

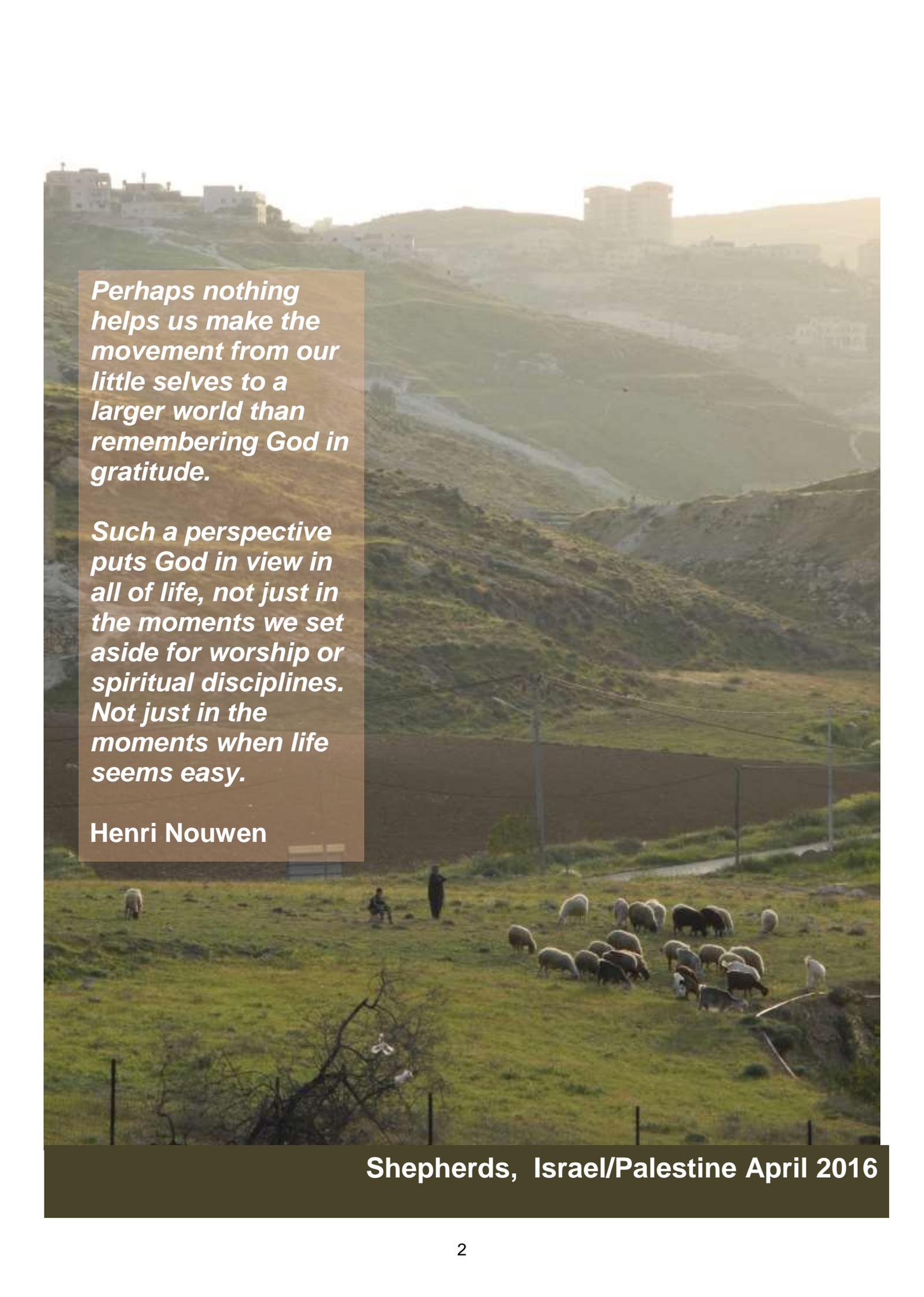


St Andrew's and St George's West May 2016 Magazine

EDINBURGH City
Centre CHURCHES
TOGETHER

ST ANDREW'S &
ST GEORGE'S WEST
EDINBURGH





Perhaps nothing helps us make the movement from our little selves to a larger world than remembering God in gratitude.

Such a perspective puts God in view in all of life, not just in the moments we set aside for worship or spiritual disciplines. Not just in the moments when life seems easy.

Henri Nouwen

Shepherds, Israel/Palestine April 2016

May 2016

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Many thanks to everyone who contributed to the magazine.

Copy deadline for the June issue is **Monday 30 May**

Contact email magazine(at)stagw(dot)org(dot)uk **Editor** Alison Bruce



God of love and faithfulness
You have appointed our Lord Jesus Christ
as mediator of this new covenant

give us grace to join ourselves in a lasting covenant
with you, and each other, as we follow you
we are no longer our own, but yours

Father, Son and Holy Spirit
you are ours, and we are yours for ever

Albany - STAGW Covenant Service,
Sunday 17 April 2016



Reaching Out

Ian Gilmour

Since Easter we have been working our way, at 11am, through the Acts of the Apostles and are being reminded constantly that the church is all about mission. As Ruth Duck declares in her hymn,

**‘As a fire is meant for burning,
With a bright and warming flame,
so the Church is meant for mission,
bringing glory to God’s name’.**

Henri Nouwen, priest and writer, described one of the dimensions of connecting with new people in his book ‘Reaching Out’ as

Hospitality is not a subtle invitation to adopt the lifestyle of the host, but the gift of a chance for the guest to find her own.’

moving 'from hostility to hospitality'.

Nouwen talks of 'creating a friendly space', and challenging all customary approaches to welcoming the guest. 'Hospitality is not to change people, but to offer them space where change can take place. It is not to bring men and women over to our side, but to offer freedom not disturbed by

dividing lines. Hospitality is not a subtle invitation to adopt the lifestyle of the host, but the gift of a chance for the guest to find her own.'

He offers the analogy of the plant; we cannot force it to grow but we can take away the weeds and stones which prevent its development; similarly, we cannot force others into a change of heart but only offer the space where such change can take place. This is one type of mission: not forcing compliance but rather helping to enable healthy patterns for people and communities.



Connecting with Old Friends and New Acquaintances

I am pleased to report that Dr Andrew McLellan will lead worship on Sunday 22 May at 11.00am. He is the national chaplain for the Boys Brigade as well as a former minister of St Andrew's & St George's and a former probationer minister at St George's West.

We will be welcoming boys and officers from all over the central belt who have served as Guard of Honour at the General Assembly service early that morning. They will join us for worship bringing their excellent brass band to play the hymns.

So we will give Andrew and Irene McLellan a warm welcome. We can also look out for those boys and officers in our building for the first time and make an effort to connect warmly with them also.

Further let us continue to give the new minister in our team a warm welcome. She is Revd Allison Becker from California and will be with us until October (she tells a bit of her story elsewhere in this edition).

David Hart is another newcomer to welcome to St Andrew's and St George's West and will be introduced in early June, though you may spot him in our café before that. David is the new workplace chaplain, working alongside Tony Bryer until Tony retires at the end of June. Tony, I am very pleased to report, will be returning to work with us from 1 October, good news for us all.



BB at St Andrew's and St George's West



Draw the Circle Wide

The paragraph above is all about people of the church who have entered and have, or will, enrich our circle. We have certain expectations of them and them of us. The harder task is to welcome people who are not the same but who differ from our average member (do we have any of those!) due to their abilities, their skin colour, their education, their difficult experiences, their sexual orientation. We need to work at drawing our circles of inclusion wide and wider if we wish to more fully engage with God's mission in our world. The song which I shared at the end of April connected with many in the congregation,

**Draw the circle, draw the circle wide.
No one stands alone, we'll stand side by side.**

**Draw the circle wide, draw it wider still.
Let this be our song: no one stands alone.
Standing side by side, draw the circle wide.**

Words: Gordon Light Music: Mark A. Miller

I want to congratulate our members who were at church for the covenant service with Albany Church for the deaf. It was a splendid occasion as Revd Rosie Addis and Moderator designate Russell Barr help us to unite through communion in a strong and special way. There was an openness and generosity of spirit displayed by our members which was hugely encouraging to me as your minister. We look forward to growing this relationship over months and years.

Enjoy the delights of May including the numerous new opportunities to welcome, connect and widen our circle during Christian Aid.

Blessings, Ian



gathering before the Covenant service



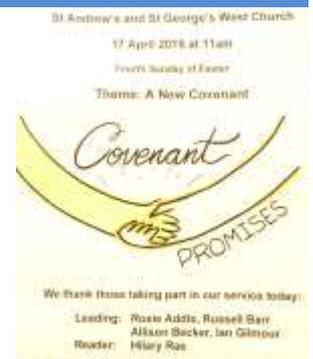
Communion cups

signing the Communion hymn



peace be with you ... and also with you

the buzz after the service





Revd Allison E Becker

Making space for the new

Allison Becker

Dear community and members of STAGW,

I'm so glad to be with you, serving on the ministry team at St. Andrew's and St. George's West. Thank you all for your warm and kind welcome.

I've been asked to share bit about myself by way of introduction. As Ian referenced in his article, I'm a minister from the United States, of the Presbyterian Church USA (which has its roots in the Church of Scotland, and is the equivalent of the CoS in the U.S.). I'm originally from California, having served in a variety of diverse church contexts. I've also been blessed to have been to Mexico, Romania, and Kenya on several occasions for ministry with international church partners.

It was in 2014 that God called me to Scotland – a call that surprised and excited me! The confirmation of trusted friends in ministry and mentors further affirmed this clear direction. This, of course, was further

solidified following an interview (over two days) with the CoS resulting in a unanimous approval and an invitation to serve with the CoS. God is a sending God and indeed, He has sent me to Scotland!

I moved to Scotland in the Autumn of 2015, then, starting a year season of serving with a CoS colleague prior to taking my own parish. The second half of this year is serving with the Revd Ian Gilmour here at STAGW. I'll be with you all until October – and I know that God has great things planned for us.

Some things about myself offered in no particular order: I like chocolate and coffee; International cuisine including a good curry, and as authentic Mexican food as I can possibly find. As my family is very musical, I enjoy live performances of many kinds from classical music to jazz; dance, musical theatre or opera. I enjoy a good ceilidh although I'm certainly still learning different dances.

Museums are a great place to explore, as I enjoy history, and there always seems to be more to discover, especially living here in Edinburgh. I'm a minister and artist, glad for opportunities to integrate the arts in worship and in ministry in general. The art galleries here in the city are places I often visit.

In my time at STAGW so far, it has become clear quickly that you are engaging our neighbours and the needs of our city well, making space for the new, seeking God for “what’s next”, ready to follow the Holy Spirit even when it might be a stretch. You care about the people of the city deeply, which is evident as I speak with each of you. What a joy for a minister to serve such a church, joining her rich history and bright future in Christ.

Let us Journey on, as we together “draw the circle wide and wider”!
(Quoting Revd Ian Gilmour)

Blessings and peace,
The Revd Allison E. Becker, M.Div.

PCUSA Minister

Serving within the bounds of the Presbytery of Edinburgh, Church of Scotland St. Andrews and St. George's West Church

With you - Drawing the circle wide and wider



African Creed, Easter 2016

Learn About Love - Worship God

For the Spirit God gave us does not make us timid, but gives us power, love and self-discipline. 2 Timothy 1.7

Sunday 11am Morning Worship Themes

1 May	Shared Ministry <i>Acts 16: 9-15</i>
8 May	For the Common Good <i>Acts 16:16–34</i>
15 May	Pentecost Sunday <i>Acts 2.1-21</i>
22 May	Trinity Sunday <i>Proverbs 8:1–4, 22–31</i>
29 May	Voice of a new Song <i>Psalms 96</i>
5 June	Voice of the Silenced <i>1 Kings 17:8–16, (17–24)</i>
12 June	Voice of Justice <i>1 Kings 21:1–10, (11–14), 15:21a</i>

Worship lifts the Spirit, it both strengthens and transforms
 Worship is helpful for our growth as followers of Christ, so consider joining us Sunday by Sunday. You can attend Communion at 9.00am, the All Age service at 9.45am or enjoy our progressive pattern at 11.00am or to have the richest and broadest experience come to all three!

May 2016

Sun 1 May	9am Communion 9.45am Learning Together; 10.30am Discussion <i>Revelation</i> 11am Morning Worship Push n shove Sunday – clear the church for the CA Sale	Preparations for the CA Sale 2016
Mon 2 May – Fri 13 May	Christian Aid Sorting Until Wed, 11 May the church is open Mon-Fri 9am-9pm Sat 9am-5pm (closed Sunday) to receive donations of books etc. for the forthcoming Sale.	
Sun 8 May	Worship held in the Undercroft 9am Communion 9.45am Learning Together 10.30am Discussion <i>Revelation</i> 11am Morning Worship	
Sat 14 May	10am-4pm Christian Aid Sale (until Fri 20 May, not Sunday)	
Sun 15 May	Worship held in the Undercroft 9am Communion 9.45am Learning Together 10.30am Discussion <i>Revelation</i> 11am Morning Worship	Christian Aid Sale 2016
Mon 16 May	10am-3.30pm Christian Aid Sale	
Tue 17 May	10am-3.30pm Christian Aid Sale	
Wed 18 May	10am-3.30pm Christian Aid Sale	
Thurs 19 May	10am- 7pm (late opening) CA Sale	
Fri 20 May	10am-3.30pm Christian Aid Sale	
Sat 20 May		
Sun 22 May	General Assembly Sunday 9am Communion 9.45am Learning Together; 10.30am Discussion <i>Revelation</i>	

	11am Morning Worship with BB Silver Band 2-6pm Heart and Soul (Princes St Gardens) 7.30pm Affirmation Scotland General Assembly Service <i>Praying for an inclusive church</i>
Mon 23 May	10.30am Book Group Friedrich Buechner <i>The Hungering Dark</i>
Wed 25 May	2pm Evergreens take a trip on the tram
Thurs 26 May	Justice and the Church International Justice Mission General Assembly Fringe Event
Sun 29 May	9am Communion 9.45am Learning Together 10.30am Discussion <i>Revelation</i> 11am Morning Worship 2pm Albany Deaf Church (Sanctuary) 2pm Hungarian Worship (Chapel) Bells Full Peal (visiting band)
Mon 30 May	12.15pm Amnesty Undercroft Group
June 2016 highlights	
Sat 4 June	Gaelic Mass
Sat 11 June	Messy Church
Mon 20 June	Book Group
Wed 22 June	Donald Gorrie Schools Debates
Sun 26 June	Congregational Picnic
Mon 27 June	Kirk Session Meeting

Congratulations

to **Anthony and Shona Simon**, who have a new son **Edward Dominic Simon**, weighing in at over 10 lb. He will be a brother to Eilidh and Iona who attend our 9.45 am services.

Baptisms

Eliza Fraser on Sunday 24 April

Funerals

Mrs. Rhoda A. Wilson on Wed 20 April at Warriston Crematorium
Mr. Malcolm Strang on Thurs 28 April at Warriston Crematorium

News and Notices

Bells listen to part of the peal rung for Donald Gorrie (Marlborough Surprise Major, 12th Sept. 2012) on BBC iPlayer <http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b07738jn>

The Book Group will meet twice before the Summer, on **Monday, 23 May** and **Monday 20 June**, both at 10.30am, in the chapel, when we shall be studying "The Hungering Dark" by Frederick Buechner.

Donald Gorrie Schools Debates 22 June 4 senior and 6 junior schools will participate in this now established competition. We will simultaneously show an exhibition on UN Sustainable Goals in the Sanctuary.

Congregation Picnic 26 June There will be a Picnic after the 11am Service on Sunday 26th June, which George, Adrienne and Philippa Burgess have kindly agreed to host at their home. All are invited. Would anyone who would like a lift, or is able to offer a lift, please give their names to James Crerar or Mary Margaret Scott. Further details to follow.
Evergreens have only one more meeting, at **2pm on Wednesday**

25 May, when we shall take the tram from St Andrew's Square to the airport, have tea or coffee there and ride back again- a very interesting and comfortable journey and free for us all- except for the tea!

Open days at Shandwick Place Members of our congregation, especially those who came from the former St George's West, will be interested to know that Charlotte Chapel plans to have **Open Days in the Shandwick Place church from Wednesday 15th to Saturday 18th June**. The church will be open all day; visitors are welcome and there will be conducted tours of the building! It might be a bit much for us to turn up *en masse*, but why not go along with a few friends? I am told it is worth seeing. There will also be a special service on Sunday 19th, but that will probably be very busy with Charlotte Chapel's own members. In the June edition of the Newsletter there will be confirmation of the dates and times of opening, in case all does not go according to plan. Jean Mackinlay.



Bright Sparks and Christian Aid



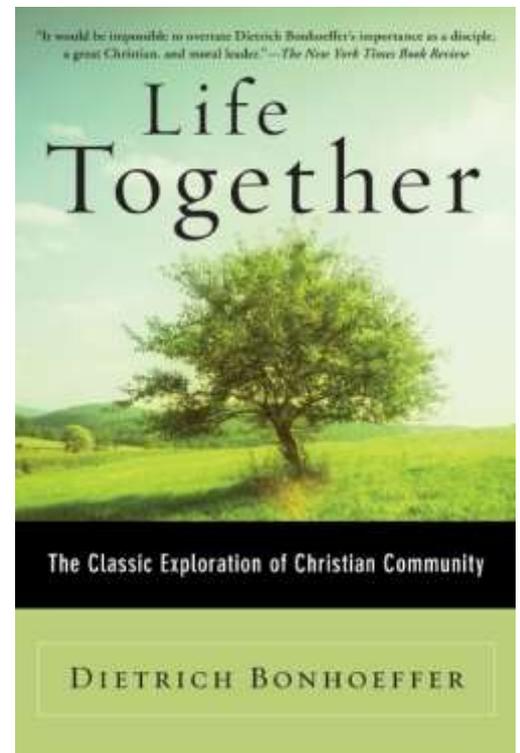
CA Week 2016 highlights Bangladesh, where flooding devastates people living on low lying islands in the Ganges-Brahmaputra delta. CA partners are helping families to raise their houses above flood level and improve soil through wormeries. So Bright Sparks have decided to start a wormery...

Did you know? If you use social media you can help spread the word about the Christian Aid Sale!
www.facebook.com/CASaleEdin
twitter @CASaleEdin

Together

Veronica Crerar

The Book Group have just finished reading *Life Together* by Dietrich Bonhoeffer. This book was first published in German in 1939 primarily as a handbook for the members of the illegal Christian seminary of which Bonhoeffer was leader at the time. The language is somewhat archaic, and there are also perhaps problems of translation. The description of the life of a true Christian community is written for a group of young men, living together learning to be strong Christians in a time of persecution and terror and, therefore, inevitably, a more intense community than our own congregation. The way of life Bonhoeffer describes is a life of total obedience, humble service, rigid discipline and care for others, which at times seems out of touch with life as we know it. And yet this strong, demanding faith



“a life of total obedience, humble service, rigid discipline and care for others”

gave Bonhoeffer the strength to oppose Hitler and to endure imprisonment, torture and death. His work has inspired Christians ever since.

True community, according to Bonhoeffer, is not an ideal which we must realise, it is rather a reality created by God in Christ in which we may participate. He urges us to avoid gossip or criticism of fellow members as this can poison a community. Our fellow Christians may not be made in our image, but they are all made in God's image and we must treat them as such. We must seek out God's will in everything. To this end we must recognise the importance of the discipline of daily prayer and bible reading. He requires us to understand and know ourselves completely, including being very aware of our own sins. He urges us to confess

our sins to ourselves, to God and to one other fellow Christian in order to be truly liberated to serve God.

possibly the finest handbook of how to live as the body of Christ

(Sam Wells)

This was not an easy read, but most members of the group found that Bonhoeffer had much to say that was still relevant today.

The excellent introduction by Samuel Wells, Vicar of St Martin in the Fields, London concludes “If you are looking for knowledge of God rooted in deep knowledge of the self; for paths in which other people can be

invitations into grace rather than obstacles to holiness; and for a way to build Christian community that is true enough to withstand the onslaughts of persecution, terror and destruction, then you are about to read possibly the finest handbook available to Christians of how to live as the body of Christ. It is perhaps the most succinct legacy of Bonhoeffer’s remarkable witness.”

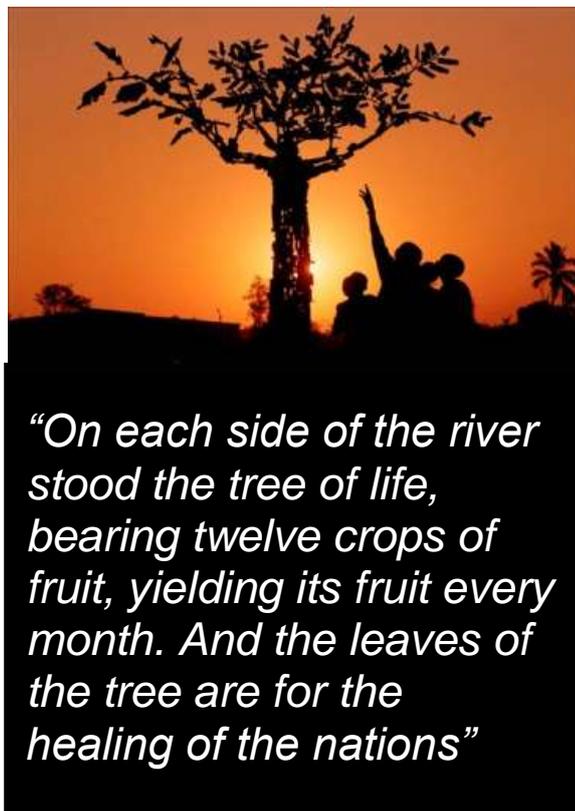
The **Book Group** meets at 10.30am on the 3rd Monday of the month. The next read is Friedrich Buechner’s *Hungering Darkness*.

Revelation

Revelation is a strange book, Who wrote it? When was it written? How do we read it? How do we interpret it? What relevance, if any, does it have for us today?

The **Sunday 10.30 Discussion Group** is tackling the book, over a 12 week period until the end of June.

Enquiring minds are always welcome!



“On each side of the river stood the tree of life, bearing twelve crops of fruit, yielding its fruit every month. And the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations”



St Cuthbert's Way Diary

Mary Margaret Scott

If you decide to walk the 64 miles from Melrose to the Holy Island in spring, you really couldn't pick a better time than 20-23 April 2016, when Judy and Arthur Chapman and I tackled St Cuthbert's Way. OK, it was cold on our final day, but - apart from a 3-minute hailstorm - it was dry, mainly sunny and warm enough to enjoy being out of doors.



On Day 1 we caught the train to Tweedbank – Judy and Arthur's first time on the new Borders Railway – and by 10.15am were on the first leg of the walk – 15 miles from Melrose to Harestones near Jedburgh.



This starts with a steep-ish climb up to the saddle between the Eildons, but then becomes a pleasant varied walk through woodland and by the side of the River Tweed, before joining the course of Dere Street. This Roman Road ran from York to the Forth and was once known as Agricola's Road; the line of the route has survived remarkably well over the last 2,000 years.

Day 2 saw us on the stretch between Harestones and Kirk Yetholm - the most strenuous part of the trip. The first half follows the River

Teviot and then Dere Street again, but after Morebattle, the route climbs sharply up to 1300 ft. on Wideopen Hill. The views are spectacular and the sound of the larks...! But we were quite glad at the end of the 16.5 mile stretch to reach the Youth Hostel at Kirk Yetholm and enjoy dinner in the local hotel.

Day 3 -13 miles to Wooler – combines some road walking with farmland, including crossing the wall that divided Scotland and England, and then another short, sharp climb up into the Cheviots. Despite more cloud on this leg, the views were still stunning with panoramic views of the Cheviot range and its peaks.



At the Border



St Cuthbert's Cave

Our last day took us to Fenwick, just 11.5 miles from Wooler. Much of this is road walking on quiet country roads, but there is also farmland and woods. On this stretch of the route lies St Cuthbert's Cave, the dramatic sandstone overhang where St Cuthbert's body is said to have been taken by the monks on their journey from Lindisfarne to Durham. A short climb beyond the cave leads to the first sighting of Holy Island and Lindisfarne Castle. Alas... I had mistaken the time of the tides, so we were not able to cross to Holy Island!

However, we have all been before so it was not as much of a disappointment as it might have been. A bus from Fenwick to Berwick and onwards to St Boswells and Edinburgh saw the end of the trip. It was so enjoyable that we are planning on walking the Great Glen Way next year!

Letter from Arizona

Bill Clinkenbeard

The battle is on for the Republican and Democratic parties to select their candidates for the General Election in November of this year. Some states have already held their primary elections and others are still to come. For the Republican Party the main contenders are Senator Ted Cruz from Texas and Donald Trump from New York (“The Donald”, as he likes to be thought of). For the Democrats the contest has narrowed down to Hillary Clinton and Bernie Sanders, junior Senator from Vermont. Here in Arizona, where I am based, Trump received 47% of the vote and Clinton 57%.

There is much in this campaign that challenges American political sanity. Ted Cruz is said to be the most disliked political figure in the country. Donald Trump is ... well - what can we say? The Republican establishment is doing its best to dispose of The Donald, but has so far been unsuccessful.

The party is afraid that should Trump be the candidate he will lose to Hillary Clinton, taking some congressional seats with him and perhaps damaging the party for the future. So far they have been unsuccessful. It is interesting that they must be considering denying their own democratic procedures. The Democrats appear to be content with Clinton, but Sanders is liberal, popular with many younger voters, and doesn't carry Clinton's baggage.

You may well ask how it is that reasonably rational people could possibly be enthusiastic about Trump, especially so when you recall his history in Scotland. How can a man who has no political experience, sports a massive ego, has encouraged his fans to “beat the... out of opponents”, promises to wall off Mexico and deport all illegals, and says that on complex issues he will mainly consult himself should be so popular.

Here is one possible answer. The American people are fed up with political correctness, anxious about terrorism, worried about immigration, and uncertain about the economy.

Trump appears to break all the rules. His outrageous statements make him seem like a strong leader, and the media assist him by reporting all this. The outrageous statements embody a deliberate policy. A strong, decisive leader appeals to the populace. You might well reflect upon a similarly appealing strong leader in the Germany of the thirties.

All this is worrying because we seem to be endorsing a kind of fundamentalism, not merely in religion but in politics and culture as well. People want simple answers to complex questions, only yes and no affirmations, only black and white issues, only victories and no compromises.

It would be good if the voters in November firmly rejected such a danger.

Bill Clinkenbeard, April, 2016

News from Together Partners

The Pilgrim for an Hour 'app': If you have an iPhone or an iPad and are comfortable using apps, can you spare half an hour to trial Together's new app which will go live at this year's General Assembly? If so, contact Ian Gilmour or Frances

.Cooper.

Silent Prayer at St John's The silent prayer time on Tuesday afternoons is from 3.30-4.15pm in the chapel – all are welcome, no experience of this type of prayer necessary!

St John's Church walks The next Thursday walk will be on **5 May** around Beecraigs Loch and Cockleroy..The next Saturday walk will be on **21 May** and will be from Lauder to Tweedbank on the Southern Upland Way.

Just Festival Event - Science, Faith and Society 7.30pm 12th May at The Quaker Meeting House, 7 Victoria Terrace, EH1 2JL

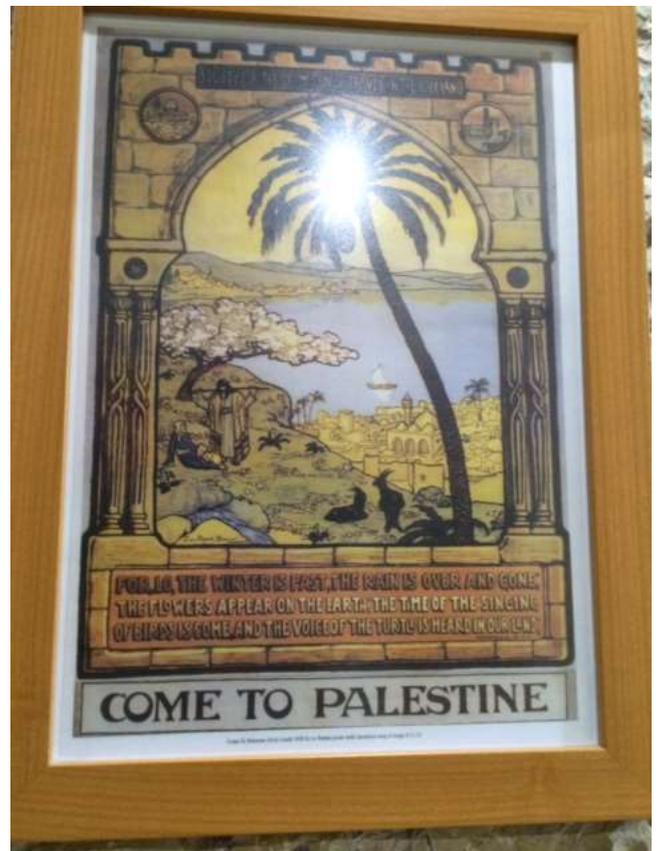
Come to Palestine!

**Sally and Nick Evans and
Alistair and Margaret McGregor**

Every few years a group from the Hadeel shop at 123 George Street and its parent charity Palcrafts travel to Israel/Palestine to meet suppliers.

We meet our suppliers as friends, see their new products and learn of their successes - and problems. In April, our group of 11 comprised Carol Morton, Director of Development and organizer of the trip, Sarah Burns, the shop manager, volunteers and members of Palcrafts Council.

One responsibility of Council is determining grants to the producer groups. It is very important to us that each of our groups operate under Fair Trade principles. This year we visited 19 groups in the West Bank and the Negev, and the shop, Sunbula in Jerusalem. The shop started life in 1989 with a Bazaar in St Andrew's Church in Jerusalem, showing the products of the co-operatives.



*Pray not for Arab or Jew
For Palestinian or Israeli*

***But pray rather for
ourselves***

*that we may not divide
them in our prayers
but keep them both
together in our hearts*

from Christian Aid

We were warmly welcome at the church when we joined their Sunday congregation. Sadly we were not able, this time, to visit groups in Gaza.

Our visits ranged from factories, showrooms and centres, to small workshops and refugee camps. We saw olive wood, wool, recycled glass, paper, soap, rugs and embroidered crafts and sampled local produce.



Zaytoun Olive Oil
at Canaan Fair Trade Centre

Some highlights

- the impressive Canaan Fair Trade visitor centre near Jenin, olive oil processing and bottling plant, supplying Zaytoun in the UK. Each year more farmers can earn a fair wage and stay on their land using traditional and organic farming methods - www.canaanfairtrade.com
- a women's empowerment project in Beit Doqu, a community cut off by the separation wall, demonstrating brass jewelry making
- smiling faces at Ma'an lil Hayat, L'Arche, where we watched cute felt sheep being made and we danced!
- stunning, colourful, embroidery crafts, using traditional and modern designs in women's co-operatives.

Many projects were developing new products and international markets, but others struggled, highlighting how "trade not aid" makes such a difference.



Ma'an lil Hayat felt sheep, made from Bethlehem wool by a L'Arche community



Jewellery making at Beit Doqu women's empowerment project



It is difficult for us, in a country with a huge degree of freedom, to imagine the problems for those living, manufacturing and trading in Palestine.



Separation barrier

“The Wall”, with its checkpoints, prevents free passage, interferes with the simplest of journeys: it adds threats, and inconvenience and is a permanent irritant. It separates workers from their place of work, traders from their suppliers, producers from their markets, and co-operatives from many of their customers.

At Surif co-operative near Hebron many women find that where they live and work is cut off from their own land, to which they only have access when soldiers unlock the gate in the wall at a time of their choice. And once the owners are on their land they are locked in until “let out” when the soldiers choose. If, on occasions, those on the Palestine side of the wall feel like virtual prisoners, that is nothing to the reality of those who are literally and randomly imprisoned. A wrong word at the checkpoint; some problems with one’s permit and suddenly someone is detained for short or long.

Live in Ramallah, a large modern city, close to Jerusalem, and every night you may hear an incursion by the Israeli army or police carrying out an arrest. If your business requires water for production, as with Canaan Co-operative, it doesn’t help if Israel cuts off the water supply for days at a time without notice. These are just a few of the daily problems we heard about - which are multiplied in Gaza!

In between formal visits we were able to enjoy some of the sights. The surprisingly green fields in the valleys and olive groves set on steep terraced hillsides; the walled city of Jerusalem glowing in the sunset; new villas and apartment blocks and homes created in the concrete blocks of refugee camps. Most evenings started with a

discussion about the projects visited that day and arrangements for the next. Sometimes there was time for more frivolous chat and a drink before heading out to eat in Beit Sahour, Ramallah or Jerusalem. These evening meals were a time to wind down from the work of the day and appreciate local hospitality and cuisine.

Whether we were enjoying a meal in the home of a Hadeel supplier, taking tea in a “secret” Austrian garden in the heart of Jerusalem or eating in the Singer Café in Beit Sahour (named after the famous sewing machine and car maker) we enjoyed each other’s company and shared our experiences of a country with so much to offer the visitor.

Visit Hadeel or look online to see what’s in store:

www.hadeel.org

And come to Palestine!

www.visitpalestine.ps



Olive groves



Singer Café, Beit Sahour



All Things Bright and Beautiful, All Creatures Great and Small

Pat McKerrow's Wildlife Diary

I watch with excitement the evidence of Spring's arrival; birds in their pairs, nest building, buds on trees, and much more.



Inevitably it makes me reflect on wonderful sightings from previous years, the fledgling bluetits I spotted on the tree outside our house one Sunday after returning home from church, the tiny baby rabbit on the grassy patch on our estate and the lovely Goosander family nearby on the Water of Leith. Who can predict what this Spring will bring? Whatever it might be, I look forward to

witnessing as much of it as I can!

Isn't there such an innocence about any new form of life? Who can resist the one nervous duckling afraid to take that first dive into the water; the one effervescent lamb who will consistently leap higher than any of the others;

“Take time to be in nature, She feeds both heart and soul, In silent love and beauty, Her presence doth console”.

and the one fledgling reluctant to take that leap of faith from the security of the nest. What a privilege and joy to observe it all, and of course to see the mums tending and feeding their young with such care and devotion.

At the moment, my attention and, I have to confess, a bit of my heart, has been stolen by a pair of mute swans on my local wildlife 'patch'. I first noticed them and their nest 10 days ago, and I've been

keeping a daily vigil ever since. I find the behaviour fascinating to witness, the way the cob (male) fends off nosy mallards, while she (the pen), is constantly building up the nest with new blades of grass, as well as 'rotating' her eggs. On my first visit, there were clearly three eggs in the nest, but sadly, by the third day of my 'watch' one of the eggs had disappeared. Imagine my delight when a new egg arrived, bringing the total back up to 3!



The nest area although beautiful and tranquil, is so very vulnerable. I am in no doubt about the risks these birds face, and similarly any cygnets that may successfully hatch in a few weeks' time. My plan is to keep track of this family over the weeks ahead and see how their story unfolds.

Many of you will know the hymn with the opening verse "The glory of the spring how sweet! The new-born life how glad! What joy the happy earth to greet! In new, bright raiment clad!" This seems to sum up what I hope we can all encounter in the weeks ahead. I will certainly be out with my camera as much as possible, waiting and watching, listening to the fabulous birdsongs, feeling blessed to be surrounded with such beauty, and feeling God's love, proximity and peace.

I leave you with a verse I found recently, I do not know the origin, but I liked the sentiment: "Take time to be in nature, She feeds both heart and soul, In silent love and beauty, Her presence doth console."

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Weekday worship 1pm Monday – Friday

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