

St Andrew's and St George's West November 2018 Magazine



Pray for
peace, compassion
for those displaced
and new homes
and occupations
for those who
have suffered

Pray for a
time when
not conflict
is needed

Pray for
peace
and
compassion



John Chalmers

Locum Minister

As I write this article I am in attendance at the Annual General Meeting of Christian Aid; together, representatives of 41 UK denominations are also discussing the future direction of this most important of UK Church agencies.

In his opening remarks, Rowan Williams, Chair of Christian Aid, has just reminded us of the words of Ban-Ki Moon, former UN Secretary-General:

"we can be the first generation to end poverty – and the last generation to address climate change before it is too late."

This has served to remind me that the influence of our church life must always be more than that of our local identity and existence.

At this AGM and conference I feel that I am not just representing the World Mission Council of the Church of Scotland which sent me here, but I am also representing St Andrew's and St George's West which places such importance on its contribution to the work of Christian Aid.

At this time I do not think there is any other congregation that could have lured me into serving as part of its Locum Team. When I was approached by Ian Gilmour and Crispin Longden I had just taken up the role of Convener of the World Mission Council and wasn't looking for any additional responsibilities.

When I suggested that my commitments to the work of the World Mission Council might be a disadvantage to the congregation, this was readily countered by the suggestion that few other congregations in the Church would be more interested in knowing what was going on in the church's life across the world

I remembered then, the many friends I have this congregation and the admiration I have for the priorities you hold and I simply couldn't say no!



So, it turns out to be a delight to be a small part of the team that will see you through to the Induction of a new minister, and true to the persuasive comment that led to me agreeing to this role I am combining this letter with an encouragement to you to continue to express the message of the gospel alongside a tenacity for its practical outworking in fairness, justice and peace across world. This is an important congregation and I look forward to playing my part in holding it together until the next major chapter on its life begins. A chapter which I am sure will see you continue to exercise a ministry which is local, national and international in significance.

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Cover: 9.45 Remembrance Service.

Thanks to all contributors. We hope to publish the next (Dec-Jan) issue on Sunday 2 December. Contributions by Mon 26 November please. [magazine\[at\]stagw.org.uk](mailto:magazine@stagw.org.uk)

November 2018

Thur 1 Nov	7.30pm at St John's: Rev Rosie Addis licensed Asst Rector
Fri 2 Nov	7pm: Seeking Peace: Reflecting on Armistice
Sat 3 Nov	7.30pm Georgian Concert Society: <i>Thalia Ensemble – Reicha and Beethoven: Friendship and harmony</i>
Sun 4 Nov	9am, 9.45am, 11am services. 2pm Albany visual service 12 noon Fellowship lunch for schools for Syrian Refugees in the Lebanon run by Edinburgh Direct Aid
Mon 5 Nov	6.30pm AHSS Lecture: <i>Highland Retreats: The Influences of the Romantic North on Architecture and Taste</i>
Wed 7 Nov	1pm Music and Reflection: Robert Schumann Piano Trio: speaker Eleanor Wilson
Thur 8 Nov	Undercroft Café closed 11.30am Thanksgiving service for Margaret Street
Sun 11 Nov	10.50am Remembrance with German Speaking Church BSL signed
Tue 13 Nov	Conference all day, sanctuary
Wed 14 Nov	1pm Music and Reflection: Edith Piaf Caitlin McGillivray, soprano and John Ramsay speaker
Thur 15 Nov	Great War Concert Ian Macfarlane
Fri 16 Nov	Rock Trust Sleep Out
Sun 18 Nov	9am, 9.30am, 11am services
Tue 20 Nov	22.30pm Service of Thanksgiving for Bob Brodie
Thur 22 Nov	7.30pm Finding OIKO Rev David Coleman
Sun 25 Nov	9am, 9.30am, 11am services 2-3.30pm Messy Church BSL signed, all welcome
Mon 26 Nov	Undercroft Amnesty Group 12.15-1pm
Thur 29 Nov	7pm The White Butterfly Concert Leonard Harper-Gow

December 2018

Sun 2 Dec	9am, 9.30am, 11am services; 12 noon Fellowship Lunch for TOGETHER Homelessness projects
Mon 3 Dec	6.30pm AHSS Lecture: <i>Being Authentic: Restoring Historic Buildings and their Interiors</i> Michael Davis
Sat 8-24 December	New Life Edinburgh Christmas Tree Festival
Sun 9 Dec	9am, 9.30am, 11am services Albany Christmas Service at Deaf Action

Mon 10 Dec	7.30pm Kirk Session
Tue 11 Dec	Stewart Investors Carol Service
Wed 12 Dec	Missing People Carol Service
Fri 21 Dec	6pm Carols at Six
Sat 22 Dec	Congregational Christmas Supper
Sun 23 Dec	9am, 9.45am, 11am services
Mon 24 Dec	Christmas Eve 5pm Christingle 11pm Watchnight
Tue 25 Dec	Christmas Day 11am Family Service
Sun 30 Dec	9am, 9.30am, 11am services
Mon 31 Dec	TOGETHER Hogmanay Watchnight Service at St Cuthbert's

Congregational News

Deaths

Margaret Street MBE on 22 October, just after her 98th birthday.

Bob Brodie peacefully at home on 4 November, surrounded by his family. After a private cremation there will be Service of Thanksgiving here at StAGW on **Tuesday 20 November at 2.30pm.**

Mary Munro on Thursday 8 November

Vacancy

On Sunday 14 October members elected a 13-strong Nominating Committee consisting of George Burgess (Convener); Barbara Finlayson (Clerk) Alison Bruce; Alison Campbell; Jimmy Campbell, Arthur Chapman, Helen Cox; Michael Cunliffe, Mary Godden; Crispin Longden; Alistair MacKenzie, Katie McNeill; Diana Thurston-Smith.

The post is being advertised through the Church of Scotland. You can also find our Parish Profile and supporting information on our website at <https://www.stagw.org.uk/vacancy/>



Bringing joy to others

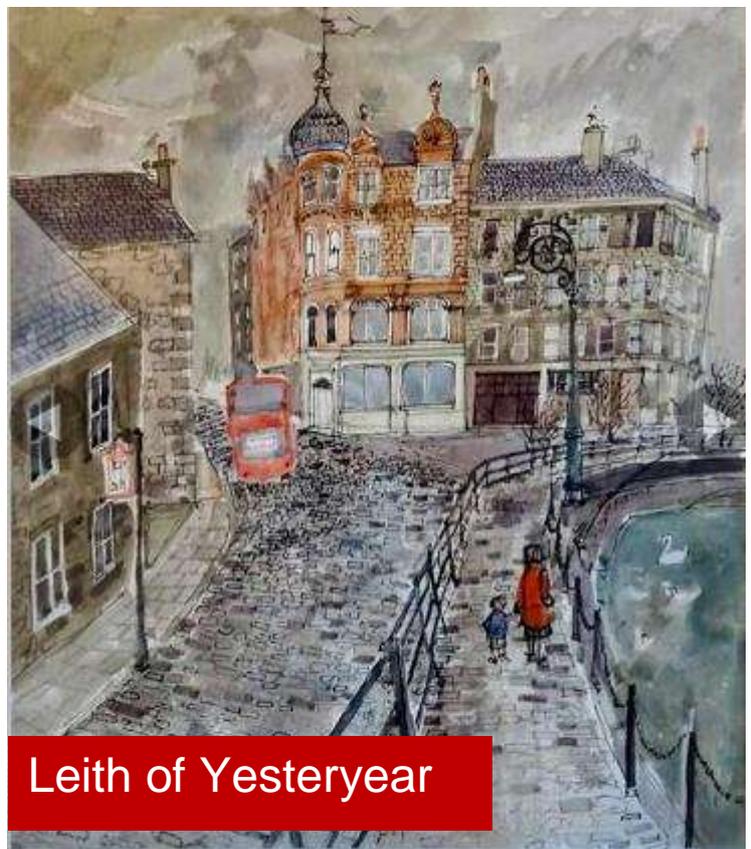
Mary Davidson
with Lisa Rogers

Following the May Sale we gave £110,000 for the work of Christian Aid. At the end of October we held a Sale of Pictures and Scottish Books, with the Coffee Morning on 27 October, the third

day of the event. As a result of this £21,000 was raised. On Monday, 5 November, a cheque for £20,000 went to the Christian Aid Scotland office. We had learned in September that if we donated the proceeds from our Autumn Sale to Christian Aid's 2018 Harvest Appeal there would be match-funding from the EU so that every £1 we gave would be worth £5 for life-changing projects in Ethiopia, Burkina Faso, Honduras and Malawi.

What had made a huge difference in the weeks beforehand when we were preparing pictures and books was that, after a year of suffering the consequences, both financial and practical, of the loss of the Peffermill unit, we had the use of our splendid new premises, freely granted to us by a City of Edinburgh philanthropist. He has given us the whole well-appointed basement of a large office building in Leith and also the constant support of the courteous, helpful staff there.

We began with a store of pictures and Scottish books reserved from the May Sale, but as the October one approached people brought pictures specially for the gallery event; as we call it. This was exciting. Douglas Davies, Peter Bourne, Moira Ferrier, Carola Gordon, Elizabeth Strong, and Jackie Warburton all came with new pictures for us. Carola Gordon's gift was a beautiful Edinburgh picture, *Leith of Yesteryear* which depicted in minute detail a corner of old Leith where the daughter of



one of our elders now lives. Other generous donors brought pictures by Richard Demarco, Marisa Donaldson and Edward Gage, and there was also Pietro Annigoni's signed portrait of HM Queen. Then there were two small works dated 1879 by William McTaggart, the great 19th-century Scottish artist, which were heirlooms belonging to an Edinburgh family who had donated these for the work of their own church for Christian Aid.

To crown the event we had a modern, major valuable work of art: the grand watercolour painting by John Bellany RA, our 2005 patron, of a fishing-boat *Star of Hope* in harbour at Fraserburgh.

A highlight of the Sale of Scottish Books was the acquisition of the 1844 Cadell edition of 101 volumes of the works of Sir Walter Scott by a scholar with a special interest in Scott and Abbotsford. There were steady sales from a marvellous array of Scots literature past and present, including *Donald and Benoit*, the book our 2018 patron John Byrne published for children in 2011.

Forming an important part of our collection were the signed first editions of Scots writers of today, which included Helen Bellany's memoir *The Restless Wave, My Two Lives with John Bellany*. We cherish all these books and gave a great deal of thought to the proper pricing of them.

We sold countless pictures and books in fifteen hours, and the interior of the church, with autumn sun streaming in, was the perfect setting for this brief postscript to the May Sale. We were delighted to welcome many of our faithful friends, some of whom had come from afar, and also to make some new ones. We were conscious throughout of the goodwill we are so fortunate to enjoy and are profoundly thankful for it. We always look forward to the Coffee Morning. The hospitality and wonderful home-baking and preserves, with the traditional stalls alongside, made the Undercroft a delightful place to be on the morning of Saturday 27 October.

Just before the Sale, three of us went to Stewart Conn's house in the New Town to collect a wide and wonderful canvas depicting the Old Town in snow. This was *Children in grey street (1964)* by Rosemary Seaton. Stewart, poet and playwright and Edinburgh's first Makar,



Children in a grey street

told us he had bought it “for a song” at one of those *Scotsman Steps* exhibitions some of us remember so well from the Sixties.

Stewart was delighted to make the connection between the horse in his picture and the recurring theme in *Horses for Canoes*, our Christian Aid 2018 story, circulated earlier this year. Inspired perhaps by our pleasure in this picture of children in the Cowgate with a St Cuthbert’s milk cart drawn by a white horse, Stewart has written a poem dedicated to Christian Aid.

Entitled *Milky Steed*, it is an apt conclusion to this letter of thanks to him and all the others who have sought, in his poetic words, to “bring joy to others” at St Andrew’s. and St George’s West Church in October 2018

Milky Steed

*With no pretension to the chivalric,
a knight’s charger, say, or a palfrey
for fair lady, but simply drawing
a red St Cuthbert’s milk float
through a snowy Cowgate, this
makes its own claim to romance.*

*Engrossed children whoop and
play,*

*A girl pushes a pram. Bought
For a song on the Scotsman
Steps, back in the Sixties, its
Powdery colours and naïve vigour
Hung for years in our sons’ room.*

*This forenoon we saw it off,
One of a long line of Edinburgh
Horses, to be sold for Christian Aid,
Hoping it will bring joy to others,
Even summon up new ghosts,
Rather than being put out to grass.*



St Andrew's & St George's West • Edinburgh

2018 Music and Reflection

Autumn Series | 1pm Wednesdays

Composers in their Lives and Music

Enjoy lunchtime recitals by young Scottish musicians - with biographical reflections from **James McNeill, Verena Jantzen, Eleanor Wilson** and **John Ramsay**.

24 October, 1pm | **Claude Debussy**

Drew Crichton, piano

Speaker: **James McNeill**

31 October, 1pm | **A Musical Reformation**

**St Andrew's and St George's West
Vocal Ensemble**

Speaker: **Rev Verena Jantzen**

7 November, 1pm | **Robert Schumann: Piano Trio**

Alex Prentice, violin
Joanna Stark, cello
Max McWhirter, piano

Speaker: **Eleanor Wilson**

14 November, 1pm | **Edith Piaf**

Caitlin McGillivray, soprano

Speaker: **John Ramsay**

Photo credit: © Peter Stubbs peter.stubbs@edinphoto.org.uk

Free Entry



St Andrew's & St George's West

13 George Street Edinburgh EH2 2PA

Find out about more events at www.stagw.org.uk

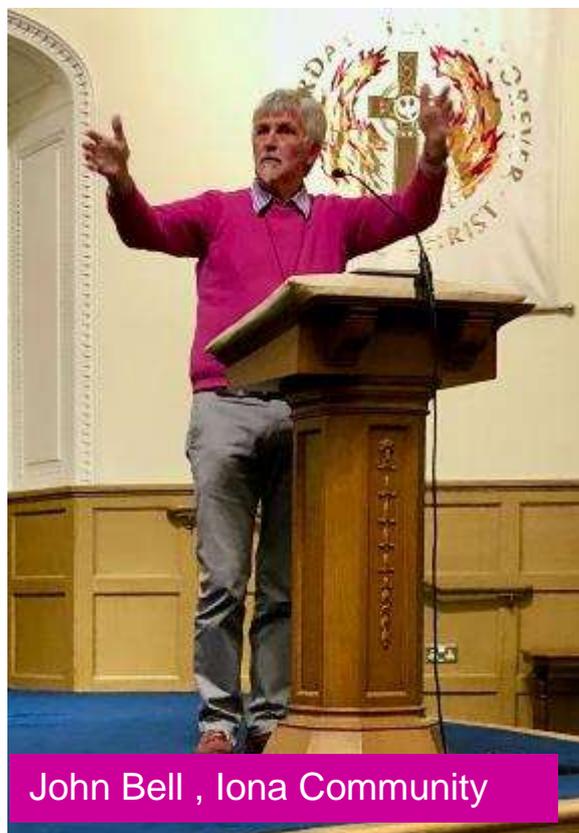
Scottish Charity No. SC008990



Meek and mild?

Nick Evans

John Bell's gentle and self-deprecating style belied the strength of the message he delivered in *Singing our way into or out of belief*, the 2018 Donald Gorrie Lecture. He set the scene by reminding us of the power inherent in music and song, how they can transport us back to childhood or significant events in our lives, even unlock seemingly forgotten memories and take us to places new. He pointed out, perhaps to the discomfort of many of those present, that no-one remembers the words of a sermon but we



John Bell , Iona Community

can all remember the words of hymns, especially those learnt in childhood.

His core message was that the words we sing tell people what we believe. He quoted several hymns which **don't** say what the Church believes. For example in *Once in Royal David's City*

“Christian children all must be mild, obedient, good as he”.

“we need a sturdier image of Jesus than just “meek and mild”.

Does Biblical evidence support this image? In fact, said John, the Bible says almost nothing about the child Jesus except that one day he ran away from his parents without telling them and went to the temple. Hardly a model of obedience! Someone in the past chose the words of the carol for their own reasons. And for today, we need a sturdier image of Jesus than just “meek and mild”.

Patriotic songs came in for a similar blast when they defended slavery or romanticised war. Hymns can almost paint a graven image in words. From *Abide with Me*:

“Change and decay in all around I see,
O Thou who changest not, abide with me.”

For some people this has established the notion that change in the

Church is synonymous with decay because they believe what they sing! John, however, put the emphasis on the Biblical words

“Behold, I make all things new”

Change is expected – and we make things new by changing ourselves.

John also encouraged us to examine closely the words we take for granted. For example, the 23rd Psalm begins with the clear male image of God as a shepherd before using the traditional female image of someone preparing a table for a meal.

“why are we more content to sing about places and events in Palestine 2000 years ago than we are about God’s presence in Scotland today? “

On a similar theme, he challenges us with the question: why do we have difficulty in using 21st century language in our hymns?

Words like tenement, offices, schools, etc. Why are we more content to sing about places and events in Palestine 2000 years ago than we are about God’s presence in Scotland today?.

For the first time in a Donald Gorrie lecture, singing illustrated what was said. It was a joy to hear John at the piano, playing with sensitivity and ease. His voice was delicate and true, focussing on the meaning of the words. As if to emphasise his core message, his final hymn, “If”, had a modern, repetitive riff evoking modern pop music, and it was even possible to imagine a drum beat underneath, with a hip-hop feel.

The words we sing are what we believe. They inform us about ourselves, tell us about God and tell the world about Christianity.

Historic hymns may well bring back warm memories, but do we always believe what we are singing? If not, why should others believe us? By the end of the lecture, choosing hymns for a service suddenly became a more daunting task and the repertoire for our Christmas Services narrowed a little.

With over 150 people in the audience from as far away as Durham and Gourock, the evening was a good way for us to be church in the 21st century. This is not the place to re-tell John’s closing joke, you’ll have to ask someone who was there, but its meaning was clear: if we sing about our faith and the world using out of date imagery, we will not be singing about the people of today.

Moments In Nature

Pat McKerrow's Wildlife Diary

Not a day passes when I don't long to be outdoors enjoying the natural world; call it an innate desire, perhaps even a need. It certainly lifts my spirits and draws me close to our Creator – as you have heard me say many times before. So much to relish, so much to treasure, and of course, so much to be grateful for. At this time of year, the colours are glorious, the air fresh and crisp, and what a treat it is to hear and witness the arrival of migratory birds.

After several months of absence, I have loved getting back to my local patch on the Water of Leith (WoL), spending time with my swan pair, and watching the antics of other residents, including goosanders, mallards, moorhens, herons, grey wagtails, squirrels, buzzards, and kingfishers. The latter, having recently given me the best kingfisher 'show' I have ever had – more on that later.

In fact, when I reflect on all that this stretch of river has given me over the years, words actually fail me. I was therefore saddened to learn that a young man was seriously assaulted near my patch recently. Yes, I confess to having encountered situations there that have made me feel uneasy and head for home sooner than anticipated. Yet, despite this, I rank the area's quietness as one of its major attractions; a place where I find peace, connect with God, and recharge my batteries within nature's embrace. How ironic and disappointing that this very feature may bring me, and I am sure others, to at least be more vigilant there.

Strangely it brings to mind many helpful words from scripture about dealing with fear in a variety of contexts. Nelson Mandela too, although speaking of much more serious circumstances, said "I learned that courage was not the absence of fear, but the triumph over it." And, younger readers will recall some advice given to the lion cub Simba in Disney's 'The Lion King': "Don't let danger control you" as well as "Being brave doesn't mean you go looking for trouble". Enough said!

So, returning to the local wildlife, what has captivated me most during my walks these last few weeks? The answer is very easy; without doubt, a kingfisher. As you know, I have had the great pleasure of watching these birds many times before, and in different locations.



centre stage on his own personal spotlight

Often, I have heard the unmistakable high-pitched whistle-like call, “zii”, followed by the flash of turquoise and orange as one zooms past on its typically low flightpath. With the naked eye they tend to be notoriously difficult to track thereafter and usually vanish from sight as quickly as they appeared. I consider myself fortunate though to have watched them perched on branches, diving torpedo-like for fish, and carrying fish to nest-sites to feed a mate or youngsters. Stunning birds, as W H Davies says in his poem ‘The Kingfisher’:

“It was the rainbow gave thee birth,
And left thee all her lovely hues...”

Much smaller than I expected when years ago I had my first ‘spot’ (approximately 7”, including the bill), quite timid, and despite their flamboyant colours, blend in beautifully with riverside vegetation. Finding a sitting kingfisher is certainly a case of luck, knowing likely places to look, and ‘getting your eye in’!

How can I begin to describe my most recent and most wonderful kingfisher experience? There was nothing particularly unusual about the day or the weather, nor indeed my decision to head along the WoL

to see what was happening. That said, something (thankfully), made me take my camera with me; these last few months post-surgery, I have mostly left it at home. Initially, it was just a normal lovely walk, enjoying the autumnal colours, the crunch of fallen leaves, and of course, a bit of interaction with my swans...encouraged by their favourite floating swan food. I was about to turn homewards when there it was, that sudden flash of blue – a male kingfisher.

Fortunately, I saw him land in a nearby tree...and thus began my kingfisher 'stalk' along the riverbank! First he flew onto to one tree, then another; then partially hidden in another...sitting for maybe 20 minutes; then a quick flight to the next tree, this time going so deeply into foliage that with the changing light, his colours were only just visible via my longest camera lens. And so it continued for almost 2 hours as we

made our way upstream, a relatively short distance of around 60 yards.

not only was the sun shining on him, but God's light was on and with both of us.

Undoubtedly the highlight came when he landed on a typical kingfisher perch, a collection of branches in the middle of the river...

immediately in front of me. Not only that, but on this perch he was bathed in perfect sunlight; centre stage in his own personal spotlight. Certainly my preferred moments of the 'stalk' and seemingly his too. He spent the majority of this magical time there, surveying his surroundings, stretching his wings, and even expelling a pellet of undigested food/fish bones. I loved every minute of it. And it is worth noting that this tiny little bird took away any anxiety I may have harboured that day about my safety; not only was the sun shining on him, but God's light was on and with both of us. I leave you with an extract from Mary Oliver's 'At the River Clarion'"

“...I was sitting at the river named Clarion, on a water splashed stone and all afternoon I listened to the voices of the river talking.

Whenever the water struck the stone it had something to say,
and the water itself...

And slowly, very slowly, it became clear to me what they were saying.

Said the river: I am part of holiness.

And I too said the stone...

...Of course for each of us, there is daily life.

Let us live it..."

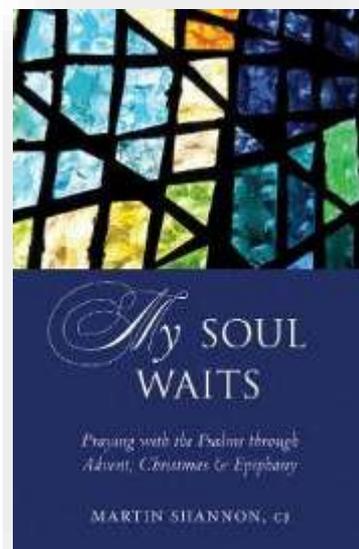
Every blessing, Pat McKerrow

Cornerstone Bookshop Reviews

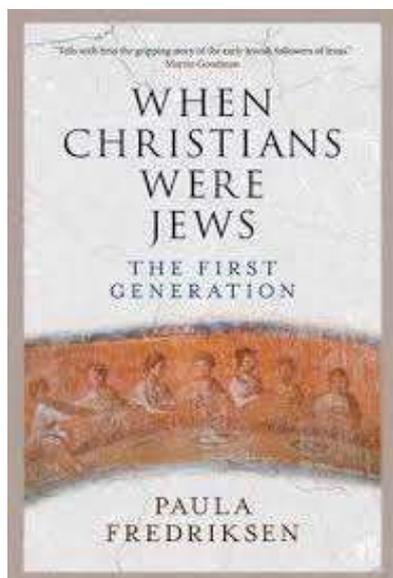
Amanda Bruce

My Soul Waits by Martin Shannon £11.99

If you follow the practice of reading daily through Advent we have many books in stock to enrich your journey towards Christmas. One such is Martin Shannon's new book, which emphasises Advent as a time of "preparation, getting ready, longing for, making room and not getting ahead of ourselves." In it he uses the Psalms as a starting point for reflection. Each day an excerpt is followed by a short meditation, a 'word' from the Church Fathers, and a prayer. At a time when we can find ourselves rushing and busy, this lyrical book offers a chance for quiet reflection, dwelling in the ancient words of the Psalmist.



When Christians were Jews by Paula Fredriksen £20.00



Paula Fredriksen is a writer who never fails to blow life into her scholarship to engage her readers. This is certainly the case in this characteristically compelling account of the lives of Jesus' earliest followers. Placing Christianity firmly within Judaism, Fredriksen's offers us part-biography, part-social history, charting the early days of the apostolic community (made up of Jews, waiting for what they believed to be the imminent establishment of God's Kingdom) in, what she calls, 'a tale of two cities,' Jerusalem and Rome. "What should the original 'community' do while they waited for their Messiah's return? Did it have a message to spread and, if so,

how and to whom? How should it include ex-pagan gentiles?" All these questions are explored by Fredriksen along with the convictions which enlivened and sustained the church in its infancy and propelled it into a future we now inherit.

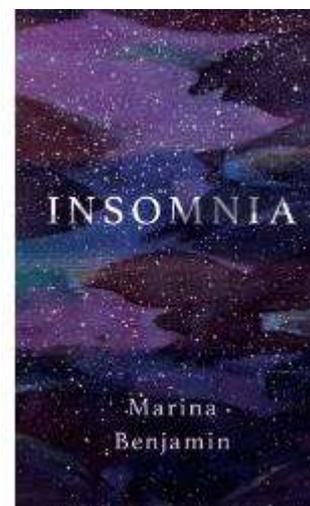
Cornerstone Books at St John's Edinburgh Mon-Sat 10am - 5.30pm
<http://cornerstonebooks.org.uk/>

Haunted by Christ by Richard Harries £19.99

Harries' latest book is an engrossing account of how twentieth century and contemporary writers, have grappled with the fundamental questions of humanity and the existence (or not) of God. From Dostoyevsky to Stevie Smith, Emily Dickinson to R.S. Thomas, Samuel Beckett to Marilynne Robinson, and including the Orcadian luminaries – Edwin Muir and George Mackay Brown – Harries introduces each one and explores how, for each of them, their faith, or lack of it, found expression in their work. This is a 'tour de force' from the former Bishop of Oxford and regular contributor to Radio 4's *Today* programme; eminently readable and bound to be on many people's Christmas wish list!

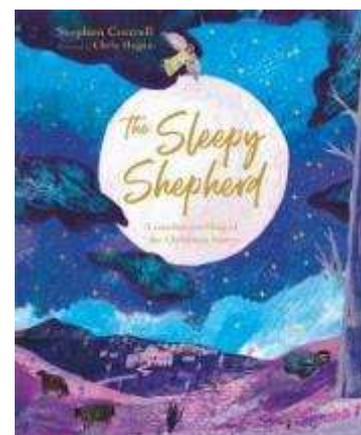
Insomnia by Martin Benjamin £9.99

Anyone who has experienced insomnia will perhaps find some comfort in Martin Benjamin's profound exploration of our inability to sleep, "not as a disorder, but as an existential experience that can electrify our understanding of ourselves, and of creativity and love". In her tightly written exploration she meditates on time and eternity, love as the result of lack, a realm beyond loneliness and the potential to find light in the dark hours. Referencing poetry and philosophers, this beautifully produced book is a small treasure.



The Sleepy Shepherd by Stephen Cottrell £6.99

(And keeping with the theme!) I'm sure many of us feel so exhausted by the time we get to Christmas there will be a degree of sympathy for the sleepy shepherd, whose story we take up when he dozes off, missing the visiting angels and the birth of the baby whom they heralded! Rebuked by his friends, all the questions of that night stay with him till, grown up, and with a family of his own, Silas finds himself in a garden with the few sheep and goats he tends. The garden is Gethsemane. Finally, he encounters the bringer of peace of whom he'd heard the rumours; and, finally, he finds a good reason to keep awake. Beautifully illustrated by Chris Hagan, this original re-telling of a familiar story is sure to capture the imaginations of the children (and adults!) who read it.





Seeking Peace,

Seeking Peace

Alison Bruce

Almost 200 people gathered to “seek peace” in St Andrew’s and St George’s West on Friday 2 November marking 100 years after the Armistice that ended WW1. From the beginning it was clear that this was an unusual evening where different points of view would be welcome.

Prose and poetry readings in French, German and English three languages allowed different voices from the early 20th century to be heard. They did not speak words of triumph or consolation but words of hurt, blindness and horror.

Sacred music of Fauré, Bach and Parry (French-German-British) brought the possibility of hope and peace to our desolation. At the centre of the music and poetry programme, Andrew Carvel’s *Everyone Sang* embodied a new collaboration for peace, melding German folksong and English poetry, children’s and adult voices, bells and chamber orchestra. Strengthened by the music we turned our



Children’s choir



Bell ringers

minds to history. Our tutors for the evening were distinguished academics from the University of Edinburgh whose global perspective was informed by research and teaching throughout Europe and the US.

We quickly learned that the “peace” of 1918 depended on location and perspective. UK, France and US celebrated peace as a victory which stabilised and confirmed their empires and political structures. Elsewhere the “peace” of armistice brought revolution, more loss of life and collapsing empires. The shatter-zones of Austro-Hungary, Russia and the Middle East became the killing fields of WW2. And in Germany the armistice brought revolution and counterrevolution and rapid rise of National Socialism. For these countries, there was no peace. As Dr Stephan Malinowski said *“What I find striking as a historian who has lived and taught in 6 different countries is how deep the gaps are between different countries in the interpretation of WW1.”*

The US, argued Dr Fabian Hilfrich, had a unique perspective on WW1. President Woodrow Wilson envisioned a new world order after the devastating conflict, coupled with free trade and democracy and national self-determination. He travelled to the 1919 Paris Peace Conference and in 1920 the League of Nations was formed, though as Woodrow’s Senate refused to support it, the US did not participate. Meanwhile his principle of national self-determination, borrowed from Lenin, fired numerous independence movements across the globe, some drawing the US into open or covert conflict.

So as we struggle to understand a changing world order – a rejection of international institutions such as the UN and EU and a re-nationalisation through Brexit and America First – what can we learn from the Armistice and its subsequent century?

Nation: a group of people united by a mistaken view about the past and a hatred of their neighbours
Karl Deutsch
(1912-92)

Certainly that our perspectives are shaped by our own history and that only a crisis provokes soul-searching and reassessment.

Total destruction and the “new dimension of horror” of the Holocaust forced Germany, in particular, to examine its conscience and responsibility. Perhaps for the UK, confronting its colonial past, still

viewed by most UK history students in a positive light, would yield a different reading of history and current affairs?

And how should we remember? What do our monuments say? War memorials in every UK town and village reflect how widespread were the losses borne. Are they monuments to war or to peace? How should we mark this centenary of the armistice?

Everyone Sang

Siegfried Sassoon 1920

Everyone suddenly burst out singing
And I was filled with such delight
As prisoned birds must find in freedom
Winging wildly across the white
Orchards and dark-green fields;
on – on – and out of sight

Everyone's voice was suddenly lifted;
And beauty came like the setting sun:
My heart was shaken with tears; and
horror
Drifted away... O but Everyone
Was a bird; and the song was wordless;
the singing will never be done.



International children's choir in rehearsal for Seeking Peace



The Long and the Short of It

Barbara Ramsay

My grandfather William Rayner was a stonemason at Edinburgh College of Art and was keen to enlist in 1914 but he was half an inch too short for the minimum height required of five feet three inches. He did his bit as a member of the City of Edinburgh Territorials.

Then, in the spring of 1915, Lord Rosebery commissioned the 17th Battalion of the Royal Scots, for men who failed to meet the target. This Battalion was known as 'The Bantams'. He enlisted at once and was quickly promoted to Sergeant William fought over France and Belgium including the Battles of the Somme, the Second Battle of Paschendaele and The Final Advance on Flanders.

William dodged the gunfire and gas attacks till, on September 30th he was posted missing presumed dead in action, and his name is displayed on one of the Tablets on the walls of Tyne Cot Cemetery near Ypres. My sister and I, his only grandchildren, paid our respects in warm sunshine on the centenary of his death, September 30th 1918.

His name can be seen on the memorial for the dead of St Andrew's Parish Church.



Family of James McPhie



VC from Imperial War Museum

James McPhie VC

Postscript

Last month Alec Hope told the story of Corporal James McPhie VC, of the former St George's Church in Charlotte Square who died in October 1918 in the final weeks of the war and gained the VC for his bravery. But that wasn't the end of the story. As part of a project to honour all 1914-18 VCs, James' death was to be marked by a special paving stone close to his birthplace. Alec Hope was invited to the ceremony and early one Sunday morning headed to the south side of Edinburgh, not sure of what to expect.

The ceremony was brief but moving. The Lord Provost laid wreaths and gave a speech; a bugler played the Last Post and members of the Royal Engineers, Mc Phie's regiment, stood faithfully with colours. Afterwards there was a chance to chat to family - nieces, nephews and great nephews - who told the story of being the first to donate a VC from WW1 to the Imperial War Museum, of travelling to France in October this year to mark the centenary of his death, and remembering James' brother John fighting nearby who had dealt with his brother's body and burial.

Suddenly the horrors of war in a village in France seemed not a century away but within touching distance. And it seemed more important than ever to remember those who lost their lives in a distant war in a then-distant country, and to stand with those who still bore their loss.



Royal Engineers and wreaths mark the spot

Thanksgiving

Allison Becker

I stood that day in the Davidson
Room

Surrounded by bags

Surrounded

By

Grace

Did you know?

I tried to thank you

My Words seemed too small

My phrasing not good enough

I tried writing it

More times than I could count

No beauty came

Overwhelmed

Deep

Gratitude

These words still

Insufficient

For God's grace

For You see..

It was standing in a hot

Empty Storage unit

In a busy city

Near a freeway

In California

Humid-hot prayers

Dusty jeans

Standing Under

A single clear Lightbulb

Above

When .. *illumination....*

Asking

Everything, Lord?

Yes.

How will it work... how will it be ..

ok ...when I get there?

*I will bring you home...says my
Homecoming*

Yes.. but .. it all?

*Yes- fear not. I go before you. I am
with you. You are not alone.*

Yes.. (Peace dwells... only slightly
steady)...

But everything?

I will provide all. Freely you give.

...And freely you will receive.

Yes. Yes.. (Breathing out. Seeking
to trust.)

Yes.

Then.. blank canvases given to

starving students that they

Might fill them and be filled

The Coffee table once before

Surrounded by late night

Theology woven with prayer

and that old couch

given to new seminarians...

Taken away in the back of an old

dented pickup truck

Everything

Given

Away

The final count of keeping

In total

Was

Four cases and a backpack

Boxes of books back in California

waiting to be sent later..

Along with some of my own

painted canvas

rolled

scrolled up for the journey

That's it

Me to Scotland
Leap!

A drafty
Furnished flat
Temporary place
Painted green
First planting

You welcomed me
You
Received
Me

Glory!

Purposed time
Mission and worship
Serving and being at table with
you
Too many coffee mugs to count
Blessed cup

Then the next move
Where and when would it Be?
Then knowing!
And facing the reality
In a very real way
That I didn't even own spoons...

Then...

God's mighty move through you

A song sent me to Kilmarnock
White bright Stole draping my
neck
My shoulders
Gloria a Dios!

Priest hands loaded the van
Hand to hand
Holy rhythm of work

My first night in my home
I ate with silver knife and fork
On a gold rimmed plate
How could it be?
Be..So....*Abundant?*
Dishes, cups and saucers
matched
Handsome dining set
Both Crystal and Polkadot glasses
Kettle
Cafetière
Coffee table
Chairs
Linens
Frames
And all the more
So much more
Gifted *art*
*A swan and cygnet now swim royal
upon the wall*
next to the cross given me at my
ordination years ago

I will provide for you

Morning
I sunlight sit
eating porridge
Stirring
coffee
Cup, heart, hands
Full

Overflow

I gave God thanks
Oh how I give God
Thanks
For
You

Rev. Allison E. Becker St. John's
Parish Church, Kilmarnock

Poet - artist - minister Allison Becker shares her thoughts on her journey from California to Kilmarnock via St Andrew's and St George's West.

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Sunday worship 9am, 9.45am, 11am + Albany Deaf Church 2pm
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