

NEWSLETTER

October/November 2017



From the Rector

Dear Friends

THE SCANDAL OF HOMELESSNESS

As the days get shorter and the weather becomes increasingly more autumnal it makes me even more aware of the many people sleeping on our streets in Edinburgh.

In a recent sermon I spoke of Greig, a homeless man who has been using the limited shelter that can be found outside the back door of church to spend the night over the past couple of weeks. Greig fell into the world of drugs and alcohol and lost his home. He has now, with courage and the help of others, managed to come back from that and will hopefully be rehoused in the near future.

At Christ Church we support the wider work of Bethany Christian Trust and provide a catering team for two of their winter night shelters. We also offer regular support to St Catharine's project for the homeless and Fresh Start.

However, just as a society need to address why there is a need for so many Food Banks, we also need to address why so many people are homeless— the main reasons in Scotland being:

Dispute with in household—28%

Asked to leave accommodation—26%

As a result of action by landlord or lender—13%

Harassment or non-domestic violence—5%

Discharge from hospital, prison, or care—5%

Other— 23%

These statistics do not, of course, include any "hidden" homeless people.

As part of my personal commitment to trying to effect a radical change in addressing homelessness I am a supporter of **Social Bite**. If you haven't heard of them read more about them here www.social-bite.co.uk, or ask me for more information. **Social Bite** is a 'Social Business', a business not established for the traditional purpose of making money but for solving social challenges.

As well as running sandwich shops and restaurants in Edinburgh which help to feed and get homeless people into employment, **Social Bite** is holding a **Sleep in the Park** overnight on Saturday 9th December when 9,000 people will sleep in Princes Street Gardens for the world's largest sleep out. The aim is that by "*raising funds and working together, we can stop the sticky plaster mentality and get to the root issues with a plan to eradicate homelessness over a 5 year period by providing people with housing, rehabilitation, job opportunities and the support they need to get back on their feet.*"

I have committed to taking part in this event and one of the requirements is to raise a minimum of £100 in sponsorship. If you would like to support me please visit my fundraising page at <http://uk.virginmoneygiving.com/susanmacdonald->, or speak to me personally.

Let's help to help end homelessness.

Blessings

Susan Macdonald

DATES for your DIARY

Sunday 1st October (in Church Centre)

11.30pm Journeys in Faith Session : *The Reformation* led by Professor Jane Dawson, John Laing Professor of Reformation History

Tuesday 3rd October (in Church Centre)

7.30pm Reading Group: *Summoned by Bells*—John Betjeman

Sunday 8th October (in Church Centre)

1.30-4.30pm *Spirituality matters retreat: 'Exploring our relationship with God'* led by Alison Moody

Sunday 15th October (in Church Centre)

11.30am Journeys in Faith Session: *Seeking Sanctuary* led by David Bradwell

Sunday 22nd October (in Church Centre)

11.30am *The End of Phase Three*
Talk and presentation led by Michael Herriott and Roger Taylor

Wednesday 25th October (in Church Centre)

7.00-8.30pm Interfaith Conversations: *Meet Trishna Singh OBE*, Director Sikh Sanjog and Punjabi Junction Social Enterprise Project

Sunday 29th October (in Church Centre)

Annual Meeting and Lunch for Area and Pastoral Visitors

Sunday 5th November (in Church Hall)

from 11.30 Annual Congregational Gathering and Lunch

Monday 13th November (in Church Centre)

6.45 for 7.00 pm Film Night : *Norman or The Moderate Rise and Tragic Fall of a New York Fixer*

Saturday 18th November (in Church Centre)

from 7.15pm Annual Christ Church Wine Tasting in the Church Centre
A tutored Wine Tasting of New Zealand wines.

Sunday 19th November (In Church Centre)

11.30am UK and Overseas Committee Sunday.
Journeys in Faith Session led by Rev Andrew Bain, Emmaus House

Sunday 26th November (in Church Centre)

6.45pm Interfaith Conversations: *Meet Rabbi Mark Solomon*

Wednesday 29th of November (in Church Centre)

7.30pm First Advent Evening: "Who is this Jesus we wait for?"

Sunday 3rd December (in Church Hall)

11.30am Advent Sunday: Annual General Meeting



The Reflection Group meets on the first and third Wednesday of the month in a member's home between 10.00 and 12.00am. Enquiries to Gill Davidson, Joy Holmes or Church Office.

Film Evening

"Norman" or The Moderate Rise and Tragic Fall of a New York Fixer on Monday 13th November

6.45 for 7pm in the Church Centre

Norman Oppenheimer is a small time operator who befriends a young politician at a low point in his life. Three years later, when the politician becomes an influential world leader, Norman's life dramatically changes for better and worse.

Everyone is welcome—
as usual there will be a break for refreshments

Susan Macdonald

Annual Christ Church Wine Tasting, Saturday 18 November 2017 from 7.15 pm in the Christ Church Centre. A tutored Wine Tasting of New Zealand Wines with cheese and biscuits by Mr Pete August from Oddbins.

For further information contact John Higinbotham at 229 7725.



Helpers and Volunteers welcome!

- Would you like to knit an angel?
(patterns are available at the back of Church)
- Would you like to sweep & rake leaves?
Please sign the sheet at the back of church (half hour or hour slots available between 11.15am-12.15pm on **Sundays 8th October and 12th November**)
- Would you like to learn and apply a new skill? We are looking for people to help using an electric buffer to clean the floor once a week in the Church Hall
(**please note:** the buffer is heavy to manoeuvre, full training will be provided)
- Do you like painting walls? (please get in touch with the office)

Missed a film night?

Don't worry...

Contact the office if you would like to borrow a DVD to catch up or watch a film again.

Journeys in Faith

Sundays 11.30am –12.30pm in the Church Centre

1st October *The Reformation*

In this 500th anniversary year of the Reformation, Professor Jane Dawson, John Laing Professor of Reformation History, University of Edinburgh will lead a seminar on the historian's perspective of the remarkable events of 1517.

15th October *Seeking Sanctuary: faith groups and the refugee crisis*

Presentation and discussion led by David Bradwell, Co-ordinator of Scottish Faiths Action for Refugees.

22nd October *The end of Phase Three*

Talk and presentation about the past year's renovation works led by Michael Herriott, Factor and Roger Taylor, architect.

29th October *Annual Meeting and Lunch for Area and Pastoral Visitors*

Annual Meeting and Lunch for Area and Pastoral Visitors in the Church Centre with commissioning during the 10am service.

19th November *UK and Overseas Committee Sunday—Emmaus House, Edinburgh*

This year we are focusing on the UK causes to which we contribute, Rev Andrew Bain of Emmaus House who will be preaching at the 10am service, will lead this session after the service and expand on the work of Emmaus House.

Sunday Afternoon 1.30-4.30pm in the Church Centre

8th October *Spirituality matters Retreat afternoon*

'Exploring our relationship with God' led by Alison Moody, Team member at Ignatian Spirituality Centre, Glasgow. Sign up sheet at back of church.'

Wednesdays 11.45-12.45pm in the Church Centre

Growing with the Gospel—We hear and reflect on the Gospel reading for the coming Sunday. All welcome, be that occasionally or regularly. (*tea/coffee available*)

Journeys in Faith

Evenings 7.00-8.30pm in the Church Centre

Interfaith Conversations

Informal conversations between a representative of another faith and members of the congregation.

Wednesday 25th October: 7- 8.30pm

Meet Trishna Singh OBE; Director Sikh Sanjog and Punjabi Junction Social Enterprise Project

Sunday 26th November: 6.45 – 8.15pm

Meet Rabbi Mark Solomon: Interfaith Consultant; Liberal Judaism Senior Lecturer, Leo Baeck College; Edinburgh & Leicester Liberal Synagogue

Advent Evenings 7.30-9.00pm in the Church Centre

Wednesdays 29th November and 6th & 13th December

Three evenings as prepare for and journey through Advent looking at the question

“Who is this Jesus we wait for?”

We will explore this question through the lens of “The Great Os” the antiphons traditionally sung as the Magnificat Antiphons at Vespers, and some of which we sing at our Sung Eucharist on Sundays in Advent.

Each antiphon is a name of Christ, one of his attributes mentioned in Scripture and are:

O Sapientia (O Wisdom)

O Adonai (O Lord)

O Radix Jesse (O Root of Jesse)

O Clavis David (O Key of David)

O Oriens (O Dayspring)

O Rex Gentium (O King of the nations)

O Emmanuel (O With Us is God)

The first extant account of early Christian worship

We all know that the N.T gives us no description of services in the late 1st century churches – only a few scattered hints. We could reasonably expect one or more of the earliest Church Fathers to fill in the gap for us. But they were anticipated in an unexpected and extraordinary way: we owe the first account to a Roman official of the early 2nd century – and he, of course, a pagan!

At that time the administration of the Roman province of Bithynia (in northern Asia Minor) had somehow got into a complete mess, and the (very efficient) Roman emperor Trajan decided (c. 110 A. D.) to send a competent senior Roman official over, to take control of the administration and to restore it to order. His choice (which turned out to be a very good one) seems rather surprising: - a man in his 50s who had had administrative experience in Rome but no provincial experience at all. He was to spend three successful years on this unfamiliar job. He is known to us as Pliny the Younger to distinguish him from his uncle of the same name, a scholar and writer.



Pliny the Younger

Pliny the Younger wrote no books, but he wrote a vast number of letters to his friends, which he then had collected and published. We still have nearly 250 of them! But (historically much more valuable) we have some 70 letters (mostly long) sent to Trajan from Bithynia to give information or to ask for advice and help, together with some 50 of the emperor's replies, all very much briefer than Pliny's letters and some just curt and dismissive.

You must by now be wondering when I shall get back to my title. Well, here goes: - One of Pliny's latest letters to Trajan, after a short introductory sentence, gives us nearly two pages (in the Penguin translation) about his sudden and unexpected encounter with people called Christians. Most of it is concerned with the question whether professed Christians

deserved punishment (i.e. for disloyalty to the official Roman cults); but the most interesting (and to us most valuable) part of the letter comes in the middle, where Pliny tells us how he interrogated some renegade Christians about the cult which they had abandoned: -

“They declared that the sum total of their guilt or error amounted to no more than this: they had met regularly before dawn on a fixed day to chant verses alternately” (I think that this must mean antiphonal singing) “amongst themselves in honour of Christ as if to a god, and also to bind themselves by oath” (the Latin word is “sacramentum”), “not for any criminal purpose, but to abstain from theft, robbery and adultery, to commit no breach of trust and not to deny a deposit when called upon to restore it. After this ceremony it had been their custom to disperse and reassemble later to take food of an ordinary, harmless kind; but they had in fact given up this practice since my edict, issued on your instructions, which banned all political societies. This made me decide that it was all the more necessary to extract the truth by torture from two slave-women, whom they call deaconesses. I found nothing but a degenerate sort of cult carried to extravagant lengths.”

The Latin word “sacramentum” means specifically a military oath, the one taken by all recruits, promising to obey their commanders, fight bravely, and so on. Pliny clearly understood it to refer in the Christian context to Christian promises to avoid various serious sins, promises which could well have been included in the primitive Eucharist. But I wonder whether the ex-Christians interrogated by Pliny were using it already in the later sense to denote the whole Eucharist service, and Pliny (hardly surprisingly) misinterpreted it as simply a civilian adaptation of a military term.

The social meal briefly mentioned as being held later in the day was clearly the Agape (“love-feast”), with the stress on the “ordinary and harmless” character of the food used then being an implicit rejection of the (understandable) pagan misinterpretation of the Eucharist as a ritual with cannibalistic connotations.

Pliny’s letter had opened with a much-elaborated statement that he had not known how he should



treat people put on the mat before him as Christians, and that his temporary solution had been to dismiss all those who gave clear proof that they were not any longer Christians by taking part in pagan worship, but to keep in custody those who refused to relent because “their stubbornness and unshakable obstinacy deserved punishment.” (Did it, in fact, in Roman law? Not as far as I know.)

The Symbolic Supper. Early Christian catacomb of Saints Marcellinus and Peter.

The letter ends with a long-winded request for Trajan’s opinion and advice on the problem.

Trajan’s reply is about one tenth the length of Pliny’s letter, and is an excellent example of sitting on the fence: it is impossible, he says, to lay down a general rule, so don’t hunt for Christians; but if any turn up who refuse to recant, punish them. Unhelpfully, Trajan fails to specify the appropriate punishment.

What Pliny made of this vague reply, and what he did, we have no idea. This correspondence most probably dates from the year of Pliny’s death, and he wrote only a few more letters to Trajan. But any response from Pliny would very probably be of far less value to us than the brief and shadowy picture of an early Church service given by former, not current, Church members to their letter-mad provincial governor, whose hobby has preserved it for us.

Mary Smallwood

CONTACTS

STAFF

Rector:	Revd Canon Susan Macdonald
Assistant priest:	Revd Imre Katay-Fodor
Director of Music:	Dr. Michael Green
Assistant Organist:	Kat Whigham
Families' Networker:	Alex Barrett
Church Manager:	Dorothea Nelson
Office Assistant:	Christine Johnson
Factor:	Michael Herriott

VESTRY

Chair:	The Rector
Rector's Warden:	Lindsay Graham
People's Warden:	Robin Morris
Treasurer:	Kenneth Ramage
Secretary:	Alison Amin
Lay Representative:	Howard Moody
Elected Vestry members:	Chris Arnold, Mike McNamee, Mary Snow, Stuart Valentine and Helen Wosu.

All staff and vestry members can be contacted by telephone or email through the Church Office: 0131 229 0090 or admin@6a.org.uk | Office open: Monday to Friday 9am to 3pm

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WALKERS' PROGRAMME

"A" Walkers (awalkers@6a.org.uk):

4th November. Glen Turret. A circular high level walk around the glen taking in a series of tops of around 780m and one Munro, Ben Chonzie. Distance 20km, ascent 1300m. OS Sheet 52 (Contact: L. MacDougall)

2nd December. Coastal Walk. Coastal walk from North Berwick to Longniddry, mainly using the John Muir Way. Distance 19km, negligible ascent. OS Sheet 66/Explorer 351. (Contact: Alan Shotter)

"B" Walkers (bwalkers@6a.org.uk):

October 21st Cademuir Hill and river Tweed (8 miles) — Contact: Chris Rees

November 18th Muiravonside Country park (7.5 miles) — Contact: Margaret Shotter

December 9th Pentlands from Swanston (7.5 miles) — Contact: Jill Gregory

Please contact the organiser by the preceding Thursday to arrange transport.



Tuesday
7th November,
5th December
7.30pm
in the Church Centre

7 November: Longbourn—

Jo Baker

"If Elizabeth Bennet had the washing of her own petticoats, Sarah often thought, she'd most likely be a sight more careful with them."
In this irresistibly imagined belowstairs answer to *Pride and Prejudice*, the servants take center stage.

5 December: 60 Degrees North—

Malachy Tallack

The sixtieth parallel wraps itself around the lower reaches of Finland, Sweden, and Norway, it crosses the tip of Greenland and the southern coast of Alaska, and slices the great expanses of Russia and Canada in half.

Book Group contact: Church Office



The deadline for the next edition of the Newsletter is **Sunday, 26th November 2017.**

Please email submissions to magazine@6a.org.uk
or leave material in Church Centre letter box marked 'Newsletter.'