

WALK TOGETHER

Autumn 2020

Magazine of
St. Columba's Episcopal Church, Bathgate
&
St. Peter's Episcopal Church Linlithgow



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St Peter's*



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Dear Friends,

Six months into Covid -19 I sense we are at another juncture. After we slowly emerged from full lockdown over the summer we began to once again enjoy some small aspects of normal life; visiting one another, albeit in small groups, travelling beyond the 5 mile limit, going out for coffee and meals, getting our hair done and most importantly reopening our churches for worship. Children returned to school, masks became an essential piece of kit and we enjoyed some much needed freedoms.

Sadly, with the change of the seasons and people spending more time indoors the virus is on the warpath again and our poor students are having a very difficult start to their academic year, especially those who are staying in university accommodation. Hats off to Andrew, Jamie, Michael and Robbie from St Peter's and to Duncan & Janet's granddaughter Joanna and Kath Stutt's grandson Andrew who are all coping with these challenges.

I don't know about you but I find it is the uncertainty that is unnerving; we all know the rules and however difficult we find having to adopt them, we do. And if we knew for certain that life would be returning to something like normal by a certain time then I think I would just get on with it. But so much in life isn't predictable or time specific and covid-19 is certainly falls into this category.

Perhaps the Christian communities can give us some examples for coping. They all follow their own 'rule of life' for a creating rhythm to each day of work and prayer, sleeping and eating. It is too easy to get sucked into the 24/7 news isn't it and this feeds our fears and insecurities. I have been trying to maintain a pattern of daily walks and time for reading as well as work and prayer and only listen to the news in the morning and in the evening. We all have to find what works for us!

Part of my routine is worship in our two churches each Sunday, including Zooming from St Peter's service, and for our midweek services.

And on everyone's behalf I would like to thank our vestries for supporting the reopening of our churches and to my two wardens David and Jane and those who worked with them for their amazing work in getting the risk assessments done and the practical work completed so quickly. And for their ongoing work to ensure that we are kept safe and within the guidelines. And thanks to all who are part of the many rota's for Sunday mornings and our midweek services as well. Fresh flowers in church are such a delight and thanks to Vera and Maureen and others for making sure that we have lovely displays. Music is so much part of our church life and we so miss singing and our choirs but we count our blessings in having Judy and Jim taking care of music and to Corrine and Paul for playing in St Peter's too.

Our vestries continue to meet via Zoom and are in the process of arranging our AGM and information regarding dates etc will be issued in our weekly church notices. And our curate and my two wardens and I continue to meet weekly via Zoom to ensure that we are keeping on top of things!

Our Curate Peter was ordained into the Priesthood on 22nd September by Bishop John in St Mary's Cathedral in Edinburgh. It was a splendid occasion as I hope the photos show. Although the numbers in the Cathedral were limited I know that many joined in live via the link and others watched it later. Penny Lyons and Tom Pringle crafted beautiful wooden gifts for Peter – a candle holder, a cross and an amazing bendy fish and June Bremner and Liz Beetham created very appropriate cards. The photo that I took doesn't really do them justice. Peter presided at his first Eucharists on Sunday 27th September and as someone posted on one of the WhatsApp Groups that you would never have known he had just been ordained, well done Peter !



For those who aren't able to come to church visits have been possible for the past couple of months and hopefully will begin again soon. In the meantime we keep in contact by phone, texts, WhatsApp and email. And sometimes I have lovely unexpected encounters when out for a walk which are always a highlight in the day for Millie and me. As have those occasional coffee shop get togethers.

Keeping on top of the day to day maintenance of our churches is crucial, it would be so easy to let things slip when people have other issues on their minds but thanks to Duncan and Richard our two churches are being well looked after as are our gardens too thanks to Alastair and Carola and Bruce and all who help to maintain them.

After the October school holidays I hope that we will be able to hold some services for our families and children and details of these will be intimated in the weekly church notices. And before we know it we will be heading toward Advent and Christmas. Again more information on what will be happening nearer the time. Christmas services are bound to be very different, more low key and with small numbers but as someone pointed out to me so was the first Christmas but oh so life changing for the world.

I am very conscious that this letter really is an update on what is going on but it does come with my love and my prayers to you all at this challenging time and with my grateful thanks for your continued prayers and support. At this time when so many aspects of our lives are being denied us, hopefully not for too long, we continue to support one another to maintain our resilience and our hope.

With love and prayers

Christine

**A prayer for our churches at this time of the Covid-19
Pandemic - for the Christian Community**

We are not people of fear, we are people of courage.
We are not people who protect our own safety, we are people
who protect our neighbours' safety
We are not people of greed, we are people of generosity.
We are your people God, giving and loving, wherever we are,
whatever it costs.
For as long as it takes wherever you call us.

*Barbara Glasson
President of the Methodist Conference*

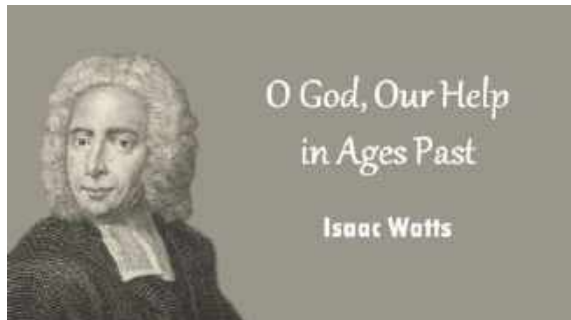


**Peter's
Ordination**









The hymn “O God Our Help in Ages Past” has a very special place in our family. We had our three children very close together and at one time they were aged 3, 4 and 6! They were usually well-behaved kids but they did have their moments. When the situation got more fraught than usual, it was my wont to stand up and sing, very loudly, the hymn “O God Our Help in Ages Past.” My antics became part of our family life. Instead of shouting or losing my temper, I would belt out the familiar words:

*O God, our help in ages past,
Our hope for years to come,
Our shelter from the stormy blast,
And our eternal home.*

Although in churches today only six verses are sung, there were originally nine – although, much to my family’s relief, I rarely had to give vent to more than the first stanza before things quietened down in the house.

The hymn is based on Psalm 90, which begins:

*Lord, you have been our dwelling place throughout all generations,
Before the mountains were born or you brought forth the earth and the
world, from everlasting to everlasting you are God.*

It was written by **Isaac Watts**, who, after a spell as a pastor in a London Congregational Church, took on the role of private tutor in wealthy London households. This gave him plenty of time to write - and indeed he did, with over 750 hymns credited to him!

He is sometimes called “the “Godfather of English Hymnody” as until his prolific work in the early 18th century, the only singing in churches was confined to the psalms. Now, congregations had many Isaac Watt hymns to sing, all set to music by eminent organists and musicians including John Warrington Hatton (Duke Street – the tune for “Jesus Shall Reign Where ‘er the Sun”), Lowell Mason (Rockingham – for “When I Survey the Wondrous Cross”) John Frederick Handel (“Joy to the World”) and William Croft who composed the tune St Anne to which “Oh God Our Help” is sung.

The hymn has been played on many famous occasions. Some declare that it was the music being played as the Titanic sank in 1912. It was played on BBC radio when World War Two was declared. It was sung by sailors on board HMS Prince of Wales before Winston Churchill and Franklin Roosevelt created the Atlantic Charter in 1941. It was sung at Churchill’s funeral in 1965, and I often turned to the words during the corona crisis. “Be our defence while life shall last, and our eternal home!” Amen

Bruce Jamieson

Life Together

Winter 2020

**Article
Deadline Date**

**November
20th 2020**

Sermon for Pentecost 14 Sunday 6th October 2020
Matthew 18: 15 -20
We need to talk

Sometimes when I am reading for sermon preparation a word or sentence leaps of the page and reminds me of something from the past. Well this week 'we need to talk' reminded me of the, thankfully, very few serious 'chats' I had to have with Fiona and Peter when they were growing up, and those were my exact words, And they knew in both my manner and tone as well as the actual words that this was not going to be a conversation about what they would like for dinner! In those words I was saying, there is something that we need to sort out!

Things need to be sorted out in all of our relationships from time to time don't they, but just how bad are we at handling these situations? For an easy life, and not wishing to stir things up aren't we sometimes tempted to turn a blind eye, or moan to someone, keep our distance, and as a last resort just walk away from the relationship? And while it would seem that the Church should be setting the good example so often we find that it doesn't have the best track record on relationships either, and we will all know of some spectacularly bad handling of some issues that have hit the headlinesand why...well because we are human, and flawed.

In this week's Gospel, Jesus offers a strategy for dealing with potentially difficult situations before they get out of hand, or rather he tells us plainly that the way we conduct our relationships here and now has a direct consequence for the coming of God's kingdom 'whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.' In other words the depth, health and quality of our relationships within the church really matter, and they matter for eternity!

And Jesus's teaching in this passage is so realistic. Unlike us, who assume that because we're Christians, we should either not experience conflict at all, or cover it up with a bland "niceness" if we do, Jesus, on the other hand, takes it for granted that we will disagree and hurt each other. So he starts with the baseline assumption that conflict within the beloved community is normal and natural. The question is not *whether* we'll wound each other with our words and actions, but *how* we should proceed when we do. In a sense, what Jesus lays out in this Gospel passage are rules of engagement, and the principles of love and respect that should undergird them.

Jesus begins by teaching us that when we experience conflict, we should dig deep and name it, risk that honest conversation, strive to sort it out, ... not expect that it will miraculously heal itself. And this is true of whichever side of the conflict we are on, it can be as hard to hear truths from the people we offend as it is to be the one who is offended can't it? This means us having to come out from behind our 'good intentions' and sit with the impact of our actions on others if we deeply care about reconciliation, repentance and restoration of our relationships as much as Jesus does. Four times in the first three verses of the passage Jesus makes reference to listening or refusing to listen. The repetition suggests that the call to hear one another, to listen closely to the truth from one another is a vital component of a community grounded in the ways of Jesus.

And even as Jesus stresses the importance of honest engagement, he calls for discretion, kindness, and care. If at all possible, he says, don't drag their names through the mud, do whatever is possible to affirm the dignity and humanity of the person you are confronting, so hard when we are really angry or hurt.

We live in a social media culture where it is too easy to press the send button in anger before we have really thought out the consequences. When we have been hurt it is so easy to forget that we too are frail, foolish, and prone to error. And we run the risk of lashing out publicly for the sake of protecting ourselves and our reputations. All of this, Jesus says, falls miserably short of God's desires for the beloved community. As Paul reminded the community in Rome 'love your neighbour as yourself, love does no wrong to a neighbour, therefore, love is the fulfilling of the law.'

But as we all know some situations are hugely complex and Jesus harbors no illusions about how challenging conflict-management can be. Sometimes, a one-on-one conversation won't suffice. When that's the case, the Gospel tells us to bring in a few more people — *not* to spread gossip, *not* to gang up on the wrongdoer, *not* to escalate the conflict — but to make sure that the truth is guarded, honored, articulated, and remembered as we work towards reconciliation. In the business world there are procedures for such occasions. As Christians we have to do this ourselves, in love and in prayer nurturing honest dialogue and refusing to keep silent in the face of behaviour that harms others. For the church is a body, each part holy interdependent upon the other. I never cease to be humbled by the grace exhibited in our Anglican Communion over some of the hugely contentious issues of modern times.

But sometimes, Jesus says, all of our best efforts at reconciliation will fail, and we will lose a member of the community, or a whole community as sadly happened in our diocese last year when following the revision of the Marriage Canon, St Thomas's in Edinburgh left. And as Jesus reminds us such losses should be met with grief, as St Thomas's departure was for us all. The fracturing of the body of Christ is not an occasion for gloating. We have lost a limb, an organ, our own flesh and blood. The appropriate response is lament.

And those who walk away, become the outsider? Jesus offers love, care, healing, hope and compassion. Consider how he treats Gentiles and tax collectors, the Samaritan woman at the well, the Roman centurion's servant. He never turns his back on those whose values and beliefs don't match his own. And the implication is for us to do the same.

Who knows what the future holds for us, the fallout from this global pandemic is going to be enormous, the ongoing uncertainty over health and economy won't just vanish overnight. What a time to be a Christian community, to live into the high calling of being part of a beloved community here and now. In order for the world to know that we are Christians not by our rightness, but by our love and care of those with whom we don't always see eye to eye.

And yes, the Church has the duty to call truth to power, to say 'we need to talk' and engage in dialogue and action that will make for a more just world. This weekend marks the 50th anniversary of Radio 4's religious broadcasting and over the years religious commentators from across the religions have discussed and debated, challenged and also shared the pain of man's inhumanity to man in the horrors of atrocities carried out in the name of religion.

And for us, we need to keep communicating in whatever ways we can to avoid the misunderstandings. As an old BT advert proclaimed 'it's good to talk' and when we get it wrong then in love and respect say 'we need to talk'. Amen.

Christine

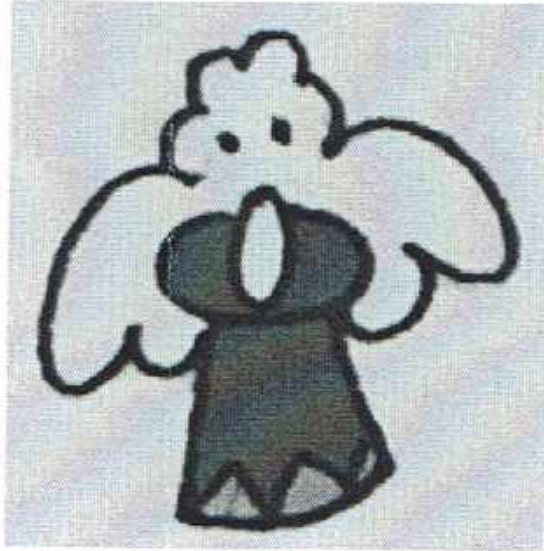
Calling all knitters

In these unusual times it is very hard to plan ahead, especially as far ahead as Christmas but for those who knit you might like to have a wee project - knitted angels for giving away this Christmas. Very easy to make either for gifts to give yourself or for contributing to each of our churches for handing out, they can have messages of hope pinned on their backs . Of course we will have to work out the sanitising of them, hence the early call! Patten and an 'exhibit a' alongside.

Many thanks

Reverend Christine Barclay





White Baby Wool

To check tension—Using No. 8 needles
24sts X 21 rows in garter stitch should
measure 5 ins.

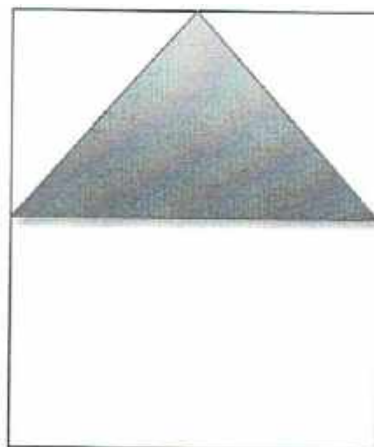
Finished square 5 ins X 5 ins

No. 8 needles cast on 24sts knit 42 rows
in garter stitch, cast off.

Using the same wool stitch a triangle from
top centre to middle left side, straight
across to right side and back up angled to
top centre.

Pull tight and insert a small cotton wool
ball inside for head

Tie off tightly leaving a length



Message from Rev Peter

My ordination to the priesthood in St Mary's Cathedral on September 22 was a wonderful occasion that in the circumstances provided for the maximum involvement of family, friends and our two congregations, as well of course my two sending congregations.

In normal circumstances, of course, St Columba's would have been packed, but sadly the pandemic put paid to that and so I am very grateful to the Cathedral's Provost, John Conway and his staff for allowing the service to take place there and for Bishop John being supportive of the idea.

Three moments stood out for me – the first being the beautiful singing of the Cathedral Lay Clerk, David Lewis, who sang the responses to the Psalm and the Litany as well as an anthem by Purcell based on the Te Deum. I found that incredibly moving. The second that the preacher, David Dalglish, was my diocesan adviser (mentor) during training and so that fittingly completed the cycle from (elderly) student to (even older) priest.

The third, and certainly not the least, was that Andy Philip, well known to the St Peter's church family, laid hands on me, together with Bishop John and Christine. I trained two years with Andy, and he was the only fellow student able to be present at my ordination. Normally all the priests present would have laid hands on me, but knowing exactly whose hands were on me, and that all three have or have had strong connections to our two churches made it a particularly special moment.

I know that some of you succeeded in following the service on the Cathedral's Facebook page, but equally I know that some of you were unable to do so, including some of my own family. In case any of you would still like to watch a recording, do please click this link <https://www.facebook.com/537507844/posts/10159136997637845/?extid=ULvnyHO1y3PA4QPo&d=n>

And, of course, it was a joy and a privilege to be able to celebrate the Eucharist for the first time at both St Peter's and St Columba's the following Sunday.

I want to take this opportunity to thank you all for being so encouraging to me and supportive of me during the past year. It has been an extraordinary year, not least when all we could do for four months was worship together on Zoom.

Everyone was so tolerant of my mistakes with the technology – and I am very grateful indeed for that – but we muddled through, knowing that at least we could worship together in a meaningful way even if we knew it wasn't the same as being together in church.

Some of you have asked whether I will now be returning to West Linton, now that I have been priested. I am afraid you can't get rid of me that easily! I look forward very much to being with you all until next summer.

Rev Peter



THE ST PETER'S TRIPTYCH – PART ONE



How often do you sit in St Peter's and look up at the stained glass windows above the altar? I must confess that I do it quite often – but that's not to say I'm not listening to Christine or Peter! I just find that the three panels give me heightened concentration as I consider the detail contained within them. Principally, of course, is the Christ figure in the centre. He is depicted dressed only in a loincloth. Putting aside the question of whether Jesus was naked on the cross (as was the case at every Roman crucifixion) or whether, in consideration of Jewish custom, he was allowed to retain minimal clothing, there is so much more to absorb the onlooker.



At Christ's feet, the artist, Joan Howson, has depicted two angels - their wings oddly aligned, holding a golden chalice and a silver paten - the receptacles used to hold the Eucharistic Host. The seraph on the right stares at the nails through Christ's feet. Two nails are shown and that is disputed by some who claim that Roman crucifixion victims had only one nail placed through both ankles and one through each hand. Belief in this "three nails theory" is called triclavianism!

Ms Howson's depiction of the nails in the hands has also been challenged by studies of the skeletons of 1st century crucifixion victims. Although there is no sign of nails as such, the way the hands are structured would suggest that the nails had been driven through the palms.

In fact, Ms Howson has chosen not to depict the agony of Christ. In her creation, the worst is over. Christ, below the mocking insignia, 'INRI', awaits eternity. Radiance shines from his halo-ed head. His face reflects serenity. In fact, the more I look at the image the more I think it may actually depict the Ascension. Are his hands free from nails? Are his arms outstretched ready to be taken out of sight, into a cloud? Are the marks on his feet old nail holes? Is that a healed lance-wound, shown on His left side? (Most representations show the Roman soldier's stabbing on our Saviour's right side!) And does the presence of the Eucharistic symbols of remembrance also hint at this being Christ, arms outstretched, being taken into Heaven?



'Christ showing his wound' by 17th C artist Giovanni Galli.

If you look closely at the stained glass image you notice that in fact no actual cross as such is depicted. Jesus's hands are shown against a green, horizontal band. His feet rest on what looks like a pedestal - a hint perhaps towards the supposition that his feet may have been supported in some way - perhaps on a hypopodium, a standing platform used in many Roman executions. It was used when it was feared that the victim's hands may not have been able to support the weight of the body.

And why has Ms Howson chosen to show the 'Cross' in green? Is that perhaps a nod towards those who believe that the Cross was actually a tree with cross branches – something often used in Roman crucifixions? In the Book of Acts the word "tree" is used several times: "They took him down from the tree" (Acts 13. 29) etc, and Peter talks of "His body on the tree" (1 Peter 2, 24.)

Matthew however distinctly mentions a cross. In 27.40 he writes that the chief priests and elders taunted Jesus by saying, "Save Yourself! If You are the Son of God, come down from the cross."

In Ms Howson's portrayal, Jesus has come to terms with his predicament and, in faith, has declared that "it is finished". His life's work on earth was nearly done. The New Jerusalem awaits - shown in the stained glass as a city bathed in radiant light, a domed temple to the right. Between the 'Golden City' and the 'Cross' is a densely planted expanse - with the hint of a river. Is this the Heavenly abode foreseen by Ezekiel and by John in the Book of Revelations - a fulfilment of God's promise. Is it Zion, the Promised Land - the greenery perhaps harking back to the Garden of Eden and the Tree of Life? The river is a Christianised version of the classical River Styx - it has become the biblical River Jordan, in which Jesus was baptized. Saint Michael, Linlithgow's patron saint, is credited with the task of carrying the souls of the dead over the river to Heaven - as in the spiritual, "Michael Row the Boat Ashore". He is shown on the Palace Fountain carrying a sack of souls, ready to ferry them to the other side.



The statue of St Michael on the Palace Fountain.

So much to look and wonder at - and there are still the two saintly ladies to investigate - in the next article!

Bruce Jamieson

Peter in St Mary's Cathedral

It was a joy and a privilege to be in the congregation in our diocesan cathedral on the early evening of Tu 22 September, when our curate Peter Woodfield moved from the ranks of the deacons to those of the presbyters. In other, and easier words, for the priesting of Peter.

Of course, the service also went out on line, through the Cathedral's Facebook page, and many more people had the chance to participate in that way (it should continue to be available for some time, using the web reference

<https://www.facebook.com/537507844/posts/1015913697637845/?extid=ULvnyHO1y3PA4QPo&d=n>

- that's one long string of characters, without any space or breaks).

The service was of course conducted by John, Bishop of Edinburgh, and, like many things in the Anglican tradition, it really fell into three parts, with the actual priesting being the central part of an extended communion service.

Normally the cathedral or church would be packed for such a service, so I had been a little concerned beforehand that, with the congregation limited to a maximum of fifty masks by the coronavirus regulations, and no joyous congregational singing or subsequent partying, it might all seem a little flat. But it wasn't. Indeed, the enforced concentration at the centre of a great building somehow added to the occasion, as Bishop John commented in his introduction.

We believe, we know, that God is with us at all times; but we don't always remember. Yet on that Tuesday night somehow there was, at least for me and I hope for Peter, a very sense of that presence: so that when Peter said 'I do' to the episcopal question 'Do you trust that you are truly called by God?' that response seemed so much more than an honest response to a question by the bishop.

And we were all also privileged that arrangements had been made within the covid regulations so that there was at least a little music, both organ and choral, something for which we all were grateful.

There are three accompanying photographs: Christine's picture of Peter with Bishop John, and two, courtesy of friend and congregational member Sheila Yarrow, one a close up of Priest Peter, and one showing his moment of transition into that apostolic succession which is one of the glories of the catholic church.

It was a glorious and very memorable evening.

Paul Goldfinch

When This is Over

When this is over,
may we never again
take for granted
A handshake with a stranger
Full shelves at the store
Conversations with neighbors
A crowded theater
Friday night out
The taste of communion
A routine checkup
The school rush each morning
Coffee with a friend
The stadium roaring
Each deep breath
A boring Tuesday
Life itself.
When this ends
may we find
that we have become
more like the people
we wanted to be
we were called to be
we hoped to be
and may we stay
that way — better
for each other

By Laura Kelly Fanucci

Blessings Rev Peter

Our journey.

We embark upon a journey from our birth until we die,
sometimes we'll travel slowly, at other times we'll fly.
Like a high speed train we'll whizz along times passing in a blur
We look back and can't recall events and just what did occur.

When sad times overtake us the days drag on and on
We look back then on the good times their strength to draw upon.
If we run too fast we'll miss out on some very special things
So please slow down and savour all life's journey brings.

Margot Watson

Regular Weekly Services & Events

St Columba's, Bathgate

**Sunday 11.15 a.m Sung Eucharist
(Second Sunday of Month is a Family Service)
Last Sunday of Month 6.30 p.m Choral Evensong
Monday 9.00 a.m Morning Prayer
Second Monday of Month 7.15 p.m Film Night
Wednesday 10.30 a.m Said Eucharist
(followed by coffee and natter)
First Wed. of Month 12 noon Community Lunch
Thursday 11 a.m 4C's - Cuppa, Chat, Company & Crafts**

St Peter's, Linlithgow

**Sunday 9.30 a.m Sung Eucharist
First Sunday of Month 6 p.m Choral Evensong
Tuesday 10.30 a.m Said Eucharist
Thursday 9 a.m Morning Prayer
9.30am Sunday Youth Group Meets Monthly at Fenwicks**

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