of humour in such contexts. Those who suffer these microaggressions develop self-protective and self-caring mechanisms; but every one of us needs to develop self-awareness of when and how we add to this culture.

The Church has to be a safe space for all, and we are called upon to self-examine our Christian way of life and to create an awareness of the part we play in the creation of microaggressions. This safe space which we call ‘Church’ means that we have to become sensitive to the needs of those alongside whom we are journeying as Christian Disciples, and we need to create communities of acceptance where forgiveness can flourish. It is this forgiveness which resets the culture of discrimination and opens up the potential for the generosity of God to be at work and flourish even within each of us.

For us in the Church as a safe space, “little things matter”. So, let us work together and help one another to sensitise the world to God’s love for all and to create a safe space for the church where all can flourish.

Dr Joe Morrow



BRECHIN SOUP INITIATIVE



By the time that you read this article, I am hopeful that nearly three hundred portions of soup will have been delivered in Brechin to those who might benefit from a delivery. This project only started to be planned about five weeks ago when Stirfresh, a vegetable distribution enterprise outside



Montrose, offered to supply free vegetables for distribution. Our Vestry agreed the Church Hall could be used for production

(It has been sitting empty during the last year) and it's been all go from there.

The local football Club Trustees agreed to assist and the Project has been planned with them from the start. It was thought preferable to involve as many of the local groups as possible into the scheme rather than having several small projects duplicating distribution. Food Hygiene Training has been undertaken, Risk Assessments completed and the local Secondary School has assisted in collecting recipients' names and printing publicity items.

Breachin is an area of high deprivation, and food insecurity has become heightened during the pandemic. We hope to supply



a package of freshly-prepared soup for those living alone and to families, on a weekly basis, at first. There will be three varieties of

soups varying over a three-week period. It is hoped that eventually some group cooking will be possible to encourage families to produce their own soup as we do not wish anyone to become dependent on us.

The community has been most generous by providing containers, labels and printing and the local Fair Share Store has provided some dried ingredients. An advert was posted on Facebook and I am delighted that so many people have volunteered to help, including three cooks who are currently on furlough!

I am grateful to all who have given of their time to get this scheme up and running, especially Cathie Calderwood, Chair of the Brechin Food Pantry, who advised us regarding Environmental Health issues.

I feel privileged to be able to use my love of cooking for others and I hope this will enable the Church to reach out into the Community in a useful way.



We have no funding at present and are seeking the following:

- Ice packs for the cool bags
(These do not need to be brand-new.)
- Bottles of cooking oil.
- Stock cubes, salt and pepper.
- Packs of butter.

If you would like to assist with any of the above, please text me on 07566 273983

Liz Howson,
St Andrew's Church, Brechin

A Brief Pageant of British Verse

(modified!)

It appears some witty would-be poet has gone viral with the following verses. Which poems do you recognise?

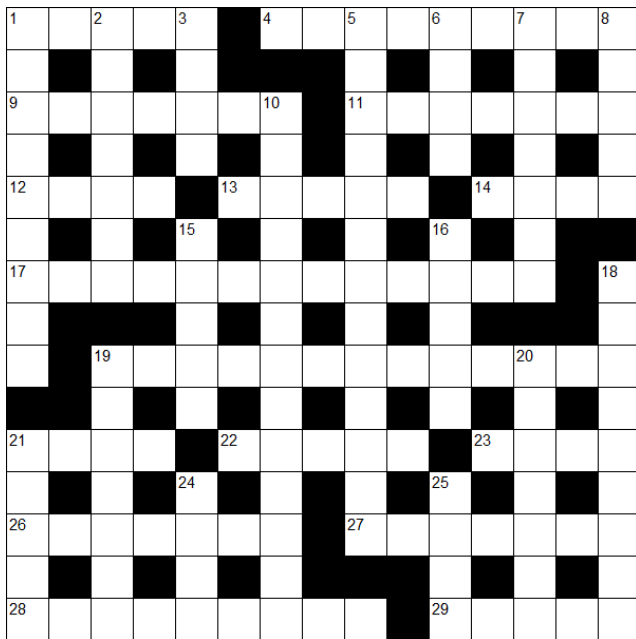
I won't arise and go now,
and go to Innisfree,
I'll sanitize the doorknob
and make a cup of tea.
I won't go down to the sea again;
I won't go out at all,
I'll wander lonely as a cloud
from the kitchen to the hall.
There's a green-eyed yellow monster
to the north of Katmandu
But I shan't be seeing him just yet
and nor, I think, will you.
While the dawn comes up like thunder
on the road to Mandalay
I'll make my bit of supper
and eat it off a tray.
I shall not speed my bonnie boat
across the sea to Skye
Or take the rolling English road
from Birmingham to Rye.
About the woodland, just right now,
I am not free to go
To see the Keep Out posters
or the cherry hung with snow,
And no, I won't be travelling much,
within the realms of gold,
Or get me to Milford Haven.
All that's been put on hold.
Give me your hands, I shan't request,
albeit we are friends
Nor come within a mile of you,
until this trial ends.

Anon.



CRYPTIC PRIZE CROSSWORD

Looking forward to Pentecost, fourteen answers will be found in the Whitsuntide hymn, *Veni Creator Spiritus* (Come, Holy Ghost). Send your entries to the editor at the address on the back page by Friday, 30 July.



- 26 A bit of havoc adolescents cause with fruit (7)
 27 Disdained to treat little Edward's corn (7)
 28 Fiery chief journalist is rash (3-6)
 29 Does she catch a rope in the bell tower? (5)
- 7 Where bells are rung to raise spirits (7)
 8 Girl has something to say before eating (5)
 10 Going nowhere in a maze (2,7,4)
 15 Fabricated by one form of timber (5)
 16 Nun's customary dress (5)
 18 Idly sip in a way that's tasteless (9)
 19 Unusual form in a child's bed supplies relief (7)
 20 English learnt about becoming immortal (7)
 21 Redhead left fireside for moorland (5)
 24 Look at a brokendown cafe (4)
 25 Outside forces (4)

CLUES DOWN:

- 1 It's heavenly when lace is let loose (9)
 2 They transmit power in genes perhaps (7)
 3 Tear around to make speed (4)
 5 Insult seven sons in Fife (13)
 6 Saintry December traveller briefly in prison (4)

CLUES ACROSS:

- 1 First couple of children always bring happiness (5)
 4 Oiling an ingot in church? (9)
 9 Reduce weight by breaking a thin leg (7)
 11 Upset if such a bloomer is revealed (7)
 12 Melody from bargees on gondola (4)
- 13 Fourteen pounds found in a peach (5)
 14 Get rid of a blazer (4)
 17 Defiant criminal undoes Britain (13)
 19 e.g. moist Sun Creme, etc. (13)
 21 No place like it! (4)
 22 A turn around for Catherine (5)
 23 Glance back at the castle (4)

Name

Address.....

.....

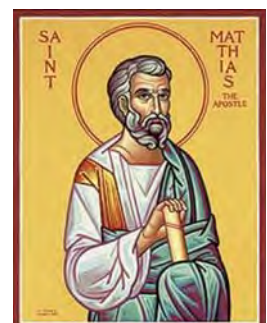
'The Coming' by R S Thomas

And God held in his hand
 A small globe. Look he said.
 The son looked. Far off,
 As through water, he saw
 A scorched land of fierce
 Colour. The light burned
 There; crusted buildings
 Cast their shadows: a bright
 Serpent, A river
 Uncoiled itself, radiant
 With slime.
 On a bare
 Hill a bare tree saddened
 The sky. many People
 Held out their thin arms
 To it, as though waiting
 For a vanished April
 To return to its crossed
 Boughs. The son watched
 Them. Let me go there, he said.

15 May - Matthias the Apostle, called by lots

Have you ever happened to be in the right place at the right time, with certain qualifications, and suddenly realise that God is singling you out for a special task? If so, Matthias is a good patron saint for you! In Acts 1 (15 – 26) the apostles had a task to do: Judas had betrayed Jesus and died, and so a new apostle needed to be chosen. He had to have been a follower of Christ from the Baptism to the Ascension, and also a witness of the Resurrection in order to qualify. In the event, the choice fell to one of two: Joseph Barsabas and Matthias.

Lots were drawn, and Matthias was chosen. How confident he must have felt in his calling: what encouragement that would be when the going got rough in later years! Matthias is thought to have ministered in Cappadocia and even Ethiopia. His emblem is usually an axe or halberd, regarded as the instrument of his martyrdom. His supposed relics were translated from Jerusalem to Rome by the empress Helena.



Christianity v. Churchianity

I've gradually become disgruntled with the church – not St Ternan's – but the church as an organisation. And it started not just in this interregnum but long before that. We've seen hardly any innovations in our regular religious activities, and the alternative services we've had are, for the most part, only witnessed by our existing congregation. The church authorities seem to be completely out of touch with non-churchgoers and we need to address the problem of reaching out to these.

As a congregation we have done wonderful things with our buildings – heating, toilets, kitchen, socialising spaces, car parking but it has all been to no avail.

The congregation continues to dwindle as we die off one by one. There's no new young blood coming in. And somebody **should** be asking **Why?** The church authorities should be asking why. But I'm not convinced that they are doing any serious market research.

However, I **have** asked why. I've asked myself and if you've read my articles in the magazine you'll know that my feeling is that what we offer in our services is largely out-moded. It's hardly changed since I was a child. And when I read that last Grosvenor Essay it's obvious that our theologians are trapped in some kind of Victorian Space Capsule unable to descend to earth. The chance of serious reform being sent down from above appears to be negligible.

But it perhaps it wouldn't make any difference. I think it is probably too late. My family, children and grandchildren, all baptised and brought up going to church, just don't see the church as having any relevance in their lives. If they have come to church on special occasions it has mainly been out of respect for Peggy and me. They reckon they live just as good Christian lives without any need of the church. They may be agnostics (I don't think they are

atheists) but their hearts are in the right place. And that was the most important thing that Jesus wanted. To be kind-hearted.

Jesus didn't try to change the religious beliefs of the Scribes and Pharisees. He, himself, preached in the synagogue. So he wasn't against synagogue worship. What he wanted was for the synagogue authorities to have a change of heart. To change the petty rules that surrounded the practice of Judaism, but had no effect on making one become a nice person. Just sticking to the rules was not good enough. Jesus wanted a change of heart not a change of fundamental beliefs. Take the case of the Roman soldier. Jesus didn't criticise the soldier's religion – he just healed the soldier's child because that was the right thing to do.

He didn't go around trying to convert people to some new religion. Jesus did not found the church. He did not prescribe how his followers should do things. What we do in church was not prescribed by Jesus. Things like how many candles, when not to have flowers, what colour the altar frontal should be, these have been decided by the church, not by Jesus. And if doing church things gets in the way of carrying out Jesus' commandments to love God and love our Neighbour then it is an impediment and we should seriously think whether to retain it. Christianity must take precedence over Churchianity.

When Churchianity becomes more important than Christianity then unspeakable horrors may result. The history books are full of them: The Crusades, The Spanish Inquisition, Interdenominational warfare – Catholics vs Protestants. More recently we have had homophobia, paedophile scandals and the diabolical treatment of unmarried mothers – young women's lives wrecked at the time when they should be experiencing the most wonderful event of their lives. All these things were swept under the carpet to try to protect the church's reputation.

That kind of hypocrisy is what turns a lot of folk off the church.

There are, we know, plenty of new, modern, progressive churches with none of this awful history and they are full of enthusiastic young people. Perhaps it is time to allow our church to die and become a museum piece and let the new churches get on with it.

It would be a tragedy if we were to spend tens of thousands of pounds over the next several years, and end up in much the same situation because we didn't make any changes to what we offer and where we offer it. That is a real danger. But if change is to happen I think it will have to come from the grass roots because I am very doubtful that the hierarchy of our church is capable of thinking critically or willing to do anything different. Should we be fortunate enough to attract an ordained minister to lead us forward in the next few years, I do not envy his or her task.

POSTSCRIPT: Since presenting this pessimistic view in the Zoom meeting I received several comments and emails, some suggesting that I am not alone in believing that some sort of reformation or reprioritising is needed. Some comments I have received make the following observations.

1. We should be optimistic. The failure of Cove church was due to the absence of a full-time priest. St. Ternan's and St. James' will thrive under a new appointment.
2. Many churches thrive whilst offering the same or similar formal services as ourselves. Can somebody find out why this is? What do they have that we lack? Is it just a full-time ministry?
3. Is the church furniture in need of change? Should the question of pews vs chairs be raised again?
4. Non-churchgoers today have probably never been to Sunday School, never read the Bible, have no concept of the Trinity, etc. What can we provide for them?

Ken Tonge

150 YEARS OF THE ROYAL ALBERT HALL

The late Joyce Grenfell wrote a wonderful song, *Joyful Noise*, about three lady choristers: Miss Clissold, Miss Truss and Ivy Trembley. Their greatest delight was to sing in an oratorio at the Royal Albert Hall. "It may be like a gasworks with a green-house roof above it, and it may lack convenience, but all the same we love it." That love has marked the life of the Royal Albert Hall which was opened in the spring of 1871, 150 years ago.

After the success of the Great Exhibition, Prince Albert dreamed of creating a more permanent cultural area in London to promote and popularise the arts and sciences. On his death in 1861 aged just 42 years, it was decided to erect a memorial and a 'Central Hall.' And so the Royal Albert Hall was built. At heart it is an impressive concert hall promoting classical music with an annual performance of Handel's *Messiah* from 1876, and from 1941 the

BBC Promenade Concerts: 8 weeks of concerts in the summer welcoming musicians from all over the world and culminating in the memorable Last Night. Composers from Wagner and Verdi to Bernstein and Britten have conducted and had works performed there.

performance of *The Phantom of the Opera* in 2011. It has provided a platform for Winston Churchill, Einstein and the Dalai Lama. Many will have poignant memories of seeing the annual Royal British Legions' Festival of Remembrance held every November since 1923: a moving occasion that culminates with the shower of poppy petals.

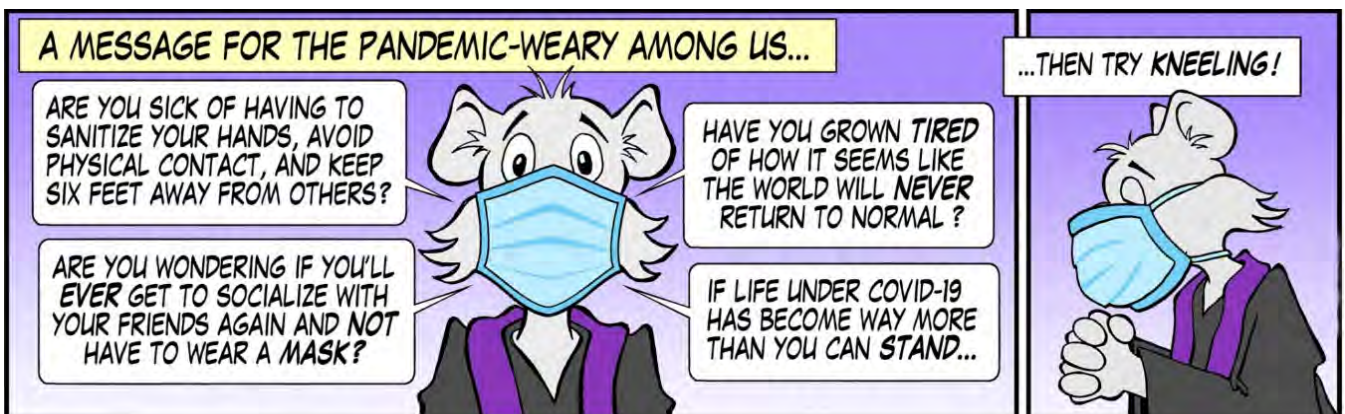


Sadly, because of the restrictions with the pandemic, the Hall's programme of events has had to be limited in scope since last year, but the frieze on the outside of the building remains to inspire. There we see carved deep into the stone-work a

celebration of the rich variety of arts and sciences that include music, sculpture, painting, astronomy and navigation, and the words "Thine O Lord is the greatness and the power and the glory and the majesty" – a reminder that all our creative work here is a reflection of the wonder of God the Creator.

But the Royal Albert Hall has also hosted an amazingly wide variety of events through its life: the Beatles in 1963, Ella Fitzgerald in 1990, Adele in 2011, poetry evenings, sport (boxing, tennis and basketball), the Cirque de Soleil, Teenage Cancer Trust concerts, and the 25th anniversary

celebration of the rich variety of arts and sciences that include music, sculpture, painting, astronomy and navigation, and the words "Thine O Lord is the greatness and the power and the glory and the majesty" – a reminder that all our creative work here is a reflection of the wonder of God the Creator.



The next issue of **Grapevine** will be coming out for 29 August 2021.
 All articles, letters, comments should be with the Editor by Thursday 5 August 2021.
 Preferably articles should be no longer than 500 words.
 The Editor of Grapevine, Beattie Lodge, Laurencekirk, Kincardineshire, AB30 1HJ
 (E-mail: <office@brechin.anglican.org> or <mjrturner@btinternet.com>)