



# EAGLE

The magazine of the Church of St John the Evangelist

Forfar

November 2020

£5 per annum or 50p monthly



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Scottish Charity No 0165572

## Communication

As well as our own website address for St John's [www.stjohnsforfar.co.uk](http://www.stjohnsforfar.co.uk) you can also find information at the following on-line resources:

Inspires Online <https://www.scotland.anglican.org/who-we-are/publications/inspires/>

Inspires Online is the free e-newsletter from the Scottish Episcopal Church – to subscribe please use the address above and then the sign-up box on the footer of that page.

Pisky.scot – <http://pisky.scot/> This provides the latest in thinking and discussion within the SEC. Previously Inspires Magazine offered a forum for information, discussion and debate. Now pisky.scot allows for that same conversation to be held more publicly and with the invitation to comment and get involved.

Diocesan website address <https://standrews.anglican.org/> – from there you can access all the Diocesan resources and subscribe to the Diocesan e-newsletter.



**Cover picture:** Choir stalls and Altar, St Ninians Cathedral, Perth

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## Autumn and Unity

We're now fully into autumn and as well as the gardens going to bed one of the most dramatic heralds of this season are the trees. I've always had a special affection for trees, and with the coming of autumn many are in a class of their own. It has taken some time, but science is discovering that trees have much to teach us. Robin Wall Kimmerer\*, a Native American and botanist, writes about how science is finally validating the wisdom of indigenous peoples.

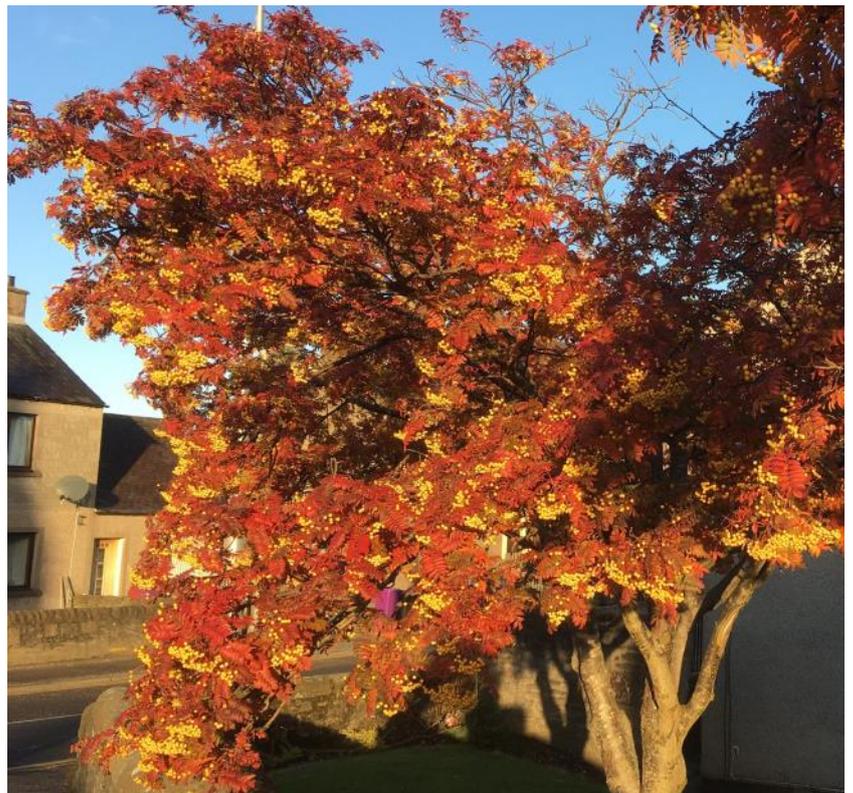
There is now compelling evidence that trees are talking to one another. They communicate via pheromones, hormonelike compounds that are wafted on the breeze, laden with meaning. Scientists have identified specific compounds that one tree will release when it is under the stress of insect attack – gypsy moths gorging on its leaves or beetles under its bark. The tree sends out a distress call: “Hey, watch out over there, I'm under attack here. You might want to raise the drawbridge and arm yourselves for what is coming your way.” The downwind trees catch the drift, sensing those few molecules of alarm, the whiff of danger. This gives them time to manufacture defensive chemicals. The individual benefits, and so does the entire wood. Trees appear to be talking about mutual defence. There is so much we cannot yet understand with our limited human capacity. Tree conversations are still far above our heads.

There is also the suggestion that there is underground communication through interconnections of fungal strands that inhabit tree roots. The fungus is enabled to forage for mineral nutrients in the soil and deliver them to the tree in exchange for carbohydrates given up by the tree. These fungal networks appear to redistribute the wealth of carbohydrates from tree to tree. They weave a web of reciprocity, of giving and taking. In this way, the trees all act as one because the fungi have connected them. Through unity, survival. All flourishing is mutual.

Unity – it seems in short supply in the human world just now. ‘Love your neighbour as yourself’ – if the trees can send the message, perhaps we can too.

*With love*

*Elaine*



\* Robin Wall Kimmerer, *Braiding Sweetgrass: Indigenous Wisdom, Scientific Knowledge, and the Teachings of Plants* (Milkweed Editions: 2013)



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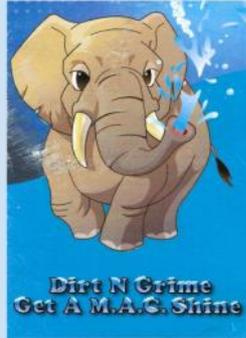
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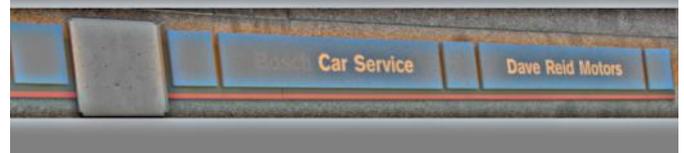
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<b>Life Events</b> (weddings and civil partnerships, funerals)	Weddings/civil partnerships - 50 person limit Funerals - 50 person limit Wakes and receptions permitted, subject to 50 person limit	Weddings/civil partnerships - 20 person limit Funerals - 20 person limit Wakes and receptions permitted, subject to 20 person limit	Weddings/civil partnerships - 20 person limit Funerals - 20 person limit Wakes and receptions permitted, subject to 20 person limit	Weddings/civil partnerships - 20 person limit Funerals - 20 person limit Wakes and receptions permitted, subject to 20 person limit	Weddings/civil partnerships - 15 person limit Funerals - 20 person limit Wakes permitted subject to 20 person limit No receptions

***Covid 19 – Tiered restrictions that are now in force in Scotland as they affect worship***

**Scottish Interfaith Week, 8-15 November**

The annual Scottish Interfaith Week in this year of pandemic lockdown, building closures and community isolation promises to be unique in many ways.

Taking the theme of “Connecting” there are online events anyone can engage with over the eight days starting from Sunday 8 November 2020. Never before have there been so many events people can join from home.

Check out the virtual tour of faith buildings in Edinburgh, an international conversation, along with artistic, musical and theatrical events. There is also cookery, a quiz, lectures, shared conversation and time for interfaith meditation.

For full details of the programme, go to the “Scottish Interfaith Week 2020” website <http://scottishinterfaithweek.org/> .



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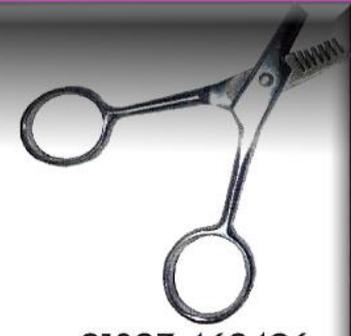
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## Who needs churches?

Our freedom of movement was taken for granted prior to the Covid-19 pandemic. Before March 2020, we were more likely to be concerned about being locked out than locked in, never mind locked down. The initial shock of the lockdown has given way to novel thinking about space and spaces, public and private. As we saw our churches shut and now rejoice in their openings, even with restrictions — mindful that a second wave of the dreaded virus may shut them again — we may ask: What's all the fuss about churches? Christians may pray anywhere in public; they may let spaces to gather as congregations. Is it not Jesus who says that he is in the midst of any two or three gathered in his name (Matthew 18.20)? Christians may pray anywhere in private; they may pray at home. Is it not Jesus who recommends praying alone (Matthew 6.6)? We've all sorts of online worship now. Who needs churches?

We do. We need churches. We Christians need churches because churches provide fixed spaces for the sacred. They don't preclude the sacred in other spaces, but the *raison d'être* of churches is the worship of God. Vital as our online worship is when gathering in churches is impossible for some or all of us, online worship typically streams from churches or chapels: we naturally worship in purpose-built sacred spaces, even when our worship is virtual. For over two millennia, we've been erecting churches to facilitate our worship. A dozen or so years ago, archaeologists uncovered the remains of a church in Rihab (Jordan) dating from between AD 33 and 70. Christianity and its churches are coeval.

I guess that's why slogans to the effect that the church is open, even if its buildings are closed, rang hollow from the start; and by early June, when Bristol's statue of Edward Colston was dumped in the harbour, they began to ring false. Why are people toppling statues? Because what we human beings build for ourselves conveys meaning, because architecture speaks. Our public spaces and their adornments matter. This is particularly true of churches for they mark our faith in God in a most tangible way.

The purpose of churches is not only to facilitate the worship of God by appealing to our senses during public prayer or to offer a consecrated space for private prayer, but to stand fast to commemorate the advent of the Christ and to stand tall as watchtowers for his coming again. Still, it's not just Christians who need churches. Churches are testaments, witnesses, in brick and mortar, to Jesus, the world's Saviour. Saints and sinners though we Christians may be, we perform a service to our sisters and brothers when we construct our churches. Churches are a part of our mission to proclaim Christ and to make him known to others.

After praying at home, and often alone, we're elated to be back in our churches. Sometimes we human beings don't appreciate things until they're taken from us. Coming back to our churches is not only a moment to value them, to give thanks for them and to recall our responsibility to preserve our legacy of sacred spaces, but it's an opportunity to recapture the enthusiasm of Jacob as he built a sanctuary at Bethel exclaiming, 'How awesome is this place! This is none other than the house of God; this is the gate of heaven' (Genesis 28.17).

*Revd Dr Michael Hull*

*Director of Studies*

*Scottish Episcopal Institute*

*and Assistant Priest, St Vincent's Chapel, Edinburgh*

## Bookings open for Lay Training Day

A Lay Training Day is to be hosted by the Diocese of Argyll & The Isles next month, titled 'Church at home: reflections on church and faith in lockdown'.

The event will be held on Zoom in two half-day sessions on the Saturdays of 7 and 14 November. The aims of the sessions are to:

Reflect on our own, and our own congregation's, experience of church, worship and faith in lockdown

Learn from the experience of others in lockdown

Distill out relevant lessons for the journey ahead

Learn more about how to look after ourselves spiritually in times of stress and change

The event is open to all interested lay people, especially those with church leadership responsibilities. The two days form a whole, but those who can only attend one of the sessions should still find participation to be beneficial.

To book and receive the Zoom invitation, please contact Ros and Chris Brett, Mission Enablers: [misionenablers@argyll.anglican.org](mailto:misionenablers@argyll.anglican.org); phone 07802 746460 or 07711 944807.



Flowers placed at the Font in fond memory of Bunty Nicoll by Hamish and Arlene commemorating Bunty on what would have been her 90th birthday on 4th November 2020

## A few words from our Gift Aid Secretary

Just my periodic reminder that anyone who donates to St. John's and pays income tax should be signed up to Gift Aid by means of a declaration in favour of St. John's. This enables us to claim back the tax you have paid on your donations from H.M. Revenue and Customs. If here is anybody who has "slipped through the net" please get in touch and I will send you the form.

We are also able to claim back the proportion of the loose change given in collections as if it had been taxed under the Gift Aid Small Donations Scheme.

This brings me to a more general point about church finances. Whilst working on preparing a claim for Gift Aid it became apparent that a few people have stopped giving since the Covid restrictions started in March, and we are also unable to put on fundraising events or hire out the hall. The cost of running the church has however not gone down, if anything it will have gone up because of the anti Covid measures.

Maybe those who can, should find some way of getting their collection/donation to the church. For example, setting up a Standing Order with their bank or sending a cheque to Roger Cousins or Carol Douglas.

John Webster

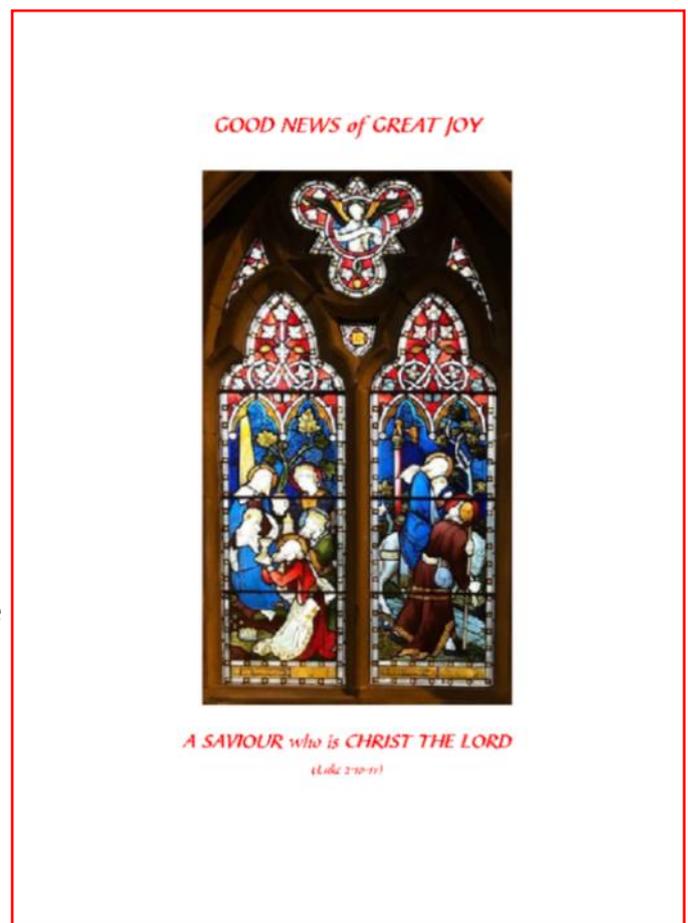
Gift Aid Secretary

## CHRISTMAS CARD 2020

Yes, it is time to think ahead to Christmas although at present with current restrictions in place it will be a very different festive season. In past years St John's has included a Christmas card inside the December/January issue of the Eagle. This gives us a chance to send greetings to friends on a collective basis rather than individual cards being handed around. The scheme has proved popular in the past and if you would like your name(s) to be included this year please get in touch with me by the end of October either by phone (my number is in the list in this publication) or by e-mail, which is [rmcousins@hotmail.com](mailto:rmcousins@hotmail.com). I shall be pleased to hear from you. A donation to Church funds will also be welcomed. Thank you.

In the meantime thank you for the excellent response to the St John's Christmas card and if you are quick there may be time to add your name, but the absolute deadline has to be 29 November. You will find special envelopes at the back of the church for your contribution, or if you prefer bank transfer could I ask that you put Christmas card as the reference.

Roger Cousins



Front cover of the 2020 Christmas card

# *At That Time*

## An Advent Bible Study

Complete as an individual or in a 'Zoom' video-conference group. Materials will be posted or emailed to you.

Zoom can be used on any computer – a link will be sent out to you in advance of the session. The group will meet at 4-5pm on: Tuesdays 1<sup>st</sup>, 8<sup>th</sup>, 15<sup>th</sup>, 22<sup>nd</sup> December.

Please let the Rector know if you would like the materials and whether you want to join with others in the group. Phone 01307 463440 or email

[revelainegarman@outlook.com](mailto:revelainegarman@outlook.com)

# Christmas Cards in aid of Aberlour Children's Trust



Advertisement for Aberlour Christmas Cards 2020. The background is light blue with white snowflake patterns. The Aberlour logo (scotland's children's charity) is in the top right. Five Christmas cards are displayed, numbered 1 to 5. Card 1 shows a red double-decker bus. Card 2 shows a church in winter. Card 3 shows a winter village scene. Card 4 says 'let it snow' with penguins. Card 5 says 'Have a Wonderful Christmas' with a wreath. A red shopping bag is on the right. At the bottom, the text reads: 'Aberlour Christmas Cards 2020 Buy our cards to help vulnerable children in Scotland. Thank you!'.



Advertisement for Aberlour Christmas Cards 2020. The background is light blue with white snowflake patterns. A green circle in the top right contains the text: 'By buying our charity cards this year you're helping to change a child's life - thank you!'. Five Christmas cards are displayed, numbered 6 to 10. Card 6 says 'Have a Wonderful Christmas' with a wreath. Card 7 shows Santa Claus cupcakes. Card 8 shows a nativity scene. Card 9 shows a child reading. Card 10 shows a row of Christmas trees. A red shopping bag is on the right. At the bottom, the text reads: 'Aberlour Christmas Cards 2020 Buy our cards to help vulnerable children in Scotland. Thank you!'.

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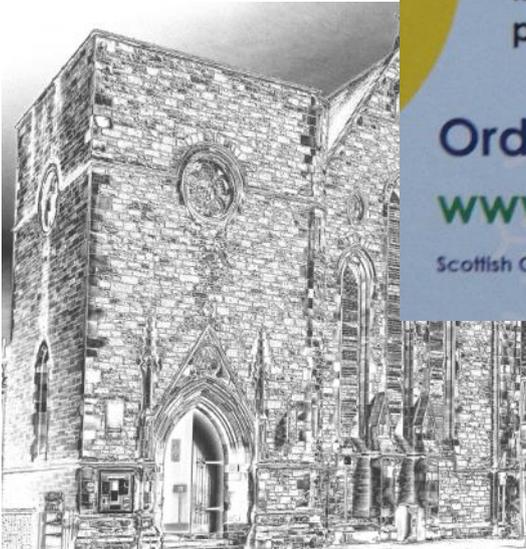
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## Taking the chill off .....

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