

St Columba's

June/July 2021



ST COLUMBA'S CHURCH OF SCOTLAND



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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.



Contents

Regulars

Vestry letter	3
Sermon	8/9
Baptisms, marriages, deaths	14
Church diary	15
Prayers	16

Features

Vaccinating in 2021	4
Wild in Barnes	5
U3A	6
The Wisdom of Solomon	7
Desert Island Discs	10
Duke of Edinburgh at St Columba's	11
New associate minister	14

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

Dear Readers,

Looking forward to summer weather, serious concerns are tempered by more light-hearted pastimes. Our focus is still on the roll out of the anti-Covid vaccine and Rona Black gives an encouraging first-hand account of time spent as a volunteer vaccinator at her local Covid 19 vaccination hub. Just as importantly, perhaps, our younger members spent a happy day simply messing around in Barnes, and our second Desert Island Disc castaways get away from it all with a selection of favourite music. Do get in touch if you'd like to share your own list.

Lilias Gillies writes about the University of the Third Age and the pleasures of stretching the grey matter. David Natzler offers food for thought in his article on the Wisdom of Solomon, the second of his series on the books of the Apocrypha.

David Stewart looks back to December 2015, when St Columba's members scrubbed up and turned out in droves to welcome Her Majesty the Queen and the Duke of Edinburgh. What a day we all had! Looking forward, we are delighted to welcome our new Associate Minister William McLaren, who introduces himself on page 14.

We hope you enjoy this summer issue.

With best wishes,

The Editorial Team

Cover photo: *Bushcraft in Barnes*

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VESTRY LETTER



June/July 2021

Dear Friends,

In the previous Magazine (April/May 2021) we remembered the 80th Anniversary of the destruction by enemy action of the original St Columba's, on 10th May 1941. This year, on the Sunday nearest the anniversary, we thought a little about how the congregation at the time must have felt and how they reacted. Shortly after the devastation the minister, Revd Dr Scott offered a prayer to the congregation as they worshipped in their new, temporary, Jehangir Hall home. First, he gave thanks for the old building, dedicated in 1884:

"We yield thee humble and hearty thanks for all that thy house has meant to a great multitude at home and around the world. For the ministry of the Word and Sacraments, bringing the bread of life to hungering souls. For the awakening of men and

women to the truth of eternal things. For the joyful fellowship of the faithful and for the sacred memories and memorials of the blessed dead. Above all for the living communion with them triumphant in glory, and with thee the God and father of us all."

Then he prayed for the time ahead. "We give ourselves to thee and yield ourselves to thy will and guidance for the unknown future. And when in thy providence the house of stone is built again with human hands, enable those who remain to illumine it with faith, to adorn it with love and to bring into it the treasures of wisdom gathered in these times of testing."

Eighty years on the *house of stone is built again*, and we are *those who remain*. Though not on a comparable scale to the wartime generation, we too face an unknown future. There will be questions to ask and decisions to make about how congregational life unfolds, emerging cautiously from the pandemic. There will be some activities that we renew, and others that will not restart after this interruption to a previous normality. There may be some things that are completely new to us. For some, the pandemic will be the catalyst for a different set of priorities, or a discovery of what is truly important. For others, there will be a longing just to get back to the things that formerly gave life its satisfaction and joy. How we handle those differing moods, agendas and aspirations, at St Columba's, Pont Street and St Andrew's, Newcastle, will require patience and sensitivity. On a very positive note, we will have the pleasure and responsibility of welcoming our new Associate Minister, Revd William McLaren, whose Service of Introduction is scheduled for the evening of Thursday 8th July 2021.

Whatever emerges, whatever new chapter we compose together, may the prayer for our house of stone be – "to illumine it with faith, to adorn it with love and to bring into it the treasures of wisdom gathered in these times of testing."

Wishing you much light in these summer months,

Angus MacLeod

Vaccinating in 2021

Rona Black in the thick of it

In January 2021, one of the local practices in my part of London became a Covid 19 vaccination hub for three south London practices. I know the GPs in the area well, and therefore volunteered my services. I am still registered with the General Medical Council which was step one. There was then a list of 21 training modules required. I was excused 'Moving and Handling level one' and 'Preventing Radicalisation level one', but completed others on line, followed by an assessment. An excellent brush up of skills involved in treating anaphylaxis was included for which the required pass level was 100% – totally justified.

We are four retired doctors among a team of around 25 working general practitioners and our sessions run for three hours morning, afternoon or evening. The rota depends on delivery of vaccine which can be changed at short notice so flexibility is essential. We have seven rooms allocated in the practice, one for each working vaccinator, where those attending for vaccination are registered on the pinnacle computer system and, if suitable, vaccinated. For one vaccine, a 15 minute waiting time is required after administration,

whereas for another no wait is needed. 150 patients are called for each session so one is expected to deal with patient consultation and obtaining consent, computer entry, drawing up and delivering vaccine for 20+ patients per session. No paperwork is required, other than giving each patient a small card with details of the date and vaccine administered.

Initially we were vaccinating the members of the community aged 70 plus, and the process was relatively slow, especially when one asked about current medication, and when one asked for access to an upper arm. The elderly are well wrapped up in January. However as we worked down the age groups there was less time needed for drug history and baring an arm, and more for discussion of possible side effects and characteristics of the two vaccines available. My part of south London is comfortably racially diverse, and the range of questions was wide. Attendees who had themselves had Covid or who had watched a friend or relative suffer were touchingly grateful and relieved to be given the vaccine. Some attendees were anxious

and required reassurance before they were content to proceed. It was helpful in these instances that I had had Covid in the early days of the pandemic and could offer an opinion on Covid itself versus side effects of either vaccine.

It was really satisfying to see a patient who came in shaking with apprehension leave with a dose of vaccine in their upper arm and a smile on their face. Also in many cases a proud sticker stating "I've had my Covid vaccination." Real enthusiasts produced a mobile phone and asked for the needle going into the skin to be recorded.

I have found this volunteer task hugely satisfying. It is such a pleasure to be part of a medical team again doing something really worthwhile. I have a great respect for the regular GPs I work alongside as they try to keep the routine work of the practice going. My honorary contract has just been extended until the end of June when we hope to have completed a very large proportion of first vaccinations and many second doses. Who could have predicted this a year ago?

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please contact the Church Office

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

Wild in Barnes

Gary Wallis on fresh air and fun

The intimation read by Angus in the run up to this event set high expectations and places quickly filled up for Bushcraft in Barnes on 25 April! Before we knew it we had reached our limit of 15 children, aged between four and 12, and their grown-up(s). Perhaps it was the hint of normality after a long Sunday School hiatus or the prospect of fire-starting and marshmallow toasting. Either way excitement filled the air as everyone arrived at the woodland venue, glad to be out of the logjam over Putney Bridge and ready to build dens, make fires and toast marshmallows! The sun was even shining for us.

Wendy, our very knowledgeable host, started off by showing us how to build various types of shelters using the natural resources around us. The children were then tasked with building their own. Two teams were quickly formed and the competition was on! Careful not to give too much away, lookouts were stationed but they were no match for the little people who were on reconnaissance between the two teams. Victory was declared all round as both shelters passed the test!



Next up was fire starting, which caused a sharp intake of breath from most of the grown-ups and a chatter of disbelief and excitement from the children. We learned how a pine cone dipped in tallow makes an excellent firelighter as does birch bark, although the latter is quite smoky. After some very important safety guidelines and close adult supervision, the children sat in a circle each with their own log base,

cotton wool ball and fire-steels. They were all able to ignite their cotton wool on the log by rubbing the steels together to create sparks. A great success and even a request to take the fire-steels to start fires at home (simultaneously denied by all parents)! After the fire-steels were all carefully counted back in by Wendy, it was on to the main event - a camp fire, toasted marshmallows and s'mores! Twigs, barks and branches of all shapes and sizes were collected and sorted with everyone working together to build a spectacular fire ready for toasting.

A seemingly endless supply of marshmallows were toasted and sandwiched between chocolate coated digestives to make s'mores. There were even enough for the grown-ups to enjoy. Wendy recounted some of her own bushcraft tales as we all enjoyed the afternoon sun and an opportunity to catch up.

Our thanks go to the Friends of St Columba's whose generous donations in 2018 and 2019 funded this activity.



University of the Third Age

Lilias Gillies on lifelong learning

The University of the Third Age, generally known as the U3A, is an organisation of adults who wish to come together to continue learning in their retirement. The idea was born in France and is now found across the world. In Europe local groups are usually attached to universities and are more or less the extramural activities of the university. In Britain it started in 1982 and the 1,057 branches are all member-led independent charities. Members meet together in groups, in members' houses or in community halls, to learn together a subject of their choice and have fun. Members do their own research, and the leading of the groups, and there are no paid tutors. For many years now it has been almost the only form of adult education available across UK.

The subjects chosen might be Current Affairs, with one member leading off on something in the news followed by general discussion. A variant might be Talking Shop, where one member hosts with tea and cake and has two subjects ready to start the conversation which can then veer widely. Languages are popular, with beginner, second level and conversation groups. Art of various kinds and crafts of various kinds, bridge, walking at all levels, exercise and gardening are all common, as is history, modern and earlier, local or other countries and genealogy. Branches usually have a programme of meetings with outside speakers open to all members. A membership of one branch entitles you to attend a group in another branch.

In Wandsworth I have led an Ancient History group for a number of years. The membership has changed gradually over the years but we have always had 8-10 members.

They do not all come every week which is good as it is a bit tight to fit 10 round the table. We have studied Egypt, Mesopotamia, Greece, Canaan, Rome in the republic and following the Empire to Byzantium through the Crusades and up to the Ottoman conquest. I attended Birkbeck for a number of years after retirement and had acquired a bit of knowledge and at least knew where to look to find sources for the Eastern Mediterranean. But we were democratic and the group decided which area we would do next.

We decided we wanted to do areas which were not in school curricula. We tackled India with none of us as experts. We managed to find a very readable History of India by John Keay which we read together and discussed. One of our members was very good at finding children's books copiously illustrated, which added interest. The British Museum has a good coin collection from India in a corner of the Oriental Gallery with images of emperors adding reality to what seemed a bit like fairy stories.

We studied early Britain and followed both England and Scotland through the Iron Age, Roman times and on to the Anglo Saxons, discovering the so-called Dark Ages were not so dark. The monks travelled widely, over Europe for their own learning but also in Christian missions to northern Europe. We found human government behaviour in Egypt, Byzantium, India, was the same in Britain. Conquerors killed off all the possible heirs and married into the previous royal family. This may have ceased now but situations are still so similar that our conversations often strayed into modern times.

We have made friends, learnt new things, enjoyed holidays and trips out, as thousands of others do across the world. It is the best thing to do if you are newly retired, moved into a new district or recently bereaved. During Covid we have continued online which works well and allows people whose frailty prevents them going out to remain involved. Perhaps in future we shall be maintaining contact online as well as meeting personally.



Boating, Luxor, tomb of Mentuemhet, Third Intermediate Period to Late Period, Dynasties 25-26, c. 690-664 BC, limestone, pigment - Oriental Institute Museum, University of Chicago

The Wisdom of Solomon

Questions and answers from David Natzler

We know that King Solomon was very wise. His name is a byword for wisdom, particularly among kings, where the bar is perhaps not very high. The 10th century Crown of the Holy Roman Emperor in Vienna (right) has an enamel plaque of King Solomon next to that of King David. King James the Sixth and First loved to be praised as Solomonic and was portrayed by Rubens on the ceiling of the Banqueting House in Whitehall as a Solomonic figure, recognisable by the twisted barley-sugar columns known as Solomonic. The Judgement of Solomon in the case of the dispute between two women each claiming to be the mother of a baby has been frequently illustrated.

Some of us will recall the verse: "King David and King Solomon led merry merry lives,

And flirted all the afternoon with other people's wives;

Until in the evening when

conscience gave them qualms

King Solomon wrote the Proverbs and King David wrote the Psalms."

How wise Solomon was we will never know. But his reputation meant that for centuries after his reign books of "wisdom" were freely attributed to his hand, including *Proverbs* and *Ecclesiastes* in the canonical Old Testament, and the *Wisdom of Solomon* now relegated to the Apocrypha.

The *Wisdom of Solomon* is abbreviated in some works of reference as "Wisd.". This summons up distracting thoughts for some of us of a very different annual work of reference that no cricket lover can be without. Best avoided here.

The *Wisdom of Solomon* is not very different from those other wisdom books retained in the Bible. It was probably written in the 1st century BC by an Alexandrian Jew, blending Jewish religion and Greek philosophy. The second half is largely an account of God's treatment of Israel up until Exodus,



putting unusual emphasis not only on the punishment fitting the crime, but also the beneficial lessons to be drawn from the punishment of others. It is also full of sacred poetry – not just of wrath but divine love:

"But thou art merciful to all, for thou canst do all things, and thou dost overlook men's sins, that they may repent.

"For thou lovest all things that exist, and hast loathing for none of the things which thou hast made, for thou wouldst not have made anything if thou hadst hated it. ...

"Thou sparest all things, for they are thine, O Lord who lovest the living." (11: 23-24, 26)

My cousin Otto was a distinguished art potter, or ceramicist as I have learned to call it. His wife Gertrud drew the most delicate of pots out of the lumpiness of clay. That may predispose me to pottery metaphors, as well as to *The Great Pottery Throwdown*. In Romans 9:21 Paul asks:

"Has the potter no right over the clay, to make out of the same lump one vessel for beauty and another for menial use?"

Paul is directly reflecting the Wisdom of Solomon, 15: 7:

"For when a potter kneads the soft earth and laboriously moulds each

vessel for our service, he fashions out of the same clay both the vessels that serve clean uses and those for contrary uses, making all in like manner; but which shall be the use of each of these the worker in clay decides." Other passages from the Old Testament sources use the metaphor of the potter for divine creation, of course, but none I think with such clarity. We are all fashioned from the same clay.

The first part of the book is devoted to a more conventional praise of the path of righteousness guided by Wisdom. Whether Sapiientia in Latin or Sophia in Greek, she is definitely a woman, as illustrators have always picked up. Hedonists are reproved, those who say, *"let us crown ourselves with rosebuds before they wither"* (2:8). Here is perhaps the origin of Shakespeare's warning that, *"Rough winds do shake the darling buds of May, and Summer's lease hath all too short a date"*, and of course Herrick's, *"Gather ye Rose-buds while ye may..."*

Throughout, Wisdom is poetically and heroically imagined: *"she is a breath of the power of God, and a pure emanation of the glory of the Almighty...she is a reflection of eternal light, a spotless mirror of the working of God, and an image of his goodness...she is more beautiful than the sun, and excels every constellation of the stars...."* (7: 25-6, 29)

This exaltation of Wisdom as a female personification or attribute of God must have been a strong influence on later Marianism. Some of the poetry and painting around the Virgin Mary can jar on those brought up with Protestant sensibilities. Maybe the Wisdom of Solomon offers divine Wisdom as an alternative focus of glorification: and a female one to boot. It is not Solomon whom we should be glorifying but the personification of Wisdom.

Sermon

Sermon preached at St Columba's Pont Street on Sunday 9th May 2021 at 11am, 6th Sunday of Easter

"As the Father has loved me, so I have loved you; abide in my love." John 15:9

This Sunday, the 6th Sunday of Easter, lies between two anniversary dates. Yesterday, the 76th Anniversary of VE Day – the end of World War II hostilities, at least in Europe. Tomorrow, the 10th May, will be eighty years exactly since the original St Columba's Church, dedicated in 1884, was destroyed by an incendiary bomb on a Saturday night. The timing meant that worshippers arriving for service the next morning met with the full impact of the building's devastation. Minister and Kirk Session moved swiftly and by the following week convened for worship in the Jehangir Hall, part of the Imperial Institute. The following Sunday, gathered in their new location, the minister, Revd Dr Scott, gave voice to so much that had been lost, so many memories, to what had been, under the shelter of that now ruined roof: *"But now all this is gone. The home of all these associations is swept away in a single night. Now there is for you no longer the moving appeal of a much-loved House of God. Now the Church of St Columba's depends upon our loyalty to Christ alone."*

"As the Father has loved me, so I have loved you; abide in my love." This morning's gospel words (John 15:9ff) are also forged in time of crisis. As John tells it, they are offered in the Upper Room on the night of betrayal. A final gathering; a meal shared; the unsettling sight of the Master stooping to wash the disciples' feet; the prediction about impending treachery. *"My children I am with you only a little while longer."* A new command: *"Love one another, as I have loved you. By the love that you show, the world will see that you are my disciples."* When Jesus talks of going away. Peter retorts: *"Why can't I follow? I will lay down my life for you?"* (We know how/where that promise will evaporate.) Jesus promises to go and prepare a place for them – but will return and take them to himself – *"that where I am you may be also."* In place of absence, he will send the Spirit. The Spirit will testify about Jesus and all truth; just as you, the disciples must testify, *"for you have been with me from the beginning."* Before that, you will be scattered: *"You will leave me alone, but my Father is with me."* Jesus finishes by praying for them. Then it is out into the night – first to Gethsemane, and then the hurried and awful death of an innocent man, acquainted with sorrows.

Smack in the middle of this longer sequence, comes our reading today: *Love, abiding, friendship* are the last urgent instructions/pleas/hopes/gifts, expressed by a man effectively on Death Row, the teacher's final lessons. *"As the Father has loved me, so I have loved you; abide in my love."* *"No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends. You are my friends if you do what I command you."* John 15:13-14

In a recent book by Doctor Rachel Clarke, *Breathtaking (Inside the NHS in a time of pandemic)*, she talks about life on the frontline fighting Covid. Early in the book she describes arriving for work and encounters Molly behind her reception desk. Molly is a retired nurse, now volunteer; but no one knows how old she is. In the past there would have been the chaos and jostling in the reception area, now there are "no patients, no relatives, no jostling in the coffee queue, no shouting, no swearing, no flirting, no family spats, no crying babies, instead there is row upon row of empty seats."

"I pause for a moment to say hello, keeping my requisite two metres' distance. *'Are you sure about still coming in, Molly?'* I ask, raising an eyebrow. *'Without meaning to cast aspersions on your youthfulness, I'm guessing you're probably in the high-risk category if you catch it?'* She smiles. The same smile that gives confidence to bewildered new arrivals trying to make sense of the maze of wards and corridors. She has an uncanny ability to make everyone feel cared for – the secret elixir, I believe, of a hospital. *'How dare you!'* She cries in mock indignation. I grin but say nothing, and a second passes. Her breeziness wavers. *'I know the risks,'* she says quietly, touching her name badge. *'We all do, don't we?'*

"I hesitate, glancing down at the text on the badge. *Hello, my name is Molly. Can I help you?* it asks. Most definitely, is the answer. Indeed, without the hundreds of volunteers like her, the hospital would flounder. I know she loves her role, finds it meaningful, important. But the idea that her selflessness might end up being the death of her is surely a sacrifice too far?

'I guess I think of it like this,' I suggest, trying to put myself in her shoes. *'You're needed. The hospital needs you. But wouldn't it be better to take some time off now, rather than get infected and risk never returning?'* *'Hmph,'* she retorts, as if dismissing a small child. *'Aren't you late?'*

Sermon

continued

“As the Father has loved me, so I have loved you; abide in my love.”

Abiding is also marked by Christian Aid Week, which starts today. Its roots too, are in the soil of crisis. This year it marks its 75th Anniversary. Christian Aid began in response to the refugee crisis following WWII. Churches in the UK did not retreat into themselves and their own recovery but saw a wider need and responded. As the charity declares: *“For 75 years, we have lived out the challenge to stand together with sisters and brothers across the world – one global family.”*

“As the Father has loved me, so I have loved you; abide in my love.”

Two Sundays ago, the reading set for the day was about the Good Shepherd. In contrast to the hired hand, who flees at the hint of danger, the genuine shepherd puts his own life on the line for the flock. Echo of today's: *“No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends.”* As it happened, the Sunday we read about the Good Shepherd was the exact anniversary of an incident in another war. The Korean War between 1950-1953, fought in large part by National Servicemen, is a largely forgotten conflict in British public memory.

At the Battle of the Imjin River, a Brigade of British and Belgian forces, faced with massed waves of Chinese troops, held high ground for three days, until their position became untenable. Eventually the order was given that they should attempt to break out of their encircling enemy and find any way possible to get back to British lines. The Adjutant of one of the regiments involved, Captain Farrar-Hockley of the Gloucesters, described one moment from the final stages of Hill 235. It is an account given to all young officers in training at the Royal Military Academy, Sandhurst, in a volume, entitled *Serve to Lead*.

“The last preparations for departure were being made. The signallers had already destroyed their radio sets, and Harry was stamping on the ashes of the codebook he had just burnt. We were all ready to move. In small groups, the Headquarters split up and ran over the ridge.

“When they had gone, I came up on to the ridge

crest and prepared to descend the other side. Bob, the Regimental Medical Officer (RMO) the unit's doctor was standing alone by the path that led to the steep slopes below us. *‘Come on Bob,’* I said. *‘We're about the last to go - you ought to have gone before this. The Colonel will be off in a minute and that will be the lot.’* He looked at me for a moment before saying; *‘I can't go. I must stay with the wounded.’* For a few seconds I did not comprehend his meaning; we were all making our way out - there seemed a fair chance that some of us would make it; to stay here was to stay certainly for capture, possibly for death, when the Chinese launched their final assault on the position.

“And then I realised that he had weighed all this – weighed it all and made a deliberate choice; he would place his own life in the utmost jeopardy in order to remain with the wounded at the time when they would need him most. Somewhere, the words appear, *‘Greater love hath no man than this ...’* I knew now exactly what those words meant. Too moved to speak again, I clapped my hand upon his shoulder and went on.’ (Captain Farrar-Hockley, *The Edge of The Sword*)

Friendship and greater love...

Loyalty to Christ alone.

“We know the risks, don't we?”

Love one another and abide.

Abide, abide, abide.

Amen

Desert Island Discs

...and today's castaways are Alison and Roderick Buchanan

As is always admitted by Desert Island Discs guests, it is difficult to choose only eight pieces of music – even more difficult when there are two individuals involved, named by our predecessor David Stewart as “the terrible twins” at a recent Happy Hour. To meet the brief, this cannot be a list of our absolute favourite pieces of music – so many are missing – but it represents a mélange of music which is important to us.

1. Elgar's 'Nimrod': this raises hairs on the back of one's neck – and tears – of which we were reminded at the Duke of Edinburgh's funeral. He was wily in his choices, all very emotive. 'I bow to thee my country' had to be jettisoned to curtail our numbers, but would otherwise have been included.

2. I would have chosen 'Edelweiss' but David Stewart stole my thunder. It was my audition piece for musicals, one of which was *The King and I*. As one of the King's many children we joined in lustily with '**Getting to know you**'. When Roderick and I were fortunate enough to visit the Grand Palace in Bangkok I was amazed to see photographs of characters in the show and, of course, my 'big brother' Prince Chulalongkorn's palace. It is difficult to separate fiction and fact when visiting certain places like Castle Howard (Brideshead) or Highclere

(Downton) but much of *The King and I* was factual – so much so that it was banned in Thailand.

3. Our third choice is from “our opera” *La Bohème*. One of the films we went to see when first going out together was *Moonstruck*, during which the protagonists Nicholas Cage and Cher go to the Met in New York to see *La Bohème*. Our copy is with Jussi Bjorling and Victoria de los Angeles – a far cry from my first *Bohème*, pre Roderick, in Glasgow where the tiny frozen hand of Mimi and her torso would have knocked out Mohammed Ali at a stroke. Happily the acting side of Opera has moved on. The piece we have chosen is '**O Soave Fanciulla**', sung by Rodolfo, Marcello and Mimi.

4. This is **Gregorio Allegri's 'Miserere'**. Having heard it many times our transformative memory is from the finale of Sir James MacMillan's *Cumnock Tryst*, on its fifth anniversary. It was performed by Harry Christophers' *Sixteen* in Cumnock Trinity Church – almost painfully poignant and totally unforgettable.

5. Populist it may be but Jussi Bjorling and Robert Merrill's version of the '**Pearl Fishers' Duet**' must have a mention. It is spine chillingly good and something we learned from years of its being a common

choice on Radio 4's *Down Your Way*. Their rendition is wonderful.

6. From *HMS Pinafore*, '**He is an Englishman**'. This is a must for us as it was used in Alan Bennet's *An Englishman Abroad* with Alan Bates and Coral Browne – about Guy Burgess. It was set in Moscow but filmed in Scotland rather than the Soviet Union. The grand marble staircase of Glasgow City Chambers played the part of the British Embassy but, more important to us, additional filming was done at Glasgow's St Andrew's Suspension Bridge – **OUR BRIDGE** (when we were stepping out) – filmed in a snowstorm.

7. Hamish MacCunn, **Land of the Mountain and the Flood**: well, this is a nod to Greenock, Roderick's and indeed Hamish MacCunn's hometown. It is somewhat dispiriting, when one looks at one's own achievements, that this wonderfully evocative piece was composed when Hamish was but 19 years old.

8. Our final choice has to be accompanied by our declaration that it was “our song” way before it became a football icon. Our wedding present to ourselves – a year before our wedding - was going to see Pavarotti during Glasgow's Year of Culture. The concert was fabulous but lacked one vital piece... until '**Nessun Dorma**' was his encore.

Music lessons with Ben



Piano, singing and organ lessons are offered by Benedict Lewis-Smith, Director of Music here at St Columba's. Ben has enjoyed teaching a small studio of virtual students (from Switzerland to Scotland) over the past year, and is always interested to hear from potential students (of any age or ability) looking to learn piano, singing, organ or more generally about music theory.

For more information, or to contact Ben,
email: music@stcolumbas.org.uk
Telephone: 07812 396884.

The Duke of Edinburgh at St Columba's

David Stewart captures memories

The recent passing of Prince Phillip had church members casting their minds back to the joyous visit made by him and Her Majesty the Queen back in December 2015; my goodness, how quickly the intervening five and a bit years have gone by. I recall around Easter of that year, there was a low-key announcement to the effect that the 60th anniversary of our present building was to be commemorated by a special service, and an invitation had been extended to Buckingham Palace for a member of the royal family to attend. I remember thinking: "Princess Anne, Prince Edward – that would be nice." Subsequently, a date was fixed, and we were informed places would have to be reserved. At the time, that seemed a tad excessive.

I vividly recall the Sunday morning in high summer when Angus, in an impressively matter of fact tone, read out that the Palace had accepted our offer, and both HM and the Duke would be attending. There was a cumulative gasp! Afterwards Mrs P, who had been in the picture for some time as our liaison with 'headquarters' said: "David, I caught sight of you as Angus announced who was coming. The look on your face was priceless!"

I understand at the start of the following week a number of messages came in to the Church office along the lines of, "You did get my message/email/note booking a place, didn't you..." Anyway, come the great day, and yours truly in best suit, new white shirt, and favourite tie turned up an hour before starting time; I was one of the first! I found myself in a pew with Nigel Roberts, Robin Moore and Donald Shaw.

Let's hear the recollections of others.

Susan Pym: I served on the

committee which organised the special service. We initially received the exciting news that Her Majesty had graciously accepted. Much to my amazement, a little later I took a phone call from Buckingham Palace, when a member of staff told me the Duke of Edinburgh would also like to attend. This definitely added to the excitement. I was privileged to be part of the line-up in the entrance vestibule. I can still feel the enormous sense of anticipation at the sound of the outriders whizzing up Pont Street, whistles stopping all the traffic. On being introduced, a beaming Duke of Edinburgh surprised me by asking "what do you do here?" Not anticipating more than a nod, I quickly replied I had helped to organise the service as I was an elder. He stood back, gave me 'a look' and said "Elder! Elder? You don't look old enough to be an elder". We all laughed, as he had immediately put everyone at their ease - to the extent that I remember squeezing his arm, before realising I shouldn't have touched him; he didn't seem to mind!

Sheila Nicoll: When the Queen and Prince Philip were welcomed at the door, there was a small muddle as Michael Stevenson - introducing the members of the Committee to the Duke - and I, introducing them to the Queen - were on the wrong sides. The Duke laughed, putting us at ease, and enabling us to sort ourselves out. Looking at the photographs, everyone speaking with the Duke is laughing. It is probably no secret that one or two people were disappointed on learning they were being presented to the Duke rather than the Queen, but it became obvious that everyone so much enjoyed meeting him. He took longer to get around than the Queen, which I understand was not unusual. When it came to signing the visitors' book, it was noticeable

that while the Queen sat, the Duke remained determinedly standing.

Lucy Llewellyn: Two things stand out. While Pathé film of Queen Elizabeth the Queen Mother laying the first stone was showing, an organiser suggested the Duke move on, but he insisted on watching to the end. Also, Duncan Lang looking a little bemused when, while discussing having been baptised here, the Duke enquired if it meant being fully submerged! Happily, Jill Steele stepped in to explain we use a font, or jug and bowl, instead.

Duncan Lang: I was honoured and proud to meet the Duke, and enjoyed his sense of humour.

Michael Stevenson: On my way to Church on that 3rd December I explained to staff at our tube station why I was wearing my kilt – to meet the Queen. A passer-by asked incredulously: 'the real Queen?' When the Duke arrived, the Minister presented me as "our long-standing Session Clerk" to which came the rapid response "and still standing!" Later, when introducing David Terry to the Duke, I referenced the 'rousing introit' he had composed. This was met with "you certainly pulled out all the stops! Perhaps, as Charlotte later mused, he said that to all the organisers he met!

Catherine McDonald: I can be terrible at remembering names, so when I was given the honour of introducing members of our wonderful congregation to Prince Philip, I spent quite a lot of time practising to pieces of paper on my living room floor. Entirely predictably, the first well-practised line I spoke to the Duke was blurted out so quickly that no one could understand it. He looked askance at me, repeated what he had misheard with a question mark in his voice (I've blocked the specifics from my memory), turned

The Duke of Edinburgh at St Columba's

continued

to Ian Aitchison and effortlessly engaged him in conversation about his military service. To everyone's benefit, the need for introductions was almost non-existent as Prince Philip chatted and laughed his way round the rest of the group, with genuine interest and engagement.

Daphne Moore: I remember how fabulous his suit looked, the creases ever so sharp!

Neil Price: Angus escorted the Queen and Andrea looked after Prince Philip. Only now does Andrea realise they could have spoken in German, it transpiring that he was fluent in her native language. In the Upper Hall he asked about the configuration of the church building. When Andrea explained that the sanctuary faced west, the Prince quipped, "Isn't that the wrong way round?" In the orthodox way, he was right of course! Later in the Lower Hall, when folk could meet the Royal couple more informally, we had arranged for senior members (over 90s) to sit at the front, everyone else standing. Prince Philip, 94 at the time, spotted this. I heard him say "It's alright for you lot, I never get a chance to have a rest!"

Bob Harman: Going about my Beadle duties, I was aware of a fizzing, happy atmosphere as the congregation assembled. It was a particular honour to lead the Minister and Royal Party into the Sanctuary and out again at the end of the service. I don't think anyone objected to my having 'tarted up' a little by wearing my regimental Gordon Highlander trews and doublet for such a special occasion.

Charlotte Bradford: I had the honour of sitting beside the Duke in the front pew. I was really impressed with the way he sang the hymns; a little gravelly maybe, but participating fully. Her Majesty and the Duke

genuinely seemed to enjoy meeting the congregation after the service.

Janet and Efchi Michalacopoulos: We couldn't believe we were sitting right behind the Queen and the Duke of Edinburgh. The privilege of talking with the Duke afterwards was unforgettable. Conversation flowed so naturally. He seemed really interested in the answers we gave to his questions, and he made us laugh.

Sarah Logan: Prince Philip took time to stop, shake my hand and comment to a smiling Beth, then 5, hiding behind my skirt: "We have a few of you at home", with a little chuckle (I assume comparing her with his great-grandchildren). It was a memorable shared moment which the now 11-year-old Beth and I still talk about, one we will always remember with great fondness.

Jim Blackwood: I found the Duke utterly charming and felt totally at ease. He smiled and joked. After asking about Tea Together, he enquired if our guests did Scottish Country Dancing. I explained that most are in their 80s and 90s, so preferred to watch rather than participate. He smiled, realising that not every nonagenarian was as sprightly as he and The Queen. When the royal couple went on walkabout in the Lower Hall, the Duke met my Mum. There are two super photos of them chatting, engaged in direct eye contact. Asking if she'd travelled far, Mum explained her journey from Lochwinnoch, which seemed to surprise him – maybe he assumed we'd all be Londoners. Mum and I joked afterwards that he had chosen to speak to her because he had an eye for a younger woman!

David Kerr: "All the books in the Bible", was my reply when HRH The Duke of Edinburgh asked me what I used when leading

Bible Study classes with the St Columba's teenagers. "Even the Old Testament?" quizzed the Prince, before - with a shake of his head - advising me that "some terrible deeds were done in the Old Testament!" I roared with laughter, the reaction of many he chatted with in the Upper Hall.

Suzanne Williams: Our exciting day started with a hem needing some work, so a mad dash to our friendly dry cleaner. On learning before whom the mended garment would be worn, a glass of wine was kindly poured by way of a swift 'elevenes toast', then off to St. Columba's, passports in hand. Warm, happy faces greeted us. A buzzing fellowship was at once detectable. After the lovely service, the children - cheeky smiles from ear to ear - were presented. Francesca managed a quick curtsy. The Duke joked with Derek about the children keeping us on our toes, chuckling at them as they eagerly shook his hand. Beaming smiles and happy faces ensued, the Duke's charm engaging the whole family. A special moment; Prince Philip will long be fondly remembered in our home!

My own recollections are threefold: the magnificent trumpet introduction, all the more dramatic because I had no awareness they were in the gallery; Nigel singing as if to be heard in Perthshire, which inspired Robin, Donald and I to open our lungs more lustily than would normally happen; Donald kindly taking me afterwards to the Caledonian Club for supper, where we ran into a couple of familiar faces that had made the same short journey! I had a surprise when after confirming to the (Polish) waiter that I would indeed like the 'gravy' with my haggis starter, it turned out to be a small glass of malt on the side – I imagine the Duke would have known; and approved!



Baptisms • Marriages • Deaths

DEATHS

"Blessed are they that die in the Lord"

27th March

Jean Maxwell Wood, London W6

Our new Associate Minister William McLaren, in his own words



I've been asked to provide some biographical details so I'll start at the beginning!

Everyone of a certain generation says they remember where they were when President Kennedy was shot and my father certainly did – he was leaving Campbeltown Maternity Hospital having visited my mother and a very new me when someone told him the news from Dallas.

I grew up at Skipness in Kintyre where the impressive remains of Skipness Castle, once a seat of the Lord of the Isles, and the ruins of the medieval Kilbrannan Chapel, as well as what were known locally as "The Smugglers' Caves" may have inspired my love of history. Skipness Castle is said to be haunted by the ghost of a "Green Lady"; as children we played in the grounds of the castle but she never appeared to

us! On leaving school I studied history and political science at Dundee University.

The summer I graduated from Dundee I was fortunate enough to be a steward at the Conference of European Churches (CEC) Assembly at Stirling. CEC was a great experience for all the stewards, meeting church members of many denominations from all over Europe, and that was my first contact with the Italian Waldensian Church which has remained a great interest of mine to the present day. I subsequently went on to study theology and train for ministry at New College, Edinburgh, before completing my probationary year as an assistant minister at Dundee Parish Church (St.Mary's) with the late Very Rev W.B.R. Macmillan.

From 1990 I was part of a team ministry in Greenock and a part-time prison chaplain before becoming parish minister at Polbeth in West Lothian for over seven years. When I was a student at Dundee the ecumenical university chaplaincy had been a big part of my life and in 2001 I welcomed the opportunity to go to Dublin as Presbyterian-Methodist chaplain at Dublin City University and Chaplain at The Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland (RCSI). It was a fascinating job, working with students of different faiths and nationalities from all over the

world.

For the last 14 years I have been minister at Stobswell, an inner city parish in Dundee where we've enjoyed very good ecumenical and inter faith relationships. Among other activities I have been chaplain to St. John Angus & Dundee, part of the Order of St. John providing volunteer Patient Transport, First Responders and Public Access Defibrillators as well as supporting Mountain Rescue Teams and the St. John Eye Hospital in Jerusalem. St. John is an international charity working throughout the Commonwealth and Ireland, best known in England for St. John Ambulance, and this is an interest I'd like to follow up if the opportunity arises in London. I've also been a school chaplain and a padre with the Army Cadet Force and am a past president of Broughty Ferry Rotary Club.

London has been a favourite holiday destination for years especially as I enjoy the theatre, not just the big West End shows but some of the smaller theatres too. However I'm fully aware that living in a city is very different from going there on holiday and I'm excited about getting to know London as a local and of course getting to know the St. Columba's congregation.

Church Diary: 6th June to 1st August 2021

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

6th June	11.00am	St Columba's Day and Holy Communion Revd Angus MacLeod MA BD
13th June	11.00am	Morning Service Revd Angus MacLeod MA BD
20th June	11.00am	Morning Service Revd Angus MacLeod MA BD
27th June	11.00am	Morning Service Revd Angus MacLeod MA BD
4th July	11.00am	Morning Service Revd Angus MacLeod MA BD
8th July	6.00pm	Presbytery of England – Service of Introduction for the Revd William McLaren MA BD
11th July	11.00am	Morning Service and Baptisms Revd Angus MacLeod MA BD
18th July	11.00am	Morning Service Revd William McLaren MA BD
25th July	11.00am	Morning Service Revd Angus MacLeod MA BD
1st August	11.00am	Morning Service Revd Nigel Robb MA BD

Prayer

A Prayer after Pentecost

*Disturb us, Lord,
when we are too pleased with ourselves;
when our dreams come true,
because we dream too small;
when we arrive safely,
because we sail too close to the shore.*

*Disturb us, Lord,
when with the abundance of things we possess,
we lose our thirst
for the waters of life.*

*Disturb us, Lord,
to dare boldly;
to venture on wider seas,
where storms will show your mastery, not ours;
where, in losing sight of land,
we shall find the stars.*

*This we ask in the name of our captain,
who is Jesus Christ. Amen.*

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Pont Street
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