

# *St Columba's*

February / March 2021

# ST COLUMBA'S CHURCH OF SCOTLAND



**Minister:** Rev. Angus MacLeod, MA BD  
**Pont Street, London SW1X 0BD**  
**Telephone:** 020-7584 2321 **Fax:** 020-7584 5446  
**e-mail:** office@stcolumbas.org.uk minister@stcolumbas.org.uk  
**website:** www.stcolumbas.org.uk

## Sundays

Please join us for worship at 11 am. The crèche is open from 10.30 am for babies and children up to four years. It can be found in the lower hall. Older children are invited to join the Sunday school classes appropriate to their age. They leave the service with their teachers following the children's talk. For teenagers, the senior study group leave with their teachers following the Bible readings. After the service, we warmly welcome everyone to the congregational lunch in the lower hall. The two-course lunch costs £3.50 and there is no need to book.



## Dear Readers,

This edition of the magazine covers the anniversary of the start of Lockdown 1 – a sobering reminder if any were needed of the way in which our lives have been changed. Quiet determination in the face of limitations threads its way through these pages.

Rosa Somerville writes about moving forward positively despite clipped wings and narrowed horizons. David Stewart takes to his (fixed gear) bike to explore parts of London never previously reached. Up in Edinburgh Neil Price relishes a fast boat trip to the Isle of May, while Rona Black writes about another island, Lismore, and St Moluag's race in a coracle. Jean Stevenson has helped one school leaver take steps towards a city career.

We look forward to spring: enjoy daffodils in another poem from Betty McKellar. While we wait, keep up with some familiar St Columba's faces, even if we are currently prevented from seeing them in person.

We hope very much that you enjoy this issue.

With best wishes,

## The Editorial Team

**Cover photo:** by Susan Pym

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Copy for future editions should be sent to us at the Church Office, preferably by e-mail

# VESTRY LETTER



February/March 2021

Dear Friends,

Sometimes, when things look bleak, we hear someone say: "The only thing we can do is pray." An alternative that sets things in a more positive light: "The *first* thing we can do is pray." Prayer becomes not a last resort or substitute for action; rather, prayer is the source of action and stimulus to care. Earlier in the pandemic, the prayer-meditation *Praise Song for the Pandemic* was written by Christine Valters Paintner. It offers breadth and beauty for our prayers. To pray it is not the only thing to do; but it may be the most fruitful thing we do.

*Praise be the nurses and doctors, every medical staff bent over flesh to offer care, for lives saved and lives lost, for showing up either way:*

*Praise for the farmers, tilling soil, planting seeds so food can grow, an act of hope if ever there was:*

*Praise be the janitors and garbage collectors, the grocery store assistants, and the truck drivers barreling through long quiet nights:*

*Give thanks for bus drivers, delivery persons, postal workers, and all those keeping an eye on water, gas, and electricity:*

*Blessings on our leaders, making hard choices for the common good, offering words of assurance:*

*Celebrate the scientists, working away to understand the thing that plagues us, to find an antidote, all the*

*medicine makers, praise be the journalists keeping us informed:*

*Praise be the teachers, finding new ways to educate children from afar, and blessings on parents holding it together for them:*

*Blessed are the elderly and those with weakened immune systems, all those who worry for their health, praise for those who stay at home to protect them:*

*Blessed are the domestic violence victims, on lock down with abusers, the homeless and refugees:*

*Praise for the poets and artists, the singers and storytellers, all those who nourish with words and sound and colour:*

*Blessed are the ministers and therapists of every kind, bringing words of comfort:*

*Blessed are the ones whose jobs are lost, who have no savings, who feel fear of the unknown gnawing:*

*Blessed are those in grief, especially who mourn alone, blessed are those who have passed into the Great Night:*

*Praise for police and firefighters, paramedics, and all who work to keep us safe, praise for all the workers and caregivers of every kind:*

*Praise for the sound of notifications, messages from friends reaching across the distance, give thanks for laughter and kindness:*

*Praise be our four-footed companions, with no forethought or anxiety, responding only in love:*

*Praise for the seas and rivers, forests and stones who teach us to endure:*

*Give thanks for our ancestors, for the wars and plagues they endured and survived, their resilience is in our bones, our blood:*

*Blessed is the water that flows over our hands and the soap that helps keep them clean, each time a baptism:*

*Praise every moment of stillness and silence, so new voices can be heard, praise the chance at slowness:*

*Praise be the birds who continue to sing the sky awake each day, praise for the primrose poking yellow petals from dark earth, blessed is the air clearing overhead so one day we can breathe deeply again:*

*And when this has passed may we say that love spread more quickly than any virus ever could, may we say this was not just an ending but also a place to begin.*

Please keep the congregations of St Columba's, Pont Street and St Andrew's, Newcastle in your prayers. And may we all know that in time we will be able to return to the buildings we love and offer our prayers in company with each other. Till then, may God grant us the patience, perseverance, peace and laughter that is demanded from all of us at this time.

Angus MacLeod

# My shrinking world

by Rosa Somerville

A year ago to the day as I write I was flying to Rome to meet a friend from Australia. We enjoyed a few days exploring lesser known sites, the layers of history underneath St Peter's, poor headless St Cecilia in Trastevere, the Palazzo Farnese at night, Palazzo Altemps, the Synagogue and so on. We parted at Fiumicino to fly home, never guessing that we would not leave our countries – let alone our cities – again for over a year. Robert Louis Stevenson recommended travel and movement to “feel the needs and hitches of our life more nearly; to come down off this feather-bed of civilisation, and find the globe granite underfoot and strewn with cutting flints.” He knew restrictions of health, perhaps more than most; but even he could not have conceived of the world's inhabitants unable to move from one country to another.



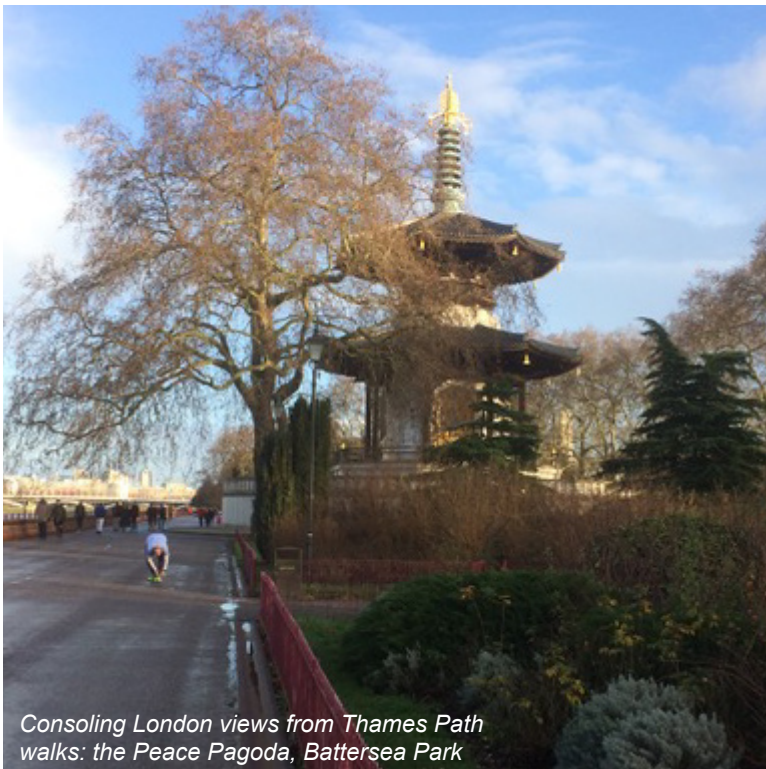
*The Angel of the North by Antony Gormley*

The “feather bed” was certainly pulled from under Britain on March 18th 2020, when the world we knew shrank from choice to essentials. Instead of the drone of aeroplanes at 4.30 am there was bird song; instead of a busy diary there were

just blank days. Things we had taken for granted were unobtainable. Not just material goods but attendance at work, church, family gatherings and meeting friends. Fear of infection kept us behind our front doors. Neighbourhoods set up contact groups to help those unable to go out to buy food, or afford it. We took solitary walks with the hope of meeting a friend or neighbour with whom to exchange greetings at a distance of 2 metres or a ‘Pym’ (ascertained by Hugh's family) – a sort of mini Angel of the North by both was useful.

Nature got more attention than usual. People bought dogs. Thursday evenings were an opportunity to thank the medical and caring staff who were on the ‘Front line’. It was quite therapeutic to clap, bang a saucepan, blow a whistle in their praise. Even vuvuzelas were brought back for this apparently. It was said the staff at King's College Hospital could hear us.

To keep in contact with each other, either for business or social reasons, we became familiar with the word ‘Zoom’. Like ‘tier’ and ‘lockdown’ some words assumed



*Consoling London views from Thames Path walks: the Peace Pagoda, Battersea Park*

# My shrinking world

Continued



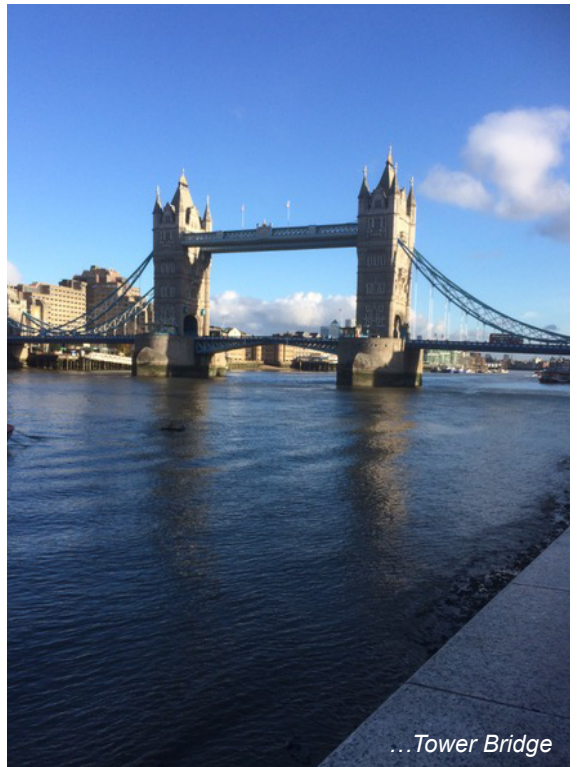
...the Walkie Talkie and HMS Belfast

I dipped into the Diary of Samuel Pepys (1665/6) to see how he felt in a similar situation, since he lived in London through years of plague. People spoke of “death and nothing else... the town is like a place distressed... the plague making us as cruel as dogs one to another.” He worried about infection from meeting people and going past plague houses. On a lighter note, as we took to walking, running and distance trackers, so did Pepys. He carried a “minute wach [sic] in my hand by which I am now come to see the distances of my way from Woolwich to Greenwich.” (These watches were apparently notoriously inaccurate!)

So to bring these musings more nearly to Pont Street – the online services, which were speedily put in place, have brought us together. I would vote this achievement by Angus and his support team as an abiding thread of strength and stability in our shrinking world. From my virtual pew I have appreciated the unity of each service – the readings, prayers, sermon, and the music. To me it is proof that the church indeed has a place in our lives today, tomorrow and forever, and that we are fortunate to belong to a caring, friendly congregation.

new meanings. In this case to zoom did not mean to hurry but to sit in front of a screen – learn which buttons to press, make sure you are muted and invisible. Then we can begin. Lecture, concert, etc – the ingenuity of groups grew in the face of disastrous finances. Meetings (including our Kirk Session) could be held. For these it was necessary to make sure the background was appropriate as you could be seen. Brush the (uncut) hair, put dog/baby/cat/out of the room and all would be well – unless the wifi went down because a small boy next door was streaming a film. Mobile phones and email became essential. Contacts round the world contributed their stories as they were hit by the virus and restricted. Without the magic cloud in the sky which holds all our secrets what would we have done?

There was a brief respite in July when museums opened again, we got used to booking a slot to visit exhibitions and collections, shops were full of bargains and the streets of London got busier; although it was a chastened Britain – we had felt those “cutting flints” sharply slicing our stability. Holidays and meetups with family and friends were difficult to plan, and sure enough, as infections increased, we went back into our boxes on December 15th. So that was Christmas cancelled pretty much. Robert Burns knew that “the best laid plans of mice and men gang aft agley.”



...Tower Bridge

# Remote music in Scotland during Covid

by Neil Price

As we all know, it has been difficult for young freelance musicians to keep their heads above water during the coronavirus crisis. They have had to adapt to any opportunity that might come their way in the 'virtual' world.

Scottish Natural Heritage came up with an inspired idea for young composers. Calling the project 'In Tune with Nature', they were 'calling on musicians of all genres – whether rock, rap, folk, classical or anything in between – to show their love of nature by writing music inspired by the coasts and waters of Scotland's beautiful nature reserves.'

They asked for pieces inspired by any one of ten of the nature reserves they administer around Scotland and offered a prize for a piece relating to each reserve. The prize was a cash award and the offer to make a short video to accompany the music, made on the relevant reserve.

We were delighted when our daughter Catriona Price (violinist and composer) was announced as the winner of the category relating to the Isle of May, an island at the mouth of the Firth of Forth in the North Sea. She had written a 5-minute piece for string quartet entitled *May Alone*.

She was asked to report to the Isle of May on 29 September to make the video. Occasional tourist boats go there from Anstruther, but how to get to Anstruther in the far East Neuk of Fife? The phone rings: "Dad, how do I get to Anstruther?" to which I replied (as soft fathers do): "Oh, OK. I'll give you a lift." I needed little persuasion having looked at the island for four years whilst living in Crail in the 1970s, but never having gone there. I had to promise to make myself scarce whilst they were filming!

Apart from the 3 SNH wardens, the Isle of May (shaped like a mile-long cigar) is uninhabited now that the lighthouse is fully automated. However, until the 14th century, it was home to a thriving monastery, which only came to an end when



*Catriona with Crail in the distance*

the monks suffered martyrdom at the hands of invading Vikings. Now, its most renowned inhabitants from April to August each year are 23,000 pairs of puffins, as well as many other seabirds and a colony of seals who breed there in the autumn. It turned out to be the most glorious day – a real highlight, much needed in a fairly grim year. The weather was perfect with just a gentle breeze and continuous sunshine. Leaving the film-makers to their own devices, I covered all the paths on the island, but the highlight came after all the

tourists left and we had the place to ourselves for 2 hours (the film-makers needed more time).

We were taken to the lighthouse and up the carpeted tower staircase via the North Lighthouse Board boardroom (the Victorians provided for everything). Catriona had her fiddle with her (she takes it literally everywhere!). The tower clearly had an amazing acoustic. Half way up, she sat on a window ledge and just started playing unaccompanied Bach. I melted, in a fatherly sort of way, but I was sure that Bach would have approved! A great musical experience in the remotest of places.

SNH had booked a 'rib' to take us back to Anstruther. What had taken an hour to get there took 10 minutes on return – exhilarating! – followed by a jolly good fish supper sitting on the pier.

An unforgettable experience. Must return next year when the puffins are present!

Catriona's piece, inspired by puffins and monks, with the resulting video (but father safely out of sight) is available on YouTube at:

<https://bit.ly/38VBcEa>



*Cliffs and lighthouse*

# Cycling in lockdown

by David Stewart

My 'old banger' was stolen from a supposedly secure bicycle bay in the car park behind my flat at the end of summer 2019. The home contents insurer (Age UK – yes, I know I don't look that old...) paid out generously, and a brand new bottom-of-the-range replacement was purchased from Fudges cycling shop on Harrow Road. Four weeks later, it was also stolen – despite the security lock being checked by the pleasant young sales assistant.

As I didn't see myself using a bike during the winter months that followed, a decision was made to postpone a second replacement until the springtime of 2020. Happily, Age UK paid out a second time.

By the third week of March, purchase of another bike became a matter of priority. Guess what, for lots of other London residents this was a shared priority. They were flying off the shelves (well, racks) and the second-hand market – via the internet – was seeing a rapid churn as well.

Fortuitously, a young Italian working for Shell had a fairly new one to get rid of, because he was being flown out (relocated) that evening to Azerbaijan. We met on Shepherd's Bush Green, a cursory inspection and introduction to its workings took place, and a fairly modest sum changed hands. I was good to go.

The roads and streets of London in the early weeks of (what we must now call) lockdown Mark I were a pleasure on two wheels. Initially it was what one was described as millionaires' cycling – you had the place to yourself. A routine developed on weekends. If the weather was reasonable, and the mood was upon me, I would head out on Saturday afternoon. If neither of those boxes were ticked, it would be Sunday.

It was more often the latter. On a bright Sabbath morn, the routine was: up early, a few admin tasks, breakfast, 11 a.m. streamed service, 'virtual coffee' phone call to a housebound congregation member (in Wimbledon), and by 12.30 clad in either Lycra (thoughtfully donated by an experienced cycling friend in Belfast) or shorts and T-shirt (if the sun was warm; the padded Lycra bottoms still went underneath, saddle sores not being terribly inviting), inexpensive but essential helmet, and off we went.

Initially, the four points of the compass would be covered each month. That original plan required adaption when one realised that it gets unpleasantly hilly on most routes north from Paddington. Since I possess what is known as a one speed bike (no gears), that is not a great experience for the older cyclist.

East was fun, because there were many famous areas with which I was familiar by name only – so exploring Bethnal Green, Stepney, Bow and Poplar was novel. To be there on VE Monday in early May, cycling slowly past the end of a modest residential road with a blue plaque indicating it was where Dame Vera Lynn grew up did feel particularly poignant.

Sometimes the zeal of a new convert meant a little more could be bitten off than was chewable in terms of distance; for example, discovering that East Ham is not immediately after West Ham, but there are a couple of areas in between. Several times, weary legs and a tiring mind were atop the one speeder as it made its way – directly, none of the meandering down nooks and crannies of the outward journey – back towards NW8.

Another early conclusion was to avoid places with Hill in their name, but not before Muswell, Streatham, Forest and (worst of all) Denmark had been tackled; the last of those was the only time the towel was thrown in, a 'dismount and push' strategy proving more sensible.

Earlier use of the old banger had largely been for commuting convenience: journeys that were too far to walk, but where it seemed lazy to take public transport. Now there is a sense of being a real cyclist – for both exercise and discovery. Fifteen years in London, and I was properly learning about my city of residence for the first time – one part being there are only so many major arteries in and out, whether they be Essex Road, Caledonian Road, Harrow Road or the A3.

When attending at services resumed, it was nice to be starting from Pont Street. Occasionally it would be east or west along the Thames, but more frequently the initial direction would be south. An unfamiliar suburb would be chosen to head towards, distractions to places of interest would occur (mews, period buildings and churches all qualify), before the advanced hour and/or weariness in the legs dictated it was time to head for home, and refreshment. Once back there, nice to look at a map and retrace the route.

A weekend now without a decent length of cycle ride, so long as the weather is clement, feels like an opportunity missed. Hopefully this simple pleasure will continue well into 2021. I commend it to you.

# Sermon

## Sermon preached at St Columba's Pont Street by Revd Angus MacLeod On Friday 25<sup>th</sup> December 2020 at 11am, Christmas morning

Under Tier 4 regulations, the Bethlehem Arms are shut; shepherds are furloughed; Wise Men face a travel ban. And Mary & Joseph? Unable to take part in the *New Parents* webinar because – no Zoom at the Inn. Christmas 2020? Really?

In 1957 Theodor “Dr Seuss” Geisel wrote the children’s book *How the Grinch Stole Christmas*: a comic, rhyming critique of Christmas commercialisation; a shout out, plea for the *true meaning of Christmas*. The *Whos* inhabit the fictitious town of *Whoville*: they love and celebrate Christmas with all the trimmings – trees, lights, stockings, feasts and singing. The Grinch hates Christmas: “*Don’t ask why – perhaps his heart was two sizes too small?*”

One Christmas Eve he decides it is time to do something awful. In the wee small hours, he slides into Whoville and steals Christmas – house to house, stuffing sacks with wrapped presents, ransacking fridges and the feasts therein, even stuffing decorated trees up and out the chimney. Till the only thing left is a trail of crumbs from the snacks laid out for Santa.

The *thief* retires to his hilltop lair, Mt Crumpit and prepares to toss the whole lot into the abyss. Momentarily he pauses – to listen for the wailing of the town as they wake up to their loss. Yet, he is bamboozled to hear the unexpected:

*“But the sound wasn’t sad  
Why, this sounded merry!  
It couldn’t be so!  
But it WAS merry! Very!*

*Every Who down in Whoville, the tall and the small,  
Was singing! Without any presents at all!  
He hadn’t stopped Christmas from coming!  
IT CAME!  
Somehow or other, it came just the same!*

For the Grinch it is a moment of epiphany:

*“It came without ribbons, it came without tags.  
It came without packages, boxes, or bags.  
Maybe Christmas (he thought) doesn’t come from a store.  
Maybe Christmas perhaps means a little bit more.”*

In this strange year that concluded for some with the chant, *Stop the steal*, is Christmas 2020 stolen? Is Covid-19, our contemporary *Grinch* – constraining households, making us anxious and fearful; church behind closed doors – all of which undeniably hurts. Question: *If the Grinch has visited us, broken in; what, if anything, remains? And do we still have a song to sing?*

A church friend sent me this week, words from another faith tradition: “A *remote* Christmas is not what anyone wanted. As a Muslim, I’ve already gone through a remote Ramadan, and two remote Eids. I know it’s tough. Although nothing can compare to an in-person iftar or Eid, where you feel united with friends and strangers alike, doing it on Zoom has forced me to think about what really unites us – a shared spiritual and emotional experience, not just a shared carpet. (*Adeem Younis is founder and trustee of Penny Appeal*).

As part of a prayer written by Christian Aid Scotland reminds us:  
*Even if we cannot gather in person: Emmanuel,  
God with us:  
Even if some Christmas traditions have had to go: Emmanuel, God with us:  
Even if we might not get to hug family and friends,  
Even if we cannot sing carols beside each other,  
Even if Christmas cheer is harder this year:  
Emmanuel, God with us*

As Christians, Christmas is neither cancelled/ nor stolen. On the contrary; stepping away from some of the familiar *stuff* may open the door to a



# Sermon

continued

deeper appreciation of what/why we celebrate. Yes, the pandemic has definitely stolen *some of the Christmas tinsel* – rituals, gatherings, loved ones – with their attendant blessings. But it has not stolen and cannot steal Christ.

For the things we have lost awhile are only pointers – road signs to a deeper hope and more enduring love. God with us, forever – in shadow, and in glory.

If we acknowledge what we miss, maybe we discover what we value – a Grinch-like epiphany of what really counts: health, friendship, the recovery of others, love, truth, beauty. Seldom the things that can be bought or sold.

Christmas is not stolen – because you can't steal the birth of Jesus or the meaning of his life, death

and resurrection. Bethlehem is just the opening chapter for the storyteller, who would one day speak of his loving father, his *Abba*, coming, as a *thief in the night*; and would finally meet his own death, in the company of two thieves. Because we hold precious that whole life, Christmas is, and always will be. our un-stolen treasure. Thanks be to God and Happy Christmas.

Amen

*(I am grateful to Rt Revd John Chalmers, former Moderator of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland for introducing me to How the Grinch Stole Christmas, via his article in Life & Work, December 2020.)*



*Filippino Lippi (c. 1457 – 1504) The Nativity with Two Angels, National Galleries of Scotland*

# Daffodils

by Betty McKellar



*Three cheers for daffodils in the chill days of March,  
bold yellow daffodils in the sparse spring grass  
gold-glinting daffodils drawn up from the earth  
by cold-fingered sun shafts on pearl-touched mornings  
under the trees at 'Conveth'.*

*No violet modesty  
no snowdrop fragility  
no soft cream humility  
from these drum-majorettes –  
they come bearing banners – 'Down with Depression!'  
all chorus girl manners and sun-burst aggression,  
flaunting their brightness in riots of gaiety  
and blowing their own trumpets  
with the brashness of brass,  
diluting the winter blackness that's left in us  
drawing grey lowness out of the depth of us  
raising a smile and a hope in the core of us  
flower girl goes,  
they bring out the best in us.*

# Saint Moluag

by Rona Black

In one of her excellent weekly bulletins, our hardworking session clerk suggested she knew little of the life of St Moluag. I hope this note will fill the gap.

St Moluag is the patron saint of Argyll. He was born into a noble family in Ireland between 500 and 520 AD and felt the call to become a Christian missionary. He travelled to the west of Scotland at the same time as St Columba, and his first landfall was the island of Lismore, an island north of Oban in Loch Linnhe. The gaelic name for Lismore (Lios Mòr) means great garden as the soil is fertile and the climate mild. Moluag founded his first monastery on Lismore and the current Church of Scotland on the island stands on the site of Moluag's building.

After establishing a Christian community on Lismore, Moluag moved to the mainland and established other Christian communities at Rosemarkie on the Black Isle and Mortlach now called Dufftown, as well as three churches in Aberdeenshire which bear his name in Tarland, Migvie and Durriss. St Moluag's in Tarland is one of the very few churches

our current moderator Dr Martin Fair has been able to visit during his moderatorial year because of covid-related restrictions. Moluag died in Rosemarkie in 592 after a very long life. He was buried there but later his heart was removed and returned to Lismore.

Today the parishes of Appin and Lismore are a joint charge. On a Sunday, the service in Appin starts at 10 am and afterwards the minister drives two miles along a single track road to Port Appin where the ferryman who runs the passenger ferry to Lismore is waiting for him. He takes the ferry to Port Ramsay at the north end of Lismore, and a member of the congregation then drives him along to St Moluag's Church of Scotland where he conducts the service at noon.

Lismore and Appin are beautiful peaceful corners of the west of Scotland. In 1978 my mother and I bought a little cottage in Port Appin, the old ferry house, as a lung for teenage children. Today that cottage is owned by my son so my visits to that very special corner of Scotland continue.

Optional note for Sunday School teachers. This apocryphal story went down well in Scottish Sunday school many years ago, but may be too blood thirsty for St Columba's children. Moluag and Columba were teenage boys who were great friends and had travelled from Ireland to become missionaries in Scotland. One fine spring day they were in Loch Linnhe, each in their own little coracle, and they spied the island of Lismore which looked green and inviting. They paddled closer and realised it would be a wonderful place for a monastery, so they decided to have a competition and that whoever touched the island first would be the one who would settle there. They both paddled as fast as they could and as they grew close, it looked as if Columba would win. But Moluag had a plan. He drew from his belt the sharp knife he used for cleaning fish, sliced the top off his little finger and threw it on to the island. Columba graciously admitted defeat and left his friend to put a docken leaf on his sore finger. Columba then paddled round the north end of Mull and found Iona.

The rest is history.



*St Moluag's Church of Scotland Lismore*

# Lockdown legacy

by Jean Stevenson

I am one of the many lucky ones whose life was not materially affected by the recent and continuing challenges posed by the pandemic. I attend many meetings, participate in a number of fora, attend exercise classes etc and these seemed to transfer almost seamlessly to Zoom, Google Meet, Skype or Webex Events with the smallest of disruption to me, although I still prefer real rather than virtual interaction. It was not so for school and university students who were no longer able to go to school or college, take important exams, or look forward to work experience and internships. I chair a Schools Group, which is part of the charitable and educational work done by the Livery Company of which I am a member, and therefore I was particularly interested in how we could help school students and what would happen to a programme that my Livery Company was funding (the Gateway to the City Programme) which was run by another charity, the Brokerage, on our behalf.

The Brokerage was quick to respond to the challenge and started the process of moving as many as possible of their interactions with students on line and I helped them to cajole a number of people to participate in Master Classes on line, speaking to and interacting with students on the programme. These Master Classes were recorded and it is hoped that in the future they can be made available to the schools we work with to engage with future students on such varied subjects as careers in the City in Marketing and Communication, Leadership and Resilience, Green Finance and Banking. The Brokerage also initiated a new structured mentoring programme to try to help students prepare for the world of work and I volunteered to be one of the first mentors to test drive it and see how it worked.

Of course everything had to be virtual and we had an initial training session where we were instructed about the rules of engagement/code of conduct, taken through the eight week programme and dealt with any questions or concerns. The programme was for year 13 (last year of school) London state school students who had obtained good grades in English and Maths at GCSE, were interested in careers in financial, professional or related services and had either been eligible for free school meals or whose parents had not been to a UK university. We were introduced to the STACK skills assessment (self-awareness, teamwork, attitude, communication and knowledge) which each student was asked to complete before the first mentoring session and on the basis of this assessment the mentor and mentee together mapped out what the future sessions would cover. Each STACK heading had several topics associated with it and there was guidance around each topic for both mentor and mentee and suggestions about what work should be done prior to each session.

In the past I had a mentor myself and I have children of my own but I was not sure either experience qualified me to guide and encourage young adults in a period their lives of great uncertainty and with no precedent to refer to. However, nothing ventured, nothing gained and the Brokerage checked in with both mentee and mentor during the programme to make sure everything was going well. I loved the experience and looked forward to our weekly sessions and I believe the feeling was mutual. I learnt how the week of my student panned out (one of the exercises was to share a week long diary as background to a session we had on time management) and that led us completely off piste to talk about exercise, playing computer

games, films and literature. As well as covering off the topics in formal sessions, my mentee told me that she had taken away a lot of tips from our more informal chats about life, and an appreciation of how to look at issues from different perspectives that she would otherwise have been oblivious of. The best news was that in the morning of the A Level results, I received an email from my mentee with the news that she had got in to Oxford and that she wanted to keep in touch. We made a tentative plan to meet up in the Christmas holidays to discuss how the term had gone but crucially to meet in person. Sadly, since I began this article Christmas has come and gone without any possibility of meeting. However, we have been in email correspondence and she is finding life at Oxford quite pressurised and was spending a good part of the Christmas vacation not only in catching up with London friends but also preparing for mock exams in January.

I hope that by next summer the pandemic and its impact will seem like a distant memory but I am afraid that there is still some way to go. What I will remember vividly is my mentoring experience which I would certainly be happy to repeat and would encourage anyone who can to do the same. Eight weekly sessions plus training seems like a long time and a big commitment but goes by in a flash. The benefit that you and your mentee can derive is potentially immense. Legacies come in many forms but this one is a two way street. I have spoken to the Brokerage and they would be keen for me to repeat the experience. I am also now talking to a literacy charity about how I can help, but that is another story!

# Faces of St Columba's

1

1 YEAR AGO



2



3



4



1. Looking back to the January 2020 staff party (parties have been thin on the ground recently): Theresa, Catherine, Lucy, Ben, Charlotte, Angus, Michael and Bernadette (missing Paul).

3. Elsie and Sarah look on as Beth lights the fourth Advent candle. The service of lessons and carols on December 20 was to be the final one attended by members of the congregation before we went back into lockdown.

2. On Sunday 13 December we welcomed our Sunday School children back to church for the first time since March 2020.

4. Meanwhile in the world of work, Elder and BBC Health Editor Hugh Pym interviews Dr Alice Carter, intensive care consultant at University College Hospital. She and her husband Dr Neil MacDonald (anaesthetist at Royal London) are on the frontline caring for COVID patients. Both attend St Columba's.

# Baptisms • Marriages • Deaths

## BAPTISMS

*"Suffer the little children to come unto me"*

13<sup>th</sup> December Charles Lawrence Redgrove Hankinson, London NW6

## MARRIAGES

*"Except the Lord build the house they labour in vain that build it"*

24<sup>th</sup> October Francis Christopher Jonathan Chauncy to  
Alice Caroline Hush, London SE5

## DEATHS

*"Blessed are they that die in the Lord"*

November Veronica Blackwood, Shoulden CT14



## IT'S TIME TO RENEW YOUR MAGAZINE SUBSCRIPTION

For information,  
please contact the Church Office

St Columba's Church Office, Pont Street, London SW1X 0BD

# Church Diary: 7<sup>th</sup> February to 4<sup>th</sup> April 2021

At the time of publishing, we are live streaming via our website [www.stcolumbas.org.uk/livestream](http://www.stcolumbas.org.uk/livestream).  
Please keep in touch with the Church Office or website to check if services can be attended in person.

Additional arrangements for Holy Week will be published nearer the time.

<b>7th February</b>	<b>11.00am</b>	<b>Morning Service</b> Revd Angus MacLeod MA BD
<b>14th February</b>	<b>11.00am</b>	<b>Morning Service</b> Revd Alistair Cumming
<b>21st February</b>	<b>11.00am</b>	<b>Morning Service</b> Revd Angus MacLeod MA BD
<b>28th February</b>	<b>11.00pm</b>	<b>Morning Service</b> Revd Angus MacLeod MA BD
<b>7th March</b>	<b>11.00am</b>	<b>Morning Service</b> Revd Angus MacLeod MA BD
<b>14th March</b>	<b>11.00am</b>	<b>Morning Service</b> Rt Revd Dr Martin Fair, Moderator of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland
<b>21st March</b>	<b>11.00am</b>	<b>Morning Service</b> Guest preacher
<b>28th March</b>	<b>11.00am</b>	<b>Morning Service</b> Revd Angus MacLeod MA BD
<b>1st April</b>	<b>8.30pm</b>	<b>Mauddy Thursday Service</b> Revd Angus MacLeod MA BD
<b>2nd April</b>	<b>11.00am</b>	<b>Good Friday Service</b> Revd Angus MacLeod MA BD
<b>4th April</b>	<b>11.00am</b>	<b>Easter Service</b> Revd Angus MacLeod MA BD

# Prayer

*And the people stayed home.*

*And read books, and listened, and rested,  
and exercised, and made art, and played games,  
and learned new ways of being, and were still.*

*And listened more deeply.*

*Some meditated, some prayed, some danced.*

*Some met their shadows.*

*And the people began to think differently.*

*And the people healed.*

*And, in the absence of people living in ignorant,  
dangerous, mindless, and heartless ways,  
the earth began to heal.*

*And when the danger passed, and the people joined together again,  
they grieved their losses, and made new choices, and dreamed new images,  
and created new ways to live and heal the earth fully,  
as they had been healed.*

(Kitty O'Meara, retired schoolteacher, Wisconsin, USA)

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