



St Andrew's and St George's West June 2018 Magazine





June 2018 Magazine

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Cover: from our creative workshop at Heart and Soul

Photos Isabel Armstrong-Holmes, Jane Brown, Alison Bruce, Helen Cox, Brigitte Harris, Margaret McGregor, Pat McKerrow, Jo Stark.

Copy deadline Mon 25 June **Contact** magazine[at]stagw.org.uk



Casting...

Ian Y Gilmour

In our congregation we gather a cast of hundreds to deliver our Christmas Tree Festival, the Festival Fringe Programme, daily worship and Christian Aid. One theologian, T. J. Gorringer, talks of church being like a theatre, while William Shakespeare, who knew a bit about theatres famously said,

“All the world’s a stage”. It comes from his play ‘As You Like It’ and is a humorous description of the various stages human beings experience if they are fortunate enough to live long lives.

Mr Shakespeare knew a fair bit about how to get the most, not only from every sentence, but also from his available cast to allow his marvellous plays to have maximum impact upon an often unruly audience.

In church at times we are front of house - welcoming visitors. At other times we are back stage setting up for the next performance or act of worship. Sometimes we are the cleaning team and at other times acting – rehearsing, reflecting, giving our lines - always focussed on giving God any glory. As we age we can change roles, doing less heavy lifting, perhaps more praying, reflecting, letter folding, listening and encouraging. Within our theatre there are certain roles which just have to be undertaken, as we recall it is always best to share the load, so everyone can have a role or two!

All the roles are important and the show cannot go on unless we have people to perform them. In June we are going to initiate a new search for talent. We do not need, as in the famous parable, to go out and dig up a gift which has been buried, if you use the set of skills you have been honing over years that will be ideal.

As discerning a theatre buff as W. Shakespeare Esq. would agree that St AGW has talent. Our flexibility and willingness over this past year has helped Carols at Six, the Christmas Tree Festival and Christian Aid to raise record sums for people in need as well as allowing us to offer our best to God.

Enjoy this season whether in the limelight or back stage, it is my pleasure to be part of such a fine group of players.

Ian

All the world's a stage,
And all the men and women merely players;
They have their exits and their entrances,
And one man in his time plays many parts,
His acts being seven ages. At first, the infant,
Mewling and puking in the nurse's arms.
Then the whining schoolboy, with his satchel
And shining morning face, creeping like snail
Unwillingly to school. And then the lover,
Sighing like furnace, with a woeful ballad
Made to his mistress' eyebrow.
Then a soldier, and so on until...

With spectacles on nose and pouch on side;
His youthful hose, well saved, a world too wide
For his shrunk shank, and his big manly voice,
Turning again toward childish treble, pipes
And whistles in his sound...

William Shakespeare
As You Like It circa 1600



Summer Worship

Worship Strengthens and Transforms

Worship is helpful for our growth as followers of Christ, so consider joining us Sunday by Sunday. You can attend Communion at 9.00am, the All Age service at 9.45am or enjoy our progressive pattern at 11.00am. Albany Deaf Church usually meets at 2pm. All are welcome.

God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble.
Ps 46:1-3

The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands. **Ps 19.1**

May he give you the desire of your heart and make all your plans succeed. **Ps 20.4**

Themes and readings for 11am Morning Worship

June 3 **Listening, Speaking, Acting** 1 Samuel 3:1–10,

June 10 **Choices and Consequences** 1 Samuel 8:4–11

June 17 **God's Role for Me** 1 Samuel 15:34—16:13

June 24 **Agents of God** 1 Samuel 17: (1a, 4–11, 19–23), 32–49

July 1 **Brushing Up against Grace** Mark 5:21–43

July 8 **Brush Away the Dust** Mark 6:1–13

June Diary

Sat 2 June	2pm (Lyceum) Theatre and Theology
Sun 3 June	9am, 9.45am, 11am services Fellowship lunch: Toilet Twinning
Tue 5 June	7.30pm Ed College Ensembles Summer Concert
Wed 6 June	5-6.30pm Reading in Church Workshop
Sat 9 June	7.30pm EDGAS Sound of Their Music
Sun 10 June	9am, 9.45am, 11am services. 2pm Albany Deaf Church Afternoon: Congregational outing
Tue 12 Jun	7.30pm Amnesty Jazz.
Wed 13 Jun	5.30 Ed Quartet Rush Hour Concert
Thur 14 June	1pm Celebrating 1pm Worship , Davidson Room 12 noon Shared Interest Edinburgh Member Event
Sun 17 June	9am, 9.45am, 11am services. 2pm Albany Deaf Church
Tue 19 Jun	6pm Donald Gorrie Schools Debates
Wed 20 Jun	10am-4pm Creative TOGETHER Knit for a Bit
Fri 22 Jun	6.30pm Decade Party
Sat 23 June	10-12.30 Messy Church
Sun 24 June	Quarterly Communion 9am, 9.45am, 11am services. 2pm Albany Deaf Church
Mon 25 June	12.15 Amnesty Undercroft Group meets
Wed 27 Jun	7.30pm Kirk Session

July

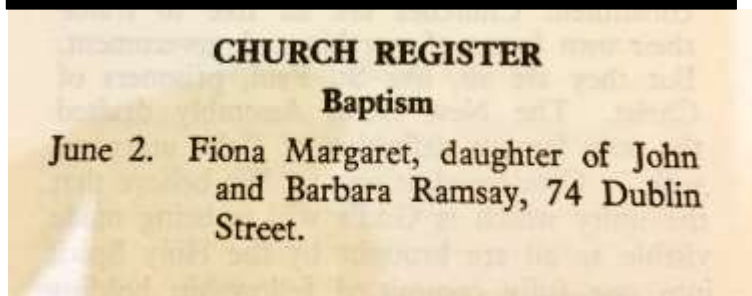
Sun 1 July	9am, 9.45am, 11am services. 2pm Albany Deaf Church 12 noon Fellowship Lunch: Iona Capital Appeal
Sun 8 July	9am, 9.45am, 11am services. 2pm Albany Deaf Church
Sun 22 July	2-3.30pm Messy Church
Wed 25 July	7pm Make your money change your world

Congregational News

Deaths

Mrs Barbara Purves
on 25 May 2018

50 years ago...



Celebrating Worship at 1pm

Thursday 14 Jun at 1pm

A gathering of all those who have led worship at 1.00pm will take place on Thursday 14 June at 1.00pm and after a short act of worship we will enjoy some refreshments. We will reflect on the value of lunchtime worship and engage in a conversation about how to improve our lunchtime worship meetings for the future.

Even if you have never led worship but have an interest, please join us. If you can't come please let Mary Godden or Ian Gilmour know and we will listen carefully to your ideas.

Church Party

Friday 22 June from 6.30pm

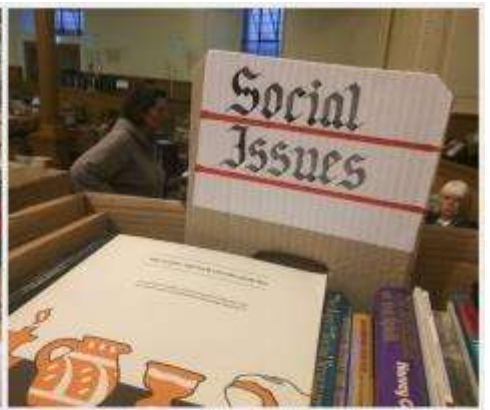
A number of our members have 'decade' celebrations this year - 10th - 90th birthdays, and 40 and 50 year wedding anniversaries. To help them all celebrate, there will be a pot luck supper in the Undercroft on **Friday 22nd June from 6.30pm** onwards. Everyone is welcome to attend, not just those with the significant event. So that we can get an idea of numbers, please let me know if you plan to come along. **MM Scott**

Make your money change your world

25 July 7- 8pm

Explore ethical investing at this seminar with Julian Parrott of Ethical Investors. Take the opportunity to learn more about choice and ethics when investing – listen to a short presentation and ask questions.

The seminar is purely informative and will not offer financial advice.





Choir Tour Collage 2018

Jo Stark and choristers

In May St Andrew's and St George's West Choir made a flying visit to Germany. We were based around Kassel where Thea Harris is organist and choirmaster and sang with her choirs in concert and for Pentecost worship. It was wonderful to sing the Missa Brasileira for its creator Jean Kleeb, and to catch up with our former choristers Katharina and Elina. We had time to visit Bach's birthplace in Eisenach and time for football!



"The most wonderful thing for me was to see the fabulous STAGWs choir and all the other wonderful church people who joined the tour again. When I look back, I remember laughter, good conversation, music, translations and sports (StAGW City ♡)."



“Singing in beautiful churches with friends old and new; celebrating the birthday of the church on the Sunday and Monday.”

“Collecting memorable German experiences, such as the UNESCO water park in Kassel, the Bach museum in Eisenach, with beautifully sounding chamber organ and spinet, coffee and cake in Cologne and an evening cruise on the Rhine...and of course, the football match!”

“This trip was a precious present for us from God. Despite our difficulty communicating with English, our choir members always welcomed us. Never do we forget everyone’s kindness, as well as playing football

“It felt like coming home—I really enjoyed seeing everyone and singing with the choir again!”

“Lovely company, lovely weather and lovely cakes!”



“The memorable things for me were the dedication and commitment of the 5 local youngsters at the STAGWs United v STAGWs City football match, and the warmth that came from the congregation at the Monday service.”



“I have noticed since the tour a new vitality in the choir in both our singing and fellowship; it’s like having another family as everyone looks out for each other and encourages you to do the best you can. I often felt a wonderful energy when speaking and working with our German friends and choirs, and feel very inspired to go back and study music there someday perhaps!”





in aid of AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL
standing up for human rights

AMNESTY JAZZ

St Mary's Music School's senior jazz ensembles are directed by the inimitable Richard Ingham in his unmissable Farewell Concert.

Concert presented by St Mary's Music School in association with the Undercroft Amnesty Group, Edinburgh

an evening of great music, great tunes

ST ANDREW'S AND ST GEORGE'S WEST
13 George Street, Edinburgh

TUESDAY 12 JUNE 2018 7.30pm (finish 9.30pm)

Tickets:

£7, concessions £5, schoolchildren free, available from St Mary's Music School, tel: 0131 538 7766, from www.stmarysmusicschool.co.uk/amnesty-jazz/ or from James McNeill at jwm28kr@gmail.com, and on the door from 6.45pm



St Mary's Music School

EDINBURGH

www.st-marys-music-school.co.uk



Peace be with you!

Arthur Chapman reflects on the 2018 General Assembly

“Peace be with you!” was an apt theme for this year’s General Assembly and the Right Rev Susan Brown in her opening homilies together with the gathering worship, especially the unaccompanied Psalm singing, provided a fitting start to each day’s proceedings. The Moderator’s gentle approach and her ability to lighten discussion with touches of humour, not to say her diligence in attending sessions, will stay with me for a long time. And it was heartening to hear members of the Youth Assembly making their views known during the debates, even if they were sometimes contrary to the views of the majority.

This was a ‘peaceful’ Assembly, although from early on, when the Assembly Council’s Strategic Plan was rejected for something more ‘radical’ there was among some of the Commissioners a promise / hope / expectation of issues to come which would stir the heart and confront the principalities and powers [Eph 6:12]. Except in one or two cases that promise was not fulfilled, neither was what was meant by ‘radical’ spelled out or explored.

In the space allotted here I can only touch on a few items that stood out for me. The first (after the rejection of the Strategic Plan) was the report of the World Mission Council and their *Special Report on Issues for Scotland from Christian Faith in Africa* – a report with which members, congregations and Presbyteries are encouraged to engage. One emphasis in this report was that of interfaith dialogue and its central importance at this particular time. The Assembly was addressed, on Friday, by Imam Sayed Razawi, Director General of the Scottish Ahlul Bayt Society. He spoke movingly of his feeling at home in the Church of Scotland, of the importance of real ‘face-to-face’ dialogue, of the centrality of brotherhood in Islam so that we “are walking shoulder to shoulder – the days are gone just to sit opposite”, and of the fact that “an absolute being is found in all of us, we are the image of God”. Instead of demonising one another we need to walk hand-in-hand to bring peace and justice to our world.

The Report of the Church and Society Council (formerly Church and Nation) has always been for me one of the key reports to any Assembly and it was good to have Richard Frazer giving this year’s report. However, although this might have provided an opportunity to be

radical – on a call to divest from fossil fuel and hence to send a message to the world about the critical issue of climate change (the consequences forever disproportionately affecting the poorest in our one world) – sadly it misfired. The original motion and a counter motion (calling for immediate divestment) both fell to another motion calling simply for dialogue between the Council and the oil and gas industries. With this decision, the General Assembly shied away from being radical. An additional section to the deliverance urging the UK government and the EU to recognise the state of Palestine helped to restore some element of radicalism.

An Overture from the Presbytery of Melrose and Peebles proposed a review of the Westminster Confession of Faith - still “a ‘subordinate standard’ to Holy Scripture” for office-bearers in the Church of Scotland. Some felt this to be of only historical interest and that we should spend our time on other more important issues. However, much of the language and style used in the Confession is outdated and falls far short of a relevant and meaningful Statement of Faith for the 21st century. Accordingly the deliverance was accepted and the Theological Forum (formerly Panel on Doctrine) asked to examine this document and its position as a subordinate standard and report to the General Assembly of 2020. I, at least, await this with interest.

I’ve only been able to highlight a few aspects of this year’s General Assembly but I cannot end without mentioning two further items. This year, on 22nd May, the General Assembly celebrated the 50th anniversary of the ordination of women to the Church of Scotland, with a walk up the Mound, to New College – especially in this congregation, we remember with thanks and affection Mary Levison (née Lusk) one of the central players in this movement. I would also like to mention Ian M Fraser, a member of the Iona Community with a lifelong commitment to ecumenism, social justice, and theological education, not least through his promotion of Basic Christian Communities throughout the world. We celebrated his 100th birthday in Alva last year. He died on 30th April and Kathy Galloway gave a wonderful tribute to him at the end of the report of the Iona Community Board on Tuesday.

Despite a lack of radicalism this year’s General Assembly was still a very important event in the life of the Church of Scotland, if no longer in the life of the nation of Scotland, and I was pleased to be able to attend.



Women in Ministry a personal perspective from Anne Wyllie

When I read *Wrestling With The Church* by Mary Levison I was struck by one parallel in our experiences. The women campaigning for the Church of Scotland to recognize their calling, realized that abstract theological debates about the role of

women in general had not and would not lead to change: what was needed was for an actual woman to stand before the Assembly and ask for her call to be tested.

After I became a Christian at the age of 14 and found my local Church of Scotland sadly lacking in any people my own age, a school-friend took me along to her church which had a thriving youth fellowship, and was an independent evangelical church with Brethren associations. I stayed for 11 years, attracted by the passion and commitment of these people to growing in faith, and by their kindness and generous hospitality. As I grew into a young adult I became increasingly concerned about the narrowness of the theology preached, and the restrictions placed on women; we were not permitted to take any leadership role – apart from teaching children – and had to remain silent in the Sunday services, apart from singing hymns: whereas in the

youth fellowship there was no gender discrimination. This difference was due to strict literal interpretation of Paul's words in 1 Cor 14:34 and 1 Tim 2:11-12 without any consideration of cultural influences or the overarching Gospel message.

I sensed a powerful inner calling from God to study theology, and undertook a degree at New College. I, along with many of my contemporaries in my home church, continued to question our church leaders, and I was excited to find that in a few areas the boundaries shifted as my gifts were recognized. For example, I was the first woman invited to lead a house-group, and the initial resistance of one older man gradually dissolved as he witnessed my leadership style facilitating discussion rather than being authoritarian. Where once I had dreaded his judgement, I felt humbled by his change in attitude and I came to rely on his enthusiastic participation. I think it made a big difference that I was not some abstract woman, but Anne: someone they knew and had nurtured over the years.

Despite frustrations I remained in that church for as long as I felt hope that the scope of women would continue to grow, but eventually I realized that some restrictions were not going to change, no matter how much they were challenged; and as my calling to a ministry in the wider Church began to take shape, I moved to the Church of Scotland. I am lucky to live in a city where there are many churches! I have been fortunate never to have experienced any gender discrimination throughout my years of ministry training in parishes and chaplaincies and then in service as a lay Reader and Ministry Assistant; and I owe a debt of gratitude to the pioneer women within the Church of Scotland who paved the way for me. I also remain grateful to the church fellowship that first nurtured my faith, and I hold dear those who have remained my friends despite disagreeing with some of my theology and practice. Friends who know and trust each other enough to engage in honest debate, respect each other and give careful consideration to all that is stirred up as we wrestle with our different perspectives on all sorts of issues.

In his address to this year's General Assembly, the retiring Moderator Derek Browning spoke about building bridges, not walls. It seems to me that building bridges of friendship where we encounter and honour the complexity and diversity of our fellow human beings is a good way to challenge discrimination of all kinds.



Remembering Vera Kenmure

Lorna Cammock

The Congregational Union of Scotland ordained its first woman minister in Scotland 90 years ago this year.

Vera Kenmure, née Finday, was ordained in 1928 and became the minister of Partick Congregational Church. Her robes are in Glasgow's Museum of Religion. She trained at the Scottish Congregational College with my father (and also with Eric Liddell of Chariots of Fire fame.)

She used to begin her prayers 'Oh Father, Mother, heart of all the world' long before the gender of God became an issue.

At the General Assembly I was proud to greet the happy crowd of 500 women ministers of the Church of Scotland wearing a T-shirt with a photo of Vera when she was President.

I have remembered her words after all these years. She described pilgrims climbing a mountain. 'As they reached the top, they glimpsed where they longed to be before the mist swirled down again. 'But they had seen the city' she ended.

The 2018 Donald Gorrie Schools Debates



Senior and Junior Teams will debate whether **Social Media is a positive force for democracy** in competition for the Donald Gorrie Trophies.

Tuesday 19 June 2018 at 6 pm
St Andrew's and St George's West
13 George Street Edinburgh



Schools taking part are –
Boroughmuir High School
Broxburn Academy
Craigmount High School
Queensferry High School
Royal High School
Tynecastle High School

The annual Schools Debates were established in 2013 in memory of Donald Gorrie, MP, MSP and former teacher.

St Andrew's and St George's West Church Edinburgh is a Registered Charity No SC008990
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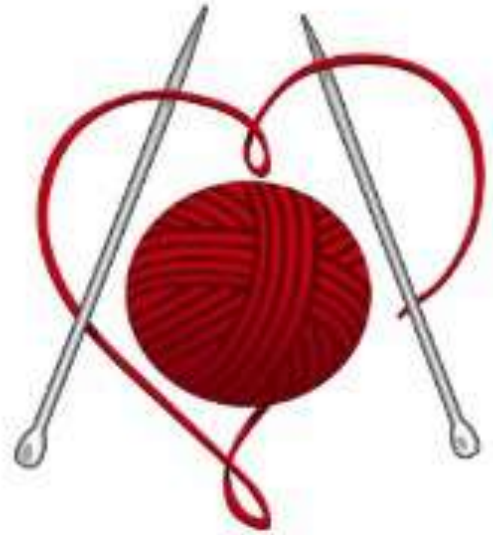


Knit for a Bit

Wednesday 20 June 10am-4pm

Edinburgh Direct Aid is currently raising funds to ship donated goods to Syrian refugee camps in Lebanon. They are encouraging supporters to raise these funds by knitting.

Creative Together are responding to this with



Knit for a Bit, on Wednesday 20 June

when everyone is invited to come to St Andrew's and St George's West to knit or crochet. We'll be there from 10.00 until 4.00 – come when you can, bring your friends, and stay as long as you like.

Everything that's made on that day will be donated to Edinburgh Direct Aid, along with donations of money from those taking part, and from anyone who would like to support us.

We'll be knitting what refugees need to survive a cold winter – hats, scarves, blankets, children's clothes – as well as toys. We'll have a supply of yarn and needles and patterns, but you can bring your own if you prefer. There will be communal projects that you can simply add a few rows of knitting to, or you can aim to make a complete item yourself. Whatever you choose to do, just come and Knit for a Bit.

Contact Maggie Morley, Mary Godden or Dorothy MacKenzie if you'd like to know more.



Scottish Charity No SC021007



Scottish Charity No SC040773



Benevolent Fund News

Alison Campbell

St Andrew's and St George's West had a very nice tribute from Freedom from Torture's Edinburgh Group who received a Benevolent Fund grant of £763. It was used to buy new chairs and blinds for the Glasgow Centre's Training and Therapy room. The brightly-coloured chairs and blinds make a big difference to the comfort of participants.

Freedom from Torture provides individual support, counselling, therapy, activity groups, and medical assessments to support asylum seekers' claims. The Scottish Centre is in Glasgow and is supported by the Edinburgh Local Group. www.freedomfromtorture.org

The Benevolent Fund Group meets annually to consider grants for charities. Please speak to one of us if you want to suggest a charity. We can follow it up, or you can fill in a form from the office. The Fund will also be considering further support for Mulanje Mission Hospital.

Jean Mackinlay, John Innes, Shona Simon and Alison Campbell

After Pearson...

Alison Campbell

Following the enjoyable visit of Pearson Soka, Hospital Administrator of Mulanje Mission Hospital, (<http://www.mmh.mw>) we have agreed to help a further qualification for the Hospital Finance Officer, Richard Nyirenda. We will do this jointly with Stockbridge Church. Such a qualification costs about £2,545 p.a. for 2 years and has the great advantage of enabling the hospital to commit the member of staff to a minimum of 4 further years at the hospital, as well as improving efficiency.

Dr Ruth Shakespeare will be retiring but is staying on meantime to help the handover to the new medical superintendents, and the Malawi Group has also planned to review our support in December 2018 and consult the congregation.

In discussion with Pearson, the following priorities were identified in addition to the MBA studies for Mr Nyirenda:

- A new X-ray machine is urgently needed. MMH has already received some funding from the English Reformed Church in Amsterdam (which gives 30,000 euros annually!) but they still need to raise about **£18,000**.
- Roof for a new house for secondary school teacher - **£2,500**
- Upgrading/maintenance of 2 hospital staff houses - **£2,400**
- Secondary school fees **£120** a year for orphaned or poor pupils or children of non-working single parents
- General funding for drugs, equipment etc. – the Bed Fund. This can be any amount but the Bed Fund suggested £600 a year provides for 40 patients.

Stockbridge Church has contributed to new toilets for the school and continues to support orchards. All our funding goes through the Church of Scotland and so is secure. If anyone would be interested in making a donation, or in a fundraising campaign for MMH, please contact Alison Campbell, Mary Margaret Scott, Ruth Forrester or James McNeill.



All Things Bright and Beautiful, all Creatures Great and Small...

Pat McKerrow's Wildlife Diary

"Dear mother earth, who day by day unfolds God's blessings on our way, O praise him, alleluia!' Famous words from the much loved hymn 'All creatures of our God and King', by St Francis of Assisi. No matter where I go, no matter the time of day or season, no matter what I might hope to see, creation tends to always have a surprise lying in wait.

At the start of this year, I had no specific holiday plans in place for 2018. Yes, of course I had a 'wish list' that included my favourite Scottish Islands, but when, and indeed if, I might set foot on them, I couldn't be certain – a waiting list for hip replacement surgery had stolen my flexibility to plan ahead. Thankfully however, an opportunity arose in April for James and I to just down tools and head off, and so in untypical spur of the moment style, I soon found myself on Islay. I was buzzing with excitement; the prospect of seeing another otter always enlivens and motivates me. Simply knowing that they are there, maybe off-shore fishing or eating, maybe at the water's edge feasting on a delicacy too large to eat at sea, or maybe just hauled out on a

rock preening or sun-bathing...**they are there... somewhere.** That fact alone makes me feel good. I also know the most likely places to find them and how to track them. All I have to do is select my location and wait, scan the waters, and wait some more...

On day one, an hour became two, then three, then four...nothing. Time to move further along the coast, scanning all the way. Another hour passed, then two, by which time my brain and eyes were weary from the constant monitoring on the moving waves; I could hardly maintain focus. The decision to head off in search of something else was straightforward, and I felt confident that tomorrow would yield sightings of a much longed-for otter. It didn't, but what joys the remainder of those and subsequent days did provide.

The most thrilling find of the entire trip came early, and I confess, it wasn't a case of instant recognition. My love of swans, like otters, is no secret, and I never tire of seeing Mute Swans wherever I happen to be. For the last few years though, particularly at migration times, I have been anxious to find Whooper Swans. And yes, on Islay I had spotted a few before, but always at a distance, too far to fully admire these stunning creatures with their long wedge-shaped yellow and black bills. Amazingly, this time, right beside the window of the RSPB's hide at Loch Gruinart, there they were, four Whooper Swans! Not only that, but these had to be the dirtiest swans I had ever encountered, hence the time it took to properly identify them. In fairness though, the unusual colouring that made them more akin to flamingos than swans, had probably come from the soil, a bit like my local swans occasionally sporting an orange tinge from tannins in the water. Regardless, what a joy to watch and photograph these birds at such close proximity.

But, undoubtedly, the prize for giving the most fun goes to the inhabitants of the seal colony on the western tip of the island. Many were in the quiet village harbour, with others camped out on rocks and shores nearby. A mixed population totalling around 30 Common (also known as Harbour), and Grey seals – Common seals being the smaller, prettier of the two types, with a concave profile, and generally more nervous than their inquisitive Grey cousins. Greys tend to be renowned for their 'Roman nose' appearance.

Seals have found their way into my camera lenses many times before and from many locations, but here I felt something about the moment, something about the ambience, and certainly, something about the

connection that ensued. I chose to head to the rocky coastline. I crept down to the water's edge slowly, quietly, and as close to the seals as I dared. The family of Greys I had set my heart upon watching and which had previously been blissfully unaware of anything beyond sunshine and slumber, instantly detected my presence. In one perfectly choreographed movement, the entire group of around a dozen seals slithered effortlessly and silently into the water, each leaving only a circle to mark the spot of their disappearance. Wonderful.

Thereafter it took no more than minutes for 'bottling' to begin, that behaviour where Greys rise vertically from the water, revealing only their necks and heads. One by one, they rose to form rows of prying eyes, my personal paparazzi minus cameras...and I thought I had camouflaged myself well! Once again, hours passed but I was unaware of time, enjoying my new friends mere feet away, plus the low, moaning sounds emanating from seals on other shores. Much later, when I attempted another stealthy and unseen move to an old pier, within seconds of sitting down, there he was, a Roman-nosed friend at arm's length. What can only be described as a game of hide-and-seek followed, up he popped with neither splash nor sound, then down; then up again 6 feet away, then down; up again back at the original spot, then down... I cannot adequately describe the look in his eye, but there was something, definitely something, and I would love to think we were sharing joy.

I leave you with this 'Benediction' from Robert Davidson:

*May all your hopes be sustained
Between the wings of seagulls
And may your fears before they start
Be taloned fast by eagles.*

*May curling salmon leap the falls
On the river of your strife
And pine trees crack with age
In the forests of your life.*

*May speckled fawns raise their heads
Beneath your vaulted blue
And may the God of frost and stars
Be evermore with you.*

Every blessing, Pat McKerrow

Shared narratives in a divided world

Peter Millar

“Not all are guilty, but all are responsible.” (Abraham Heschel) In these first months of 2018 commentators around the world have drawn our attention to the many and increasing disconnections which today mark our human landscape. As I write this some nations are on the verge of sending yet more bombs upon the already battered people and streets of Syria. And that is only one zone of conflict. There are countless others, some of which we know nothing about despite the ever present global media.

Recently some writers have been saying that not only are we embedded in disconnections but civilization itself is threatened. Many feel this to be true. Are we holding together? Are any common binding narratives left for the nations? Are the divisions of our time inevitable? Abraham Heschel believed that although we are not all guilty we are in one way or another all responsible.

Yet in a world marked by its many pluralities and vast cultural differences the idea of some kind of “holding or core narrative” may be stranger than fiction. An example of this is present right now in the world order when we realise that there is no shared understanding about the use of chemical weapons.

In 1969 the British historian Kenneth Clark presented a popular 13 part series of TV programmes in the UK under the title *Civilisation*. The programme took 3 years to make and Clark had travelled some eight thousand miles, taking in eleven countries utilising a 130 different locations. The results were greeted with critical acclaim and the writer J B Priestley regarded them as a contribution to civilization itself. The world has changed much since 1969 but even then Clark spoke of the underlying fragility of any civilisation.

His words take on significance amidst today’s various global breakdowns....”Civilisation can be destroyed. What are its enemies? Fear of war, fear of invasion, fear of plague and famine... and fear of the supernatural... and then exhaustion, the feeling of hopelessness which can overtake people even with a high degree of material prosperity. Of course civilisation requires a modicum of prosperity. But far more it requires confidence – confidence in the society in which one lives; belief in its philosophy; belief in its laws, and confidence in one’s

own mental powers. The moral and intellectual failure of Marxism has left us with no alternative but heroic materialism, and that is not enough. One may be optimistic, but one can't exactly be joyful at the prospect before us."

Sobering words. Heroic materialism has brought much that is good to the world, but we also see clearly its various downsides. Millions are well fed yet they feel their life is empty of meaning and millions more are underfed because of abject poverty. Within our globalised world the stranger is often seen as the enemy and we lack a mature understanding of other cultures even with our connecting technologies. The difficulties facing Facebook raise a whole raft of questions about individual privacy and security within a world-wide web.

Whether rich or poor we are all participants within this globalised order which increasingly is raising questions as yet unexplored in human history. These basic questions are rooted at the heart of every community and while they may be seen as secular questions many of them have spiritual implications because they are about the core meaning of our humanity. When the founder of Facebook was recently appearing before the Senate Hearings in Washington DC we were reminded that Facebook has now well over 2 billion users. Never before in history have 2 billion people been linked in this particular way to one commercial company. Here we are in uncharted territory not least because many personal details about these 2 billion people have been recorded and embedded within highly complex technological structures which are not available to public scrutiny. In all of these mind-blowing statistics it is easy to forget that for centuries the great religions of the world have reminded us that an individual is never just a number in a computer but body, mind and spirit. In the Christian tradition there is a basic teaching which says that not only is the life of a person precious but that each life carries the divine image.

While we all accept that there are many factors working within globalisation, we still need to be reminded of this wider frame of meaning and of purpose which is the gift of spirituality within our human existence. Not "spirituality" in a narrow sense, but rather the acknowledgment that life has mystery and that even with all our technological brilliance we do not have all the answers. The fact is that we are part of a cosmic order which brings meaning and hope to our human condition. It remains a truth that there are realities which we can

experience as human beings grounded in awe, in wonder and in silence. It is also true that as we befriend the natural order we are enabled to move into new depths of awareness, of compassion, of humility, of wisdom and of trust.

At the end of his 1989 book, *A New Vision of Reality: Western Science, Eastern Mysticism and Christian Faith*, Bede Griffiths wrote these prophetic words: “The way to recovery is to rediscover the perennial philosophy, the traditional wisdom, which is found in all the ancient religions and especially in the great religions of the world. But those religions have in turn become fossilised and have each to be renewed, not only in themselves but in relation to one another, so that a cosmic, universal religion can emerge in which the essential values of Christian religion will be preserved in living relationship with the other religious traditions of the world. This is a task for the coming centuries as the present order breaks down and a new world order emerges from the ashes of the old.”

In every generation this movement of re-discovery begins within the individual mind. We must keep asking ourselves right to the end of our lives if we are open to fresh spiritual explorations and to new encounters with traditional wisdoms. Over many years I have been challenged and inspired by these words of Julia McGuinness as they remind us to keep on companioning an exploratory heart and mind even in times when it is difficult to understand the world around us.

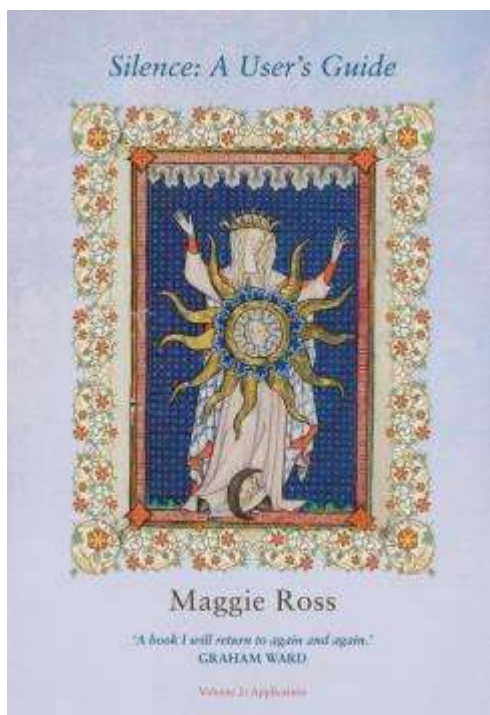
**Some people travel in straight lines:
Sat in metal boxes, eyes ahead,
Always mindful of their target,
Moving in obedience to the coloured lights and white lines,
Mission accomplished at journey's end.**

**Some people travel round in circles:
Trudging in drudgery, eyes looking down,
Knowing only too well their daily unchanging round,
Moving in response to clock and habit,
Journey never finished yet never begun.**

**I want to travel in patterns of God's making:
Walking in wonder, gazing all around,
Knowing my destiny, though not my destination,
Moving to the rhythm of the surging of the spirit,
A journey which when life ends, in Christ has just begun.**

Cornerstone Bookshop Reviews

Amanda Bruce



Silence: A User's Guide –

Application by Maggie Ross £14.99

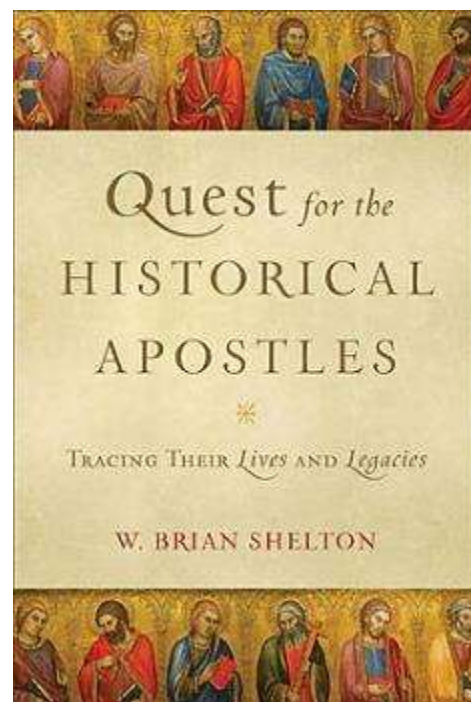
Here we have the long-awaited second and concluding volume in Maggie Ross' major work exploring silence and the way in which paying attention to silence can transform our lives. In the first volume (pub. 2014) Ross considered the 'work' of silence and how, in the earliest church, this had been considered instrumental for anyone coming to know God. She also looked at the reasons for and methods by which the institutional church

began to suppress the work of silence in the years and decades that followed. An advocate for our reclaiming this way of being, Ross, in this volume invites and guides her readers to enter into the work of silence – not necessarily by disbanding with words, rather by learning ways in which to read and hear anew, methods for doing so she sets out. When we are attuned to silence – beholding as we are held - we will, she says, come closer to knowing ourselves and therefore knowing better the God of our inmost being. Hers is, as one of those who endorsed the book comments, “a graceful and fiercely generous invitation” to be more deeply aware of the light of love which surrounds us.

Quest for the Historical Apostles

by W. Brian Shelton £19.99

This new work by W. Brian Shelton brings together in one volume a comprehensive introduction to each of the Apostles, variously considered pioneers, heroes and saints; models for the faith and sources of first-hand knowledge of their friend, Jesus. Exploring their lives and legacies, Shelton sets out to get beyond the myths, considering what may or may not be attributed to each of the Apostles and the likelihood



of their various missionary journeys through a clearly set out reading of historical sources, ancient literature, archaeological evidence and critical reconstruction. Moreover, he considers how each of the twelve men have been received through the years and how the messages and models they engendered are lived out by the church today; this, after all, is their legacy. For all who follow as disciples or as interested sojourners on the road, this is will serve as an excellent guide.

Seven Ways of Looking at Pointless Suffering

by Scott Samuelson £18.99

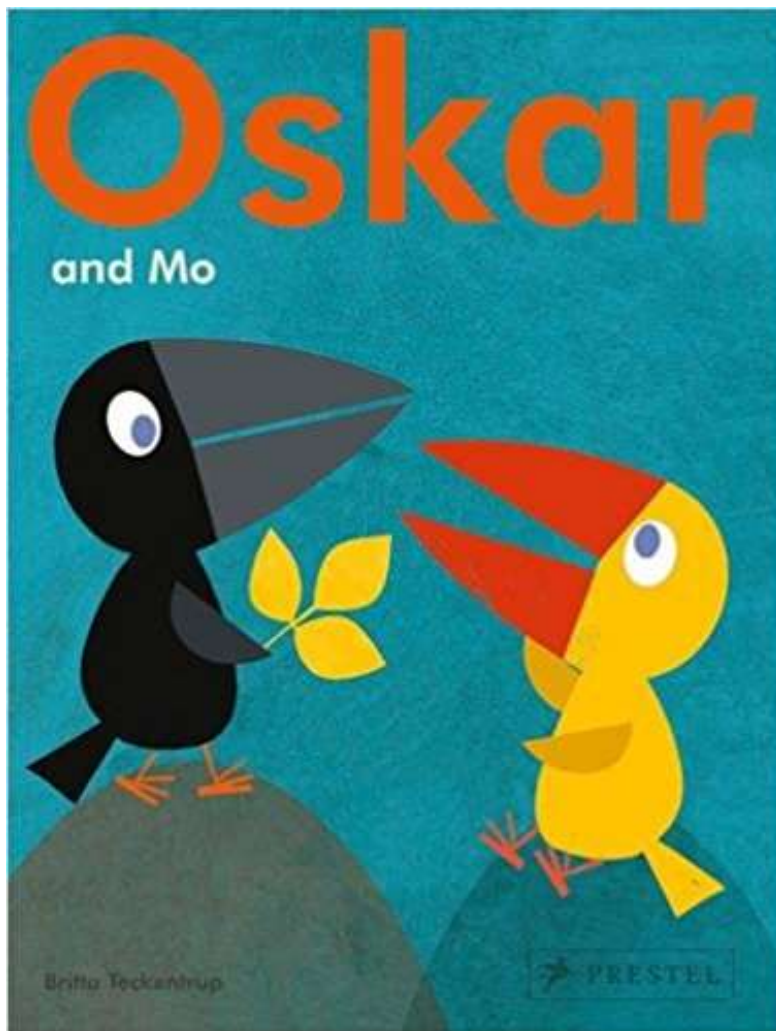


The question of why we suffer has perennially fascinated and tormented the human mind. In this book Samuelson explores the two ways we have typically responded, what he calls the ‘fix-it’ and ‘face-it’ attitudes, and explores what it means to embrace both. “To be human,” he argues, is to embody a huge paradox: the paradox of having simultaneously to accept and to reject suffering; the paradox of both facing and fixing the same troubles.”

The danger comes when we long only to fix suffering; a longing, he argues, which humanity is increasingly leaning towards. Historically, the responsibility of ‘fixing’ suffering was often placed on

God’s doorstep. Increasingly, however, we have relied on advances in medicine and technology to do the same and, he argues, are perilously close to a point where we move beyond *hoping* for an end to our suffering but rather *demand* it. To do this, he says, is to deny our very humanity which calls us to accept the mystery of suffering which is the mystery of being alive.

Eminently readable, Samuelson’s words seek not so much to offer answers as to open up questions, considering whether, in fact, accepting suffering opens us to a host of affirming possibilities – it may reveal God, atone us with nature, inspire art and invoke compassion and empathy – making it an uplifting as well as thought provoking read.



Oskar and Mo

by Britta Teckentrup £10.99

Britta Teckentrup's picture books regularly feature in these reviews – not deliberately and we have no shares in her work – simply, her books are always a delight of colour and profound sentiments expressed in few words. Oskar – a raven who loves the world which he inhabits – is a regular character in her books who himself is much-loved by children around the world. In this story we meet his best friend, Mo and through learning about what they share and do together, learn about the special love and relationship best friends have.



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Weekday worship 1pm Monday – Friday

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