

Sep-Nov, 2023

stJohn's
Dumfries
a church for everyone



M A G A Z I N E

st John's Dumfries

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The St John's Magazine is published quarterly and is available free of charge. **People occasionally ask if they can contribute to the cost. If you would like to do so, we would suggest £12 per year would be a suitable sum.** There is a facility for doing this on the St J's website, or the office can take card payments. The views expressed do not necessarily represent those of the editorial team or of the Vestry of St John's, but are intended as a sharing of the life of the people who make up the community there, and those elsewhere whom we invite to contribute.

The next edition of the Magazine is due out in time for **Christmas, and the nominal copy deadline is 15/11/2023.** Please send comments and/or contributions to pastadmin@stjohnsdumfries.org.

If you have any ideas or suggestions for articles, please contact the Editorial Team. Copy should ideally be 300-700 words, with supporting illustrations or photographs (these available as separate files), if possible.

Editorial team: Janice Aiton (Rector), David Kerr, Margaret Morton

You can contact us at pastadmin@stjohnsdumfries.org, or 07754 596140.

See www.stjohnsdumfries.org and weekly notices for more information.

worship

As mentioned previously most of our worship services are back up and running pretty much as they did before the pandemic; however we are retaining some of the online provision that was set up during it. See the printed Diary and Notices week by week and also the St J's website (www.stjohnsdumfries.org) for what's going on. With autumn comes the resumption of a number of activities within St John's, including Evensong (fortnightly, alternating with the Contemporary Service) and the Contemporary Services. Posters are published as reminders about each of these, displayed in the Church, the external Notice Board and on St J's website. If you would like to subscribe to an email reminder for either, please speak to the Church Office (contact details below).

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All post should be addressed via the Rectory/Office, 8 Newall Terrace, Dumfries DG1 1LW.

from the registers

Baptism
1 October, 2023: Annabella Katie
McCallie-Harris

getting in touch

The Office is currently staffed Mondays and Fridays, but you can also make contact on 07754 596140 or at pastadmin@stjohnsdumfries.org

St John the Evangelist

Junction of Newall Terrace and Lovers' Walk, Dumfries DG1 1LW
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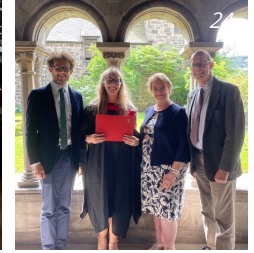
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editors' notes

In this edition, the Rector has some tales of the unexpected; Pamela Crosbie, who leads Bethany Christian Trust in Dumfries, a charity we regularly support, tells us what's going on with them and, powerfully, their users; and Daphne and Robert Thorne (Daphne herself a volunteer with Bethany) share the story of their life together, and what brought them here. In the first episode of a two-parter, Fiona Seagrave talks about her passion for gardening and, on the subject of seedlings of a different sort, we have a report on this year's Summer Holiday Club. Carole and Jim Booth were at this year's Annual Methodist Conference, and you can read their report on that, followed by Steven Ballard on the Mission to Seafarers, another organisation we support regularly. Simon Lidwell brings us up to date with the work of Quartz within and, importantly, externally to, St J's; Jean Chalmers reports on travels to Galashiels and other destinations, while, further afield, Christine Guthrie has been in the Picos de Europa. Gill Swales watched the Union Cycliste Internationale event staged recently in D&G, Annabelle Guthrie is nervously pacing up and down at the front of an, as yet, empty classroom and we finish with a general news roundup. We hope you enjoy it all. Our cover photo comes from this year's Children's Holiday Club.

The Rector writes...

SURPRISINGLY ANSWERED PRAYER

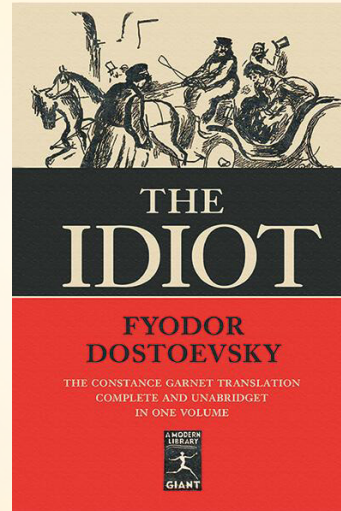


I remember reading some time ago the biography of Dostoevsky and was struck both by the horror and relief he experienced at a particular juncture in his life. The time is December 1849, the place Semenovskiy Square in St Petersburg, Russia. There is deep snow, and the air is bitterly cold, but the sun is shining. Among the twenty-eight prisoners who had been brought there is the great Russian writer Fyodor Dostoevsky, who had been tried and held prisoner along with others for his radical political views.

The prisoners had only just learned that they had been condemned to death by firing squad. The execution is all set. Three stakes have been erected in the square and the first three prisoners are tied to the stakes and caps are pulled over their faces. The firing squad is already in line, taking aim and awaiting its officer's command.

Dostoevsky is not one of the three bound to the stakes but he knows he is next in line. So, he begins to say farewell to his companions. He focusses on his imminent death, terrified of the unknown prospect it will bring. Time passes with intensified fear and awareness. Then there is a roll of drums, the military signal for retreat. Dostoevsky from his own military experience himself realises that the sentence is revoked, and he will keep his life. The prisoners are delighted as the messenger arrives with the Tsar's pardon and the news of their sentence to Siberia. It turned out that the whole incident had been a deliberate

charade- the Tsar perversely wanted them to taste death before he gave clemency.



It may have been a charade to the Tsar and his men but to Dostoevsky it was real. His expectation of death had been agonisingly real and his pardon miraculous. The experience had a profound effect and although sentenced to Siberia he found himself ecstatically happy "I cannot recall when I was ever as happy as on that day." Years later he said: "I walked up and down my cell and sang the whole time, at the top of my voice, so happy was I to have my life back." It was life as gift he was celebrating- the

precious miracle and blessing of life. One result of this profound experience was that he found himself wanting to love everyone with an unconditional love and forgiveness. This is evident in his novels like "The Idiot" where we see an all- forgiving and all-embracing love.

I share this biography with you for there was a character in Scripture who faced death and knew the joy of a reprieve. The person I am referring to is King Hezekiah. King Hezekiah was one of the good kings of Judah (they were few and far between). If he had any fault, it might be that he was a little too sure of his own goodness and was beginning to be a bit proud. At the time of the story in Scripture, Hezekiah was 40 years of age. He had reigned in Jerusalem for some 15 years and had experienced God's help and power in defending his nation.

Then he falls ill. Hezekiah's mortal illness involved a boil. This may have been a furuncle or carbuncle, the latter being "a more extensive inflammation of the skin and can prove fatal." To us most infections are easily cured with antibiotics, but in those days a serious infection could bring death. We are not told at

this stage if Hezekiah is worried about his health but when the prophet Isaiah comes and says, "Set your house in order for you shall die and not recover.", Hezekiah is greatly troubled. You might wonder, what on earth had Hezekiah done to warrant this message and death sentence. All scholars seem to agree that pride may have had something to do with it.

How does Hezekiah react? Hezekiah was not prepared to die. He wanted to live longer and so he turned his face to the wall, focussing and giving all his attention to God in prayer. He wept bitterly before the Lord and Hezekiah reminded God of all the good things he had done and how he faithfully served the Lord. The heart of God was touched by the King's petition and God sent the prophet Isaiah back to the King with the assurance that he was going to be granted fifteen more years of life.



Wow! God's answer is both amazing and wonderful. A saint of God prays and immediately, God changes his mind and sends instructions to his prophet. A few minutes after Hezekiah prays, Isaiah returns to his bedroom. Hezekiah is still lying on his side, facing the wall. Isaiah says, "Hezekiah, this is what the Lord, the God of your father, David says..." Hezekiah turns over with joy on his face. Then Isaiah, "Prepare a poultice of figs." They did so and applied the poultice to the boil and he recovered.

Did the poultice of figs cure Hezekiah? Possibly, it was instrumental in curing because God enabled it. Prior to this,

Hezekiah was about to die, and no figs would have helped. It is God who turned the situation around! Within three days Hezekiah would be strong enough to get out of bed and go to the temple.



What I love about this story is the humanity of Hezekiah. He may have been told by the prophet that he will live and although that poultice of figs has cured him, that is not sufficient. He needs a sign to know for certain that he will live for fifteen more

years. God is gracious to us at times in our requests and we see this in the case of Hezekiah when he gives him a sign. The sign is a shadow which goes back up ten steps, thereby assuring Hezekiah that he will live.

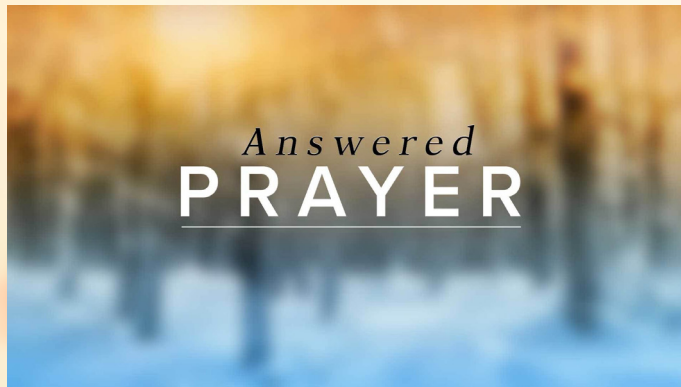
In many ways King Hezekiah's response of a reprieve for fifteen years echoes that of Dostoevsky. King Hezekiah praises God. He sees life as a sheer gift from God, a daily miracle, something to be ecstatic about and praise is the fullest expression of being fully alive "the living, the living give thanks to you, as I do this day." Hezekiah has been given fifteen years of his reign again, what has he learnt, what will he do differently? If we had to live 15 years of our life again, what would we do differently?



In this scriptural story about Hezekiah, we see the power of answered prayer. If Hezekiah had not prayed, he would not have lived. Prayer is powerful and effects change. As it says in the book of James "The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective."

This doesn't mean that you have to be sinless to get your prayers answered. Hezekiah wasn't sinless. He made mistakes, wrong decisions, and had moments that reflected a weakness of faith. Nonetheless, Hezekiah made an honest attempt to follow God in his life and repented when he was convicted of sin. God honoured this with blessing, success and answered prayer.

What is the power of prayer? How can prayer bring a person back to life? How can it heal the sick? How does prayer comfort those who are anxious or sinking into the depths of depression? Prayer is powerful and changes sometimes our situations but almost always it changes us. In the film *Shadowlands* C. S. Lewis makes the following comment on prayer: "I pray because I can't help myself. I pray because I am helpless. I pray because the need flows out of me, waking and sleeping. It doesn't change God, it changes me."



I would say sometimes prayer does change God's mind but more than often it changes us. What is most comforting is that God does hear our prayers and he does answer. He answered the prayer of Hezekiah. He answered the prayer of Hannah in her longing for a child and she gave birth to Samuel and later to other children. God answered the prayer of the church in the book of Acts when the church prayed for Peter's release from prison. Moses received many answers to prayer, for example when he asked for help, God granted him seventy elders. Jabez whose name means sorrow prayed "Oh that you would bless me and enlarge my border, and that your hand might be with me and that you would keep me from harm so that it might not bring me pain." His prayer was answered.

Prayer is answered in Scripture but also in our every day lives. As a nation we prayed for a Covid Vaccine and that prayer was heard and answered. In St John's different people have prayed for healing and their prayers have been answered. Others have prayed for job opportunities and avenues have opened up for

them. We prayed about the organ and lighting projects and our prayers were answered. In St John's over the years, we have prayed for many things and there have been incredible answers, too numerous to mention.



So, take heart and pray for God hears us. Be ready to be surprised by answered prayer. Your prayer may well be answered in the way you anticipate but be prepared for the answer to come in a completely surprising way. God may answer your prayer immediately or after some time. What is certain is that your prayer will be heard and will be answered. "Trust in God and lean not upon your own understanding."

Janice H. Aiton

Bethany Christian Trust Dumfries

Update

We have 11 supported flats for homeless people in Dumfries and currently there are eight flats in use. We provide safe and secure accommodation for people at risk or with a history of homelessness.

The Drop-in provides a safe place to meet and have something to eat and for many people is a lifeline. The people who use the drop-in often describe how it helps with isolation and depression.

Bethany Christian Trust helped a young woman recently and her own words describe the impact that help had on her life.

Thank you for your support.
Pamela Crosbie
Drop-in Coordinator

stj



GOOD NEWS – MY STORY

1. What would you like to tell people about your past situation?

I was homeless from 14 and came into Bethany when I was 16. I had no stable home for 2 years I was bouncing about 3-4 different towns, ones hours away so it made me very isolated and on my own. I had no childhood I had to grow up very quickly and on my own.

2. What would you like to tell people about your current situation and what has changed for you? How has Bethany been part of making a difference for you?

I'm now nearly 17 and in the process of moving on. I'm more independent confident and it's given me that last push that I can in fact do this on my own. The Bethany changed my life it really turned it around they have given me more opportunities than I could ask for but I'm so grateful that they gave me the stepping stones to start an independent life where I know I'm not going into it with my eyes closed.

3. What do you hope for the future?

I hope to go back to college get more qualifications as I had to drop out to get into homeless and to sort my housing out but it's put me into a better position to if I go back to college I'm not going to fail or fall behind because of everything that piles on you when you're a homeless young person.

Horse Sense - Daphne & Robert Thorne

A rather clearer sense of direction brought Daphne and Robert from Wales to Southwest Scotland.

Daphne and I along with our three sons, James, Christopher and Matthew, arrived in Scotland in April 1989. I had been offered a partnership in a business with my former employer who owned an estate in the Esk valley. This was centred on taking race horses from trainers who felt their charges would benefit from a change of routine: a sort of rest and recuperation.

I seem always to have lived my life on a border. Born in Brecon in the shadow of the Brecon Beacons, my early years were spent in or near the town. On leaving school I was first employed in the Finance Department of the county's Water Board, now part of Welsh Water, but soon found that the regularity, routine and total predictability of the future in this employment was no place for me.

Four previous generations of my family on my father's side had,

in one way or another, earned their livings working with horses, either as grooms or as proprietors of their own businesses, so perhaps it was inevitable that I should end up taking the same road. At the age of 19 I moved some 20 miles along the Welsh border into the Herefordshire village of Clifford, about 3 miles from Hay-on-Wye, where the borders of three counties, Radnor, Brecon and Hereford meet; and also the English and Welsh marches.

Here, for about 17 years, I was employed by the owner of a large farming enterprise, based on the production of store and fat cattle, but in no small way supported by producing young horses - primarily for steeplechasing, but for those lacking the talent to find their way onto a race course (and there were plenty!) a niche was found, either as hunters, eventers or show horses. The aim was, of course, to sell them on at a profit. The



yard was always busy with anything up to 70 horses a year passing through. Most had been bought unbroken at public sales, or privately from all over the country, including Ireland. Some were failed two or three-year olds from flat racing yards whose owners had run out either of patience or money - often both - trying to get their horses into the Winners' Enclosure. All these horses, regardless of their previous backgrounds, were given a period of rest at grass before being brought up and re-broken or broken from scratch. You can imagine, with the number of horses involved, my experience of dealing with the education of these youngsters soon became extensive; something for which, during my later working life, I was eternally grateful.

My future wife Daphne came to Hay-on-Wye in 1971 to work with Roman Catholic and general antiquarian books. One of the major attractions of the job was being allowed to have her Patterdale terrier in the shop with her! In 1975 we were married in Salisbury, Wiltshire and our three sons were born in 1977 and 1980. We lived in a bungalow with a three acre field, acquired a Guernsey house cow, named Jonquil, who provided abundant milk, cream and butter and Daphne took up beekeeping.

Bedtime drinks became known as 'Canaans', thanks to all the milk and honey! Daphne also learned to ring bells at this time in Clifford church and the neighbouring tower of Whitney on Wye. In 1983 I was offered the position of stud groom to Sir Watkin Williams Wynn's Hunt, the Wynnstay, near Ruabon in North Wales and we decided to move, this time right on the borders of Flintshire with Cheshire and Shropshire. Here I was responsible for about 18 horses and a staff of four grooms. For the next six years we enjoyed the most successful and satisfactory time among a large company of people with similar interests to our own.

Ruabon is on the borders of the Dioceses of St Asaph and Lichfield and at the local parish church Daphne became involved with the Sunday school and was instrumental in the establishment and production of The Ruabon News, an ecumenical and bilingual parish magazine.

This brings us up to 1989 again and our move to the Scottish Borders here in Dumfriesshire. This took place just a few months after the Pan Am air disaster over Lockerbie and I remember Daphne saying, 'We shall be very close to where the plane came down.' That spring we often saw search parties on the Langholm hills picking up bits of insulation which had floated down from the plane into Eskdale.



For a number of reasons, the business partnership which had brought us north did not work out and I decided to run my own horse breaking and schooling enterprise. We moved from the Langholm area to a farmhouse on the Hoddom and Kinmount estate. The farm steading was disused and we converted it into loose boxes. At the same time, in order to have another income stream, I worked part time at Mount Annan stables, the property of Mr. David Stevenson of the Edinburgh Woollen Mill. His manageress, Liz Boon, was a very experienced bloodstock buyer and secured steeplechasing young stock, all unbroken, from Ireland, so it was like a return to my Herefordshire days, dealing with many horses that made it into the top flight of racing in the hands of the late Gordon Richards of Greystoke, Penrith and usually ridden by his stable jockey at the time, Jonjo O'Neill. With my own business two problems became apparent; with the first it was a case of a 'feast or a famine'. Either a glut of customers had horses for me to work with, and who, of course, wanted their horse's problem dealt with immediately; or the phone seldom rang for weeks and income dried up. Added to this was the fact that, were I so unfortunate as to be laid up for any reason, there was no one to whom I could delegate the work of dealing with a problematic youngster, usually worth a considerable amount of money. General help was easy enough to find, but not so in the case of someone experienced enough to undertake what I was doing. So, in order to generate a steadier flow of income, Daphne secured a secretarial job with CG Grieve in Dumfries, whose senior partner was Lea Wilson, late Treasurer of St. John's.

When we first arrived in Scotland, we attended the beautiful tiny Church of Kirkandrews on Esk (we didn't know much about the Episcopal Church of Scotland to begin with) but then worshipped at St John's in Annan, where Matthew, our youngest, was confirmed. Later we found a niche at St. John's, Dumfries and, as, in the meantime, we had moved from Annan to Nethermill, about midway between Dumfries and Lockerbie, we also attend All Saints' Lockerbie.

Returning to the business problem, we started selling horse food and, as this side of the business expanded, Daphne gave up working in Dumfries to assist with our new business, which we called Robert Thorne Estate Supplies, although I still continued working with horses on a reduced scale. In 1999 we purchased 1-6 The Green, Eastriggs; site of the old Co-op mini market, and increased our stock to include feed and equipment for a wide range of livestock from domestic pets to more exotic ones such as camels, ornamental pheasants, game birds and rare waterfowl, which required a special diet of floating sea duck pellets, which enabled the birds to feed just below the surface of the water but not actually on the bottom as ordinary waterfowl do.

We also erected a warehouse at the rear of the premises on the site of the old Carlyle Hall, which during the war had been a dance hall and cinema for the munition workers of Eastriggs and Gretna. Daphne ran the office and we had a staff of five in the shop and warehouse while I and a second driver dealt with deliveries throughout southwest Scotland and north Cumbria. Thus we continued until 2012, when we felt the time had come to call it a day so we sold everything and retired.

Throughout my life I have always been very interested in the history of the locality in which I found myself living. As a teenager, I and a friend visited every church in Breconshire, either on foot or bicycle, with the idea of noting the changes that had taken place to these buildings since they were last recorded in about 1810 by the Breconshire historian Theophilus Jones. I still have a part of a large volume of notes and observations we recorded at the time.

From my days in the Hay-on-Wye vicinity, I developed an interest in Francis Kilvert, the Diarist, who was curate of nearby Clyro and later Vicar of Bredwardine, a few miles further down the Wye valley. Our time in Ruabon enabled me to develop an interest in the history of an industrial area connected with the North Wales coalfield and, on coming to Scotland, I soon became interested in the history of border families and virtually any aspect of local history in the region. Working as

a volunteer in the archive department of the Ewart library has been particularly rewarding. I have been able to work on a number of collections of family papers and with the Borough Magistrates' papers, accumulated between about 1710 and 1790: a wonderful source of information on day-to-day life in Dumfries during this time. Daphne often remarks that the Ewart library seems to have become my second home!

Daphne has had the privilege of working as a volunteer with the Bethany Christian trust for the last nine years which she has found immensely enjoyable and rewarding.

We have been living in Scotland now for 35 years and our children and grandchildren always enjoy visiting and appreciate the peace and beauty of the Dumfriesshire countryside. Long may it continue.



A Garden of Bright Images

One foot in the Compost Heap - Fiona Seagrave



In the first of a two-parter, Fiona Seagrave shares with us her passion for gardens and gardening.

Gardening – the very word usually evokes strong feelings. Love it, hate it, or a necessary evil; one to be approached as a chore, such as washing the car, or tackling that huge pile of ironing. Personally, I love it. It must be in “the genes”.

Both sets of grandparents were keen gardeners. My parents also, particularly my mother, Audrey Thomson, whom many of the more senior members of the congregation will remember, enjoyed this compelling hobby. My father tackled the hedges, mowed the lawn and cultivated the vegetable plot. My mother’s passion was flowers. She grew them, arranged them and painted them.

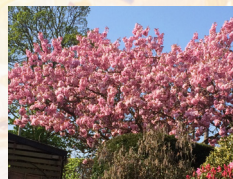


Our house was full of pot plants, and in summer there was always a vase of garden flowers to be seen.

As a child my gardening consisted of cultivating my own small plot, then as a teenager, I also assisted my parents with weeding and occasional lawn cutting, (probably with the incentive of extra pocket money!). One of my early childhood memories was lying in bed on a summer’s evening, the window open, and hearing the gentle sound of the push mower, followed by the sweet smell of freshly cut grass, as my father mowed the lawn. That, and the clip, clip of the hedge shears was peaceful and soporific, unfortunately now replaced by the raucous sounds of petrol, electric and

battery appliances of every conceivable kind. How did our parents manage a garden without modern technology! Gardening, as we knew it, has undertaken a transformation in recent years due to the increasing awareness of the damage we, as humans, are doing to our planet, and the consequential changes to our climate.

Most of us will have noticed that the seasons are changing. They are no longer so clearly defined as they were, eg. my flowering cherry now regularly flowers approximately 3 weeks earlier than it did 40 years ago, and my neighbour’s spring flowering magnolia is now in bloom and covered in buds in September.



I’m sure we can all quote similar examples. This, of course, has a knock on effect on our native fauna.

We are also far more subject to the results of extreme weather – torrential rain, periods of extreme heat, wild fires, and exceptionally low winter temperatures. Everything is relative of course, and there are so many parts of the world where the term extreme weather takes on a whole new meaning, as we see when we watch the world news. I despair of people who dismiss climate change every time we have very cold weather as an argument against rising world temperatures. They seem unable to distinguish between climate and weather. The world’s currents, winds and temperatures are changing, and there will come a point of no return, when things will collapse like a domino chain. One of the dangers to ourselves is

the potential loss of the Gulf Stream, on which we are so dependent, particularly those of us who garden. The amount of fresh water from the melting Northern icecap and the vast frozen tundra of the Northern European continent is reducing the salinity of the N. Atlantic. When it reaches a certain level the Gulf Stream will slow and cease to flow as we know it. Our equable maritime climate which we presently enjoy, will become more like that of Scandinavia. How will that compare to our present weather? To give you a personal example; places on the same latitude as Dumfries in Eastern Sweden experienced temperatures of -40°C in the same cold snap we experienced here last December - a difference of nearly 30°C to ours!



“What can I possibly do, as an individual, which would make a difference?” is often heard. The answer, if you are a gardener, even in a small way, is a lot.

First, we need to realise how much acreage of the UK is devoted to gardens. Apparently, there are 23 million gardens covering an acreage of over 10 million, with an estimated 3.5 million garden ponds. 81 percent of us have an outdoor space of some kind and more than 27 million claim to enjoy gardening. When we take this into consideration, our input, as gardeners is extremely important. As to how we can go about this, I will offer some suggestions next time.

Happy gardening!

Oh I Just Can't Wait...

Annabelle Guthrie has her eye, not on a crown, but on the 2023 Holiday Club



Oh I Just Can't Wait For The Holiday Club!

For the fourth time, St John's held a very successful holiday club between the 7th and the 11th August, with this year's theme focusing on Disney's 'The Lion King'. For those unfamiliar with the film, a young lion called Simba is heir to the throne once his father, Mufasa, dies. However, Scar (Simba's uncle and Mufasa's brother) is jealous that Simba will inherit the throne, and plots to overthrow and kill Mufasa and blame Simba for Mufasa's death. He then runs away from the lion pride.



Over the week, we were able to welcome around 36 children; some who had attended previous holiday clubs or the mystery evenings, and others who were signing up for the first time. Each day focused on a different section of the film, and the children explored this through related craft activities, games and bible teaching, where links were made between the events in the film and sections of the bible such as Jesus walking on the water, the Crucifixion, Jesus' birth and the meaning of his name, and the feeding of the 5000. The children also became familiar with the structure of each day as the week progressed, and were excited to participate in Joe Wicks' fitness videos, get



to know the leaders through question-and-answer sessions and take part in quizzes, matching games and challenges such as seeing who could eat an ice lolly the fastest.

Wednesday and Thursday of the holiday club also provided the children with opportunities for extra fun through carnival games and sports day activities. The highlights of these included an obstacle course, tin can knock down, playing skittles and Jenga, as well as throwing wet sponges at Kalpana and a bouncy obstacle course and slide (which the leaders also enjoyed playing on when the children had gone home!).

Friday afternoon allowed the children's family and friends to come along to see what the children had been up to over the week. This included a performance of songs which they had learned, a quiz about the holiday club, a demonstration of a memory verse which they had learned (Mathew 1:21), a photo montage and the announcement of the team which had gained the most points during the week – well done to Janice and Linda's yellow team. The children, parents and carers and the

leaders were then all able to share their stories and memories over tea, coffee and refreshments.

Overall, this year's holiday club was a success, and was enjoyed by both the children and leaders, with many new friendships blossoming between the children which, we pray, are sustained away from the holiday club.



**I'm gonna be a mighty king, so
enemies beware...**

**I'm gonna be the main event, like no
king was before;**

**I'm brushing up on looking down,
I'm working on my roar...**

Oh I just can't wait to be King!

*[Not from the New Testament, but from
Walt Disney's The Lion King]*

Methodist Conference 2023

It's not just Douglas Adams' Private Detective, Dirk Gently, who believes in the interconnectedness of all things...by Carole & Jim Booth



What is the Methodist Conference?

Methodism describes itself as “a Connexion” – and, yes, the old spelling with the ‘x’ is correct. This describes the connectedness and shared responsibility for each other, of all the “societies of the people called ‘Methodist’”. So, Methodism is, and has been from John Wesley’s time, centralised for its organisation, policy making, and discipline. The Methodist Conference, which first met in 1744 under John Wesley, is the body which gives expression to that connexionalism and oversees the life of the Methodist Church across Great Britain.

So, each year on the 1st September, the new Connexional Year starts and those Ministers (Presbyters and Deacons) moving to new appointments will be in place by that date. Districts and Circuits throughout the Connexion will begin to take note of the decisions made at the 2023 Conference held in Birmingham.

Conference is a yearly event and Jim has been going in one capacity or another for over 25 years and Carole has been part

of the organising committee for coming up to 20 years with responsibility for all volunteers and timetabling of stewards.

Conference moves around Great Britain. In recent years we have found ourselves mainly in the Midlands. We have to find conference venues that are big enough to seat 1000 and have enough accommodation within the conference venue or at hotels close by.

Conference gathers Methodists, not just from the United Kingdom and Northern Ireland but worldwide as partner churches send Representatives. Translators are provided as necessary. Ecumenical guests come too, and a few years back, when Conference met in London, one such was Robin Paisley, our former Rector.

Conference is divided into three sections. The first, Thursday and Friday, is the Presbyteral which is a gathering of the ordained who meet to discuss various matters pertaining to the rest of Conference and to engage in study and spiritual reflection.



The second is over the weekend when the new President and Vice President are inducted on the Saturday afternoon. You may remember that Andrew Baker's wife Jill is a former Vice President. The President has to be an ordained Presbyterian. The Vice President will be either a lay person or an ordained Deacon. Both have to be nominated and voted into office by the Representatives to Conference and serve for just one year.

Sunday worship includes 'Reception into Full Connexion' which is a process all ordinands experience before moving on to ordination. This is for Presbyterian and Diaconal ministry. For the Presbyterian or Deacon, this means that from the point of Reception through to death they are ultimately the responsibility of the Conference for everything – where they work, where they stay, what they're paid etc. The Presbyterian or Deacon becomes responsible to the Conference for remaining faithful to their calling.

The ordinands then go off to their ordination services after lunch. This year there were two. One for the Presbyterians and one for the Deacons. The Diaconate in Methodism is an order of ministry separate from the Presbyterianate, so becoming a Deacon isn't a step to becoming a Presbyterian. Deacons in the Methodist Church do not proceed to Presbyterian ministry. Once upon a time deacons were all women and were called Wesley Deaconesses, were not allowed to marry and held positions exercising a pastoral ministry, sometimes in deprived areas. Over time and with a better understanding of their special kind of ministry, men were also allowed to become deacons and most now preach and of course, there is no bar to marriage. Deacons are deacons and are ordained into that specific ministry.

The Representative session starts on Monday. The business comprises reports to Conference after work has been done by various groups and committees. Debates take place, decisions made, votes taken and all of this filters down to the Districts, Circuits and individual Churches. One piece of work for this

year's Conference related to a radical revision of the way that candidates for ordained ministry are dealt with. Jim did the initial drafting of all the Standing Orders (Church law!) to give effect to the new processes.

Jim used to be a Representative because he was a synod secretary, then a Conference Record Secretary, then Chair of the Liverpool District. Now he comes as a volunteer and oversees the Registration Desk, checks people in and gives out lanyards and badges. He manages the welcoming of guests to the Thanksgiving and Memorial Service which is part of the Presbyterian Session. This is for the relatives of those ministers who have died during the past year. The short service is followed by lunch. Sometimes it can be quite moving as the names of the deceased are read out. It may sound morbid to those not used to this kind of thing but it is a way of honouring years of service.

On the Saturday afternoon, Jim manages all VIP guests including ecumenical and interfaith. Former Presidents and Vice Presidents also come.

Carole, who works from the end of one Conference to the beginning of the next, recruiting, apportioning volunteers to Help Desk, Stewarding and Collation, produces Handbooks, Steward timetables, floor plans and room assignments and coordinates the whole lot.

It's fun, it's 10 days long including preparation before everything starts to packing down. We make sure that things tick over smoothly. We have health and safety briefings.

We value our Methodist Heritage and the opportunity to meet together and strive to find a way forward for the Methodist Church for today and the future.

Methodist Terminology

Connexion - The whole of the Methodist Church wherever it is found.

District – Anglican equivalent Diocese

Chair of District - Anglican equivalent Bishop. The Chair of the Scotland District and the Shetland District is Revd Mark Slaney

Circuit – a smaller division within the District; a number of local Churches.

Circuit Superintendent – has primary responsibility for oversight of a Circuit. St John's is within the Strathclyde Circuit of the Methodist Church in Scotland. Our Superintendent is Revd Andrew Baker.

For Those in Peril by Rev Steven Ballard

Steven brings us a reminder of what it is we are supporting, and why.



the good news of Jesus Christ, for which all churches and missionary societies exist, and second, to express God's love through its pastoral ministry of welcome and compassion

Recently, at a Sunday service at St John's I was sitting next to the Revd Stephen Hazlett, the former rector of Kirkcudbright. Stephen served for four years as a chaplain with MSF to the port of Rotterdam, the largest in Europe, and he told me that on average one ship sails into port every minute. No Scottish port compares with that but with only one full time chaplain here in Scotland, the task of the Revd Tim Tunley, even though he has a supportive team of ship visitors, is a huge one.

Seafaring is one of the most dangerous professions of all. I phoned Tim for a recent update on MSF, and I was reminded of these dangers when he told me of a tragedy at the port of Invergordon. A seafarer was knocked off the cruise ship as the gangway was lowered, and by the time the ship reached Edinburgh, he had sadly died, leaving his wife and two



For a number of years now St John's has held a collection to support the work of the Mission to Seafarers (MSF) annually, and in July of this year our congregation was again very generous and a cheque for £492.30 (a significant increase on last year's figure of £208.75) was sent to MSF Scotland.

MSF had its beginnings when, in 1835, the son of The Revd John Ashley, asked his father on the seafront at Clevedon in Somerset, how the people on the ships in the Bristol estuary were able to go to church. This question planted a seed in John Ashley's mind, which resulted in great things happening. In Jesus's parable of the mustard seed something which was tiny then grew and became a great tree. Similarly, from its humble beginnings, MSF was born. It was called initially the Bristol Maritime Mission before it became the Mission to Seamen. Now, because of many females who make up seafaring personnel, the mission, which is rooted in the Anglican Communion, is called the Mission to Seafarers and operates in over 200 ports worldwide.

What does the MSF aspire to do? Two things. First to proclaim

daughters at home in the Philippines. Tim visited the crew, where on board ship they had created a shrine on the pool table with their colleague's photo surrounded by flowers and candles. Ships are often in port only for a short time and with the help of Tim's fellow Roman Catholic Stella Maris chaplain, arrangements were later set in hand for counsellors to board the ship at Liverpool to help crew members in their grief.

During the spring and summer, a good number of cruise ships dock at Scottish ports, especially Grangemouth, and this season so far MSF Scotland has visited over 70 of these ships. Most visits are done on board, but for crew who have several hours shore leave Tim and his helpers are sometimes able to offer them transport and take them to do much anticipated shopping after days spent at sea.

MSF Scotland is now looking at new ways to engage with seafarers, and one initiative which Tim has been developing recently is to take stickers on board vessels. These are then displayed in a prominent place and include a QR code. If this is scanned on a phone it links to an MSF Facebook page which has sections on seafarers' welfare. It also contains advice on what personnel can do if they are faced with bullying or sexual harassment. Initiatives like this illustrate how MSF internationally is looking to extend its digital reach, and it is now perfectly possible for someone at sea to communicate with a chaplain on shore and find the listening ear of someone who cares, and to whom as a Christian they can speak in confidence.

Please therefore continue to pray for MSF, particularly in its work here in Scotland, and for Tim and his pastoral team in their caring ministry. Also, that they may have the resources they need to continue to do God's work in our land.

Steven Ballard

stj



Faire du vélo dans la Région de Dumfries et Galloway

Union Cycliste Internationale – Gill Swales

It's not often one can watch world class athletes locally, so I intended to catch some of the Paracycling when the UCI World Paracycling Championships came to Dumfries recently.

I headed up to the Crichton Campus to watch one of the men's road races – the race I saw was for the H3 category – hand cycling for those with upper body mobility but without use of lower limbs. The cyclists are in effect lying flat, and this reclining position is mandatory. As they can't easily look forward there are plenty of safety folk to guide, and police on motorbikes accompanying them. They cycle using arm and shoulder strength, and it looks very tough work, especially as it was pretty windy.

The course they were racing took in Bankend and Glencaple, and in my naivety I thought they were doing just one lap – in fact they were doing four, making a race of 62.4km. About 30 cyclists from all over the world took part. I watched parts of the race on a big screen with a crowd of supporters, and headed to the finish line to cheer each lap, and especially to cheer them finishing.

The atmosphere was both exciting and friendly, and the race was won by the Italian Testa Mirko in 1hour, 45 Mins and 33 seconds. Sadly, British rider Luke Jones finished next to last, however, it's such an achievement that all should feel very proud. It was inspiring to watch athletes who have overcome disabilities to become world class sportsmen.

A mum and daughter standing nearby told me some of the cyclists had visited local schools and she was wearing a UCI cap and t shirt, so hopefully a legacy will be the encouragement of interest in the sport, and let's hope the momentum leads to better - and linked - cycle ways in the region.



stj

Midsummer at Caerlaverock by Simon Lidwell

*Summer Activities: Think you know what Quartz does?
You might be surprised...*

Forest Church meets every third Sunday of the month at 2pm outside the Crichton church. We use the Crichton grounds to allow us to explore a theme based around encountering God's presence and wisdom through creation.

As well as our monthly meetings at the Crichton, we sometimes do bigger events elsewhere.

When was the last time you visited Caerlaverock Castle? This summer Quartz participated in a project to help explore ways in which the heritage of Caerlaverock, both castle and estate, can be made accessible to people who don't usually access it.

The project has been commissioned by Historic Environment Scotland (HES) and by The Stove Network. It is described as "an innovative approach to creative learning, heritage and community arts working to realise and inspire new possibilities in working with the region's historic locations. Through gatherings, activities, groups and residencies, this co-created project is seeking new relationships, understandings and links to our past so as to understand and connect with our future."

Our contribution drew on techniques developed for the McNabb project in 2013 and refined through our experiences of Outerweaves and worshipping as Forest Church since then.



The earliest written records state that the land on which Caerlaverock Castle was built was part of the Holme Cultram Abbey (in Abbeytown, Cumbria) lands. We contributed a "Monastic Experience". Throughout the day we rang a bell inviting people to gather for a selection of readings, chants, and collects that would have been familiar to residents of the castle. We also provided a labyrinth as an example of how structure can give minds a chance to wonder. We also chatted with people and had a collection of cards which they could take away.

Participants commented that they experienced peace, that there is something special about meeting outdoors. The wind on your face, the bird song, the significance of the place all combining to make the experience of walking the labyrinth a different one to walking it indoors.



Wardlaw

The following day was a Sunday close to midsummer so we went further back in time to stand still. We climbed the Wardlaw hill. This is a pre roman

hill fort which overlooks the Solway and the mouth of the river Nith north of Caerlaverock Castle. Having taken a moment to be aware of the presence of the Holy Spirit, we walked up to the ancient hillfort.

Saturday was a day where we focused on general spirituality and discussed shared experiences of peace in a public space with everyone who was interested. Sunday was a connected experience with shared participants, but where everyone had responded to an invitation to meet in Christ's name and share his peace. On both days we presented treasures from the spiritual heritage of the area through activities which we hoped would help people experience something they might not be familiar with. Connections were made and interesting discussions entered into. Some of the comments from the day are recorded on the Quartz section of the St John's website.

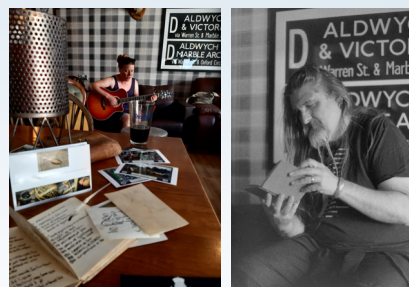


CLC- the Quartz housegroup

These weekend events are underpinned by the opportunity to meet as a Quartz house group. We took a break for the school summer holidays, but this group usually meets every second week throughout the year. We take turns to lead and host the evenings. Meeting to pray, read the bible and share, supporting one another through the ups and downs of ordinary life. In listening to one another we grow to understand ourselves, deepen our relationship with God and discover more clearly how each one of us is uniquely called to respond to God's love.

Tales at the Tap

Have you ever noticed how many stories there are in the Bible? We are used to reading them, but for much of human existence people have learned through spoken stories. Many of the ones we read in the Bible started out as tales told round fires and in houses before they were written down. People would gather and listen to the tales which explore mythic themes and the mysteries of being human and this has developed into the many performance arts available today. Perhaps as a response to modern technology there is a growing appetite for the primitive forms of this experience, and ancient tales. Throughout the summer, once a month Simon and Kate have been telling a variety of stories accompanied by music in the Riverside tap. This is an example of the sorts of Wordsmith Crafts CIC activities which, whilst being beyond the capacity of Quartz, have connections which are hopefully obvious!



Online

Quartz also has a presence online. You can find this from St John's website, or directly by going to www.wordsmithcrafts.co.uk/Quartz. This is complemented by frequent posts on social

media platforms such as Instagram and Facebook. Physically meeting people, and having printed materials is, of course, very important and we do that. This chart from research carried out by the Evangelical Alliance shows how important an online presence is to complement having a visible presence in the community.

www.eauk.org/resources/what-we-offer/reports/talking-jesus-report

Where would people go to find out about the Christian faith?



Freshers' fair

Every year students are welcomed to the Crichton campus with a special week of activities called "Freshers' Week". As part of this local businesses and other organisations set up stalls introducing what they do. Quartz has been part of this for some time now providing a presence, giving away stickers, and inviting people to become involved in St John's activities.

Tapestry of Scotland (and other trips) by Jean Chalmers

These days out are proving popular...read this and book your seat on the next one!



The Thornhill Community Transport bus has proved to be very popular with St John's Congregation and thanks go to David Kerr for organising and coordinating regular trips and outings.

For many years the choir made annual trips to Annan Academy to see the school shows, along with other congregation members and friends and we always



Dalveen Pass (www.pinterest.co.uk)

hired a regular service bus. I remember the very first time we went to the show. Jamie had joined St. John's as the new Choirmaster and, after choir practice one Wednesday evening, when most of the choir had gone home, Jamie asked if a few of us if we would like to come to the show. The show was Oliver and the year was 1999. Tom Carrick was our organist at the time, and he ordered the bus. A **big** bus! There were six of us - three adults and three children. Jamie was waiting at Annan Academy when we arrived. An embarrassing moment! For the last two or three years we have used the community bus.

For our Mothers' Union outings we usually used a convoy of members' cars but, this year, we used the community bus where we were all together for our visit to Carlisle cathedral. David wasn't driving on this occasion and there was some confusion as to the one way system and we had an unintended Grand Tour of Carlisle. This was soon sorted by several members who knew how to get there, and we had a very enjoyable day, with morning coffee, lunch and a free concert before we left for the trip home.

The community bus has been used for regular congregation outings. I can't remember all of them but there was a trip to Kilmarnock for 10 pin bowling and a trip to Glasgow to see the Burrell Collection in its refurbished buildings.

In August we went to Galashiels to see the Great Tapestry of Scotland. Since we went to Thornhill to pick up passengers, David took us through the Dalveen Pass at

the start of our journey; unfortunately the beautiful scenery was somewhat shrouded in mystery and rain but it didn't detract from the feeling of wonder. The weather did improve so that we could enjoy the spectacular scenery of the Borders country.



On arrival in Galashiels, we saw the very imposing purpose built gallery where the Tapestry is on permanent display. By this time, we were hungry, so decided to have lunch before starting our journey through Scotland's history through the tapestry. The author Alexander McCall Smith had the idea for a tapestry as he was inspired by a visit to the Prestonpans Tapestry and he recruited Andrew Crummy, the artist behind the Prestonpans tapestry to gather a team to work on the new tapestry.

The Great Tapestry of Scotland is one of the world's largest art projects and stitched by 1000 people from across Scotland. It is made-up of 160 linen panels and 300 miles of wool. The Tapestry tells the story of Scotland's history, heritage and culture. It is a truly amazing and stunning way of portraying Scottish history. It is interesting to see

The Great Adventure Of Being A Pilgrim

Christine Guthrie



Alexander McCall Smith (www.wikipedia.org)

the panels up close with the names of the stitchers incorporated on each panel. Large magnifying glasses were provided to view the intricate detail of the stitching. I was pleased to see that my next door neighbour, who is a very talented embroiderer/dressmaker, was a stitcher on a Dumfries panel. I didn't manage to see all 160 panels, only about 30. I needed time to really enjoy and appreciate the work and amazing commitment of the stitchers on each panel. Maybe another outing to Galashiels in the future would be a possibility?



Andrew Crummy (www.wikipedia.org)

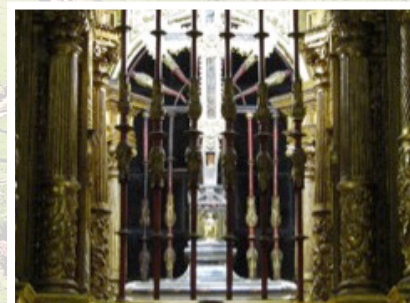
Christine has valiant been, or, as you prefer, true valour seen... anyway, she's been following in the footsteps of pilgrims.

The English Christian hymn, "He Who Would Valiant Be" (also known as "To Be a Pilgrim") uses the words of John Bunyan in Part 2 of *The Pilgrim's Progress*, written in 1684. For a time, Bunyan's original version was not commonly sung in churches, perhaps because of the references to "hobgoblin" and "foul fiend." However, (according to Wikipedia), one commentator said: "Bunyan's burly song strikes a new and welcome note in our Hymnal. The quaint sincerity of the words stirs us out of our easygoing dull Christianity to the thrill of great adventure."

In May 2022, my husband, Alan, and I embarked on our first 'great adventure' after the end of the Covid-19 pandemic lockdown. In our 28 years of marriage, we have spent several holidays, including our Honeymoon, in the Cantabria region of northern Spain, staying at a beautiful family-run hotel in the Picos de Europa mountains.

Although we know the area well, there is always something new to discover, and this holiday was no exception: a visit to the Monasterio Santo Toribio de Liebana. Previously, we've only seen it from outside, whilst enjoying the magnificent panoramic views

of the mountains as the monastery is built high up and overlooks the region's main town of Potes. Toribio and some Benedictine monks chose to build their home there (during 530-540), and secluded themselves from the world. Many monks settled in this area as it was close to the pilgrimage route to Santiago de Compostella, which is further to the west, in the region of Galicia. The restoration of the monastery started in 1961, and in more recent years has seen further development, now offering a sanctuary to modern-day pilgrims on their 'great adventure' when travelling part of, or the whole length of, the same pilgrimage route. In the main chapel, the lying statue of Santo Toribio is said to have been in the monastery since at least 1316.



It is at this monastery that the largest known piece of the True Cross (the Lignum Crusis) – a piece of the left branch of the cross - is found in the side room to the main chapel, and was brought to the monastery in the

8th century from Jerusalem, to be preserved within the safety of the monastery. On 3rd May, there is the annual custom (La Vez) that two men from each village in the community of Liebana must come to the monastery to pray in the church and worship the True Cross. They used to come without any breakfast, leaving their homes at midnight, and walk, sometimes barefoot, all night long, to reach the monastery at dawn.

The Lignum Crusis is 635mm long by 393mm wide, and now appears in the upward crucifix position so that the sacred hole where Christ's hand was nailed can be fully seen (see the rectangular 'hole' shown in the photograph). It is embedded in a gold-plated cross and is 38mm thick. This is the largest known piece of the True Cross, even larger than the one preserved in The Vatican.

The next day, we drove into the neighbouring region of Asturias, to Covadonga, nestled in the mountains of the Picos de Europa, with a permanent population of only 58 recorded in 2008. Covadonga is a pilgrimage site dedicated to Our Lady of Covadonga, commemorating the Battle of Covadonga in 722, marking the first Christian victory in Spain over the Moors invading from North Africa. Our Lady of Covadonga is a significant Marian shrine. A statue of the Virgin Mary, hidden in one of the caves was believed to have miraculously aided the Christian victory led by Pelayo who, after the battle had been won, and upon the instructions of King Alfonso I "the Catholic" (739-757), had a monastery and chapel built on the site of the battle in honour of Our Lady of Covadonga. The sanctuary was destroyed by fire in 1777, and replaced by a great Basilica, which was consecrated in 1901, and houses the current statue of our Lady of Covadonga.



Our day in the Asturias region continued from Covadonga to the nearby town of Cangas de Onis. A replica of the Victory Cross hangs from the Roman Bridge spanning the Rio Sella, following the victory of the legendary battle against the Moors in 722. The parapet has a cobble stone path, and the wooden replica of the Victory Cross can be seen in the photograph, and hangs from the central arch. The bridge was built in the 14th or 15th century, though possibly replacing another bridge built in Roman times. The original cross (10th century) is kept in Oviedo Cathedral.



During our visit, we climbed the steep steps up to the Holy Cave, which has a waterfall flowing from Covadonga's two lakes high in the mountains (1134m), to the peaceful shrine, precariously perched on a ledge of the mountain, and bedecked with flowers and candles; this is the place where Pelayo prayed to the hidden statue and where La Santina, our Lady of Covadonga, appeared to Pelayo.





The rest of our holiday was easily filled with revisiting places we've enjoyed on previous holidays, such as wandering around Potes and, for the first time, visiting the inside of its church; taking the cable car up Fuente De to 1823m for stunning views across the Picos de Europa national park; and the spectacular



mountain road (only to be driven in clear weather) which starts from Potes, initially driving through the lush meadows of the Liebana Valley and onwards (and upwards!) via the Mirador

del Corzo Puerto de San Gloria (a must-do photo stop at 1604m/5262ft) with its snaking road and hairpin bends, and then it's literally downhill all the way to Lake Riano situated in the province of Leon, with its beautiful peaks at 1112m. For the first time, we drove across the bridge at Riano to appreciate the scenery from the other side of the lake, before continuing on our 299km/185 mile (believe me, it's worth it!) circular route, driving along the gorge Desfiladero de los Beyos with adjacent ravines; and through the Hermida Gorge – a twisty road for about 20 miles at the bottom of one of the most scenic canyon roads in Spain, where for 6 months of the year the village of Hermida doesn't receive any direct sunlight due to the height of the mountains (no good if you've got solar-powered devices, but we did notice that the village now has an electric vehicle charging point!) – the road through the Hermida Gorge is the only major 'way in and out' from Potes via the Picos mountains to Spain's north coast which is also forms the southern coast of the Bay of Biscay. Finally, and regarded as one of the prettiest and best preserved medieval villages in Spain: Santillana del Mar (although its situation isn't actually coastal) with its cobbled streets and historic buildings. It's a well-known stopping off point on the route of the Pilgrims' road, so we felt obliged to go there as part of our 'great adventure and to be a Pilgrim'.

Travel details: We flew from Edinburgh with Ryanair to Santander, and hired a car to drive 1.5 hours to our hotel, and stayed 7 nights at the Hotel Del Oso (which means The Bear) in Cosgaya, near Potes. Previous holidays, we have booked a Brittany Ferries package holiday and taken our car, but this time we found it cheaper to do the bookings ourselves and fly/drive. And yes, the hotel staff remembered us following our visits to the Hotel Del Oso in 1993, 1995, 2 separate mini-breaks in 1997 – one driving home through France and stopping for a few nights in the Dordogne, the other with my parents, and in 2012 as a family with Robert and Annabelle, then on our own in 2022. And yes, we never tire of visiting this region, and just writing this article conjures up lovely memories and makes me want to visit 'our hotel in the mountains' very soon and enjoy doing it all again!

Christine Guthrie

Who's the Teacher Here...

Oh wait....that's me! Annabelle Guthrie (at the time of writing) preparing for her new job. By the time you read this, she will have completed her first term.



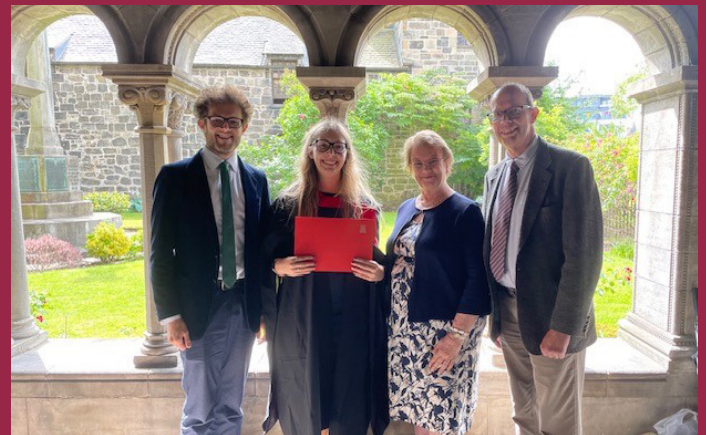
When I applied to study primary education at university in late 2018/beginning of 2019, I had never considered that the end of my first year, the entirety of my second and third year and part of my final year would have been impacted by a global pandemic. Here we are, four years later, and the world is pretty much 'back to normal'.

Last time I wrote for the magazine about my studies, I was in my first semester of my second year, when I was living at home and studying online from my room. My third year involved most of the same, however I moved back to university to do this and had one day in campus each week, where strict social distancing measures remained in place. Finally, my fourth year was back to normal, where the university took a 'hybrid' approach – most learning took place on campus with some classes online.

It can be argued that the final year of a university degree is the most challenging year of study. Between September 2022 and May 2023, I juggled an 8800 word dissertation which looked at

how upper-primary teachers can promote and model reading for pleasure during their practice, an analytical study of how my placement school incorporated outdoor learning, a critical presentation about educational theory and an assessed 10 week placement within the upper stages of the primary school. However, I am pleased to say that I passed my final placement, and all my university-based assignments with high 'A' grades, which allowed me to graduate with a first class degree in Primary Education with a specialism in literacy. I was able to graduate on 6th July 2023 at Paisley Abbey, and thankfully the rain held out to be able to get some outdoor photos! It was a lovely day celebrating with my university friends, lecturers and my family.

So, what's next? Well, all newly qualified teachers in Scotland must complete their 'probationary year' – a year-long job found by the Scottish Government which allows graduate teachers to experience teaching their own class with support from a mentor, reduced class contact time at three and a half days and five hours of local authority-based training each week. I have been given my place in a very small, rural primary school located near Maybole in South Ayrshire, where I will be teaching thirteen P5-7s (which is nearly half of the school!).



News Roundup

David Kerr

NEW VESTRY MEMBERS

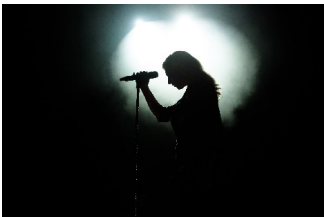


CartoonChurch.com

Following the recent AGM, Kalpana Ratnam-Roarty, Heather Gibbings and Amie Byers have retired from Vestry, and Catriona Appleby-Strivens, Andy Bixler, James Clark-Maxwell and Robyn Brotherston have been elected as replacements. Annette Beagrie is our new Alternate Lay Rep, and Gill Swales and Kay Solaja continue as Lay Rep and Regional Lay Rep respectively. Margaret Morton continues as Vestry Secretary, Christopher Pierson-Harvey as Assistant to the Treasurer (it will be recalled that the 'actual' post of Treasurer is occupied by an external professional, Jennifer McDiarmand of Saint & Co, CA), and Billy Dewar-Riddick remains PVG Co-ordinator. As a Congregation, we're

most grateful for the service of the outgoing Vestry members (the three longest-serving have to retire each year, in terms of our Constitution), and also to those who have agreed to take their places. The Vestry meets monthly, except for the month of July. Its first meeting 'proper' this session will be an Awayday at Mable House on 11 November. Your prayerful support for the work of the Vestry, and its members, who are also the Trustees of St J's, is much appreciated.

NEW MICROPHONES



We used the majority of the Provincial Recovery Grant, offered to charges a couple of years ago, to replace some of our ageing radio mikes, and they have made a huge difference to how audible the

various readers, worship leaders and so on are, week by week. You will have noticed also, however, that the two remaining older radio mikes have become more troublesome in recent days, and we are in negotiation with TG Baker, our supplier, to replace these as well, now that the funding situation has eased a little. In the meantime, please bear with us...

QUINQUENNIAL REVIEW

This, as the name suggests, is a five yearly inspection, carried out on the instructions of the Diocese, on all the church buildings, including the Rectory. Inevitably, it results in a To Do list. This year, we were fortunate to secure the services of Rebecca Cadie, the Diocesan Architect, who knows us, and our buildings, well.



We have still to see the detail of her report, following her visit at the end of September, but, overall, the church and Rectory came out as 'not too bad', though, of course, there are some things that need doing. Rebecca was particularly pleased at the improvement to the internal condition of the tower, ringing chamber etc and the entrance porch, following the repairs that were done a couple of years ago. We also carried out extensive – and expensive – electrical work in the last year or so, both to satisfy our insurers, and to repair damage caused by water ingress before the work on the tower was carried out. The salts appearing on the stonework inside the building are actually a *good* sign; they indicate that the stonework is drying out; and though the salts need to be hoovered, or brushed, off from time to time, their continued re-appearance will be an indication of the progress of the drying process. There are a number of weed-choked gutters and the like on all the buildings, and we are chasing the roofers to get these attended to.

The Hall, it will surprise no-one to know, is a different story. The (probably original 1920s) roof is reaching the end of its life



and, as we know, leaks in various places. The decoration, design and layout could do with a rethink as well, both to fit it better for our current and future use, and to make it more accessible for those with mobility impairments and so on. Refurbishment of the Hall, possibly in a couple of phases, will need to be our next major project. The Vestry will shortly be talking to at least one, locally based, professional fundraiser, to ascertain what the

possibilities are, and no doubt you'll be hearing more of this in due course. As an aside, various people have mentioned the state of the kitchen ceiling. Whilst there is some weed growth on the flat roof above, which may not be helping, Rebecca suggested that there is not much evidence of water actually



coming in; but that, the kitchen having no formal heating, in contrast with the rest of the hall building, that top corner is likely a cold spot and that condensation (from cooking, which we don't do much of) and the dishwasher (which we use quite a bit) may be to blame. She suggested we always run the extractor (switch labelled and near that for dishwasher and cooker) when cooking or using the dishwasher. Remember to switch it off again afterwards...

Other, more minor, matters either completed, or in course of completion, include attention to the drainage system of the boilerhouse; the annual servicing of the boilers, dishwasher, fire protection equipment; attention to the exterior lighting at the rear entrance, and portable (electrical) appliance testing...and on it goes.



Having had the privilege of hosting Donald Henry's grand piano for the last few years, and Donald having come to the decision to sell it, we now have another; this one the property of Jamie Brand, who is kindly allowing, as Donald did before,

St J's to have the use of it for our own purposes. External groups, likewise, may use it, for a small fee. We are, of course, most grateful to both Donald and Jamie for their generosity.



We were delighted to host the baptism of Annabella Katie McCallie-Harris on Sunday, 01/10/2023; appropriately enough, Harvest Festival (and also our AGM) a beautiful, and beautifully behaved, baby...future Vestry member, perhaps?

CONGRATULATIONS TO BERYL CROSSLEY, who celebrated her 90th birthday recently and whose party was held here at St J's shortly afterwards.





St John's
Dumfries

A Church for everyone

