



# Argyll & The Isles

*News and Views from Around the Diocese*  
Spring 2008 – No. 88

## FROM THE BISHOP



I have to confess I feel a little apprehensive about this new development in the history of our Diocesan Magazine. However, it is a positive apprehension. Never before have I 'edited' a journal! Audrey Walton, who does secretarial work for me, has not been involved either in the process of the preparation and publication of a magazine. However, she has had experience in the journalism industry, for which I am grateful! As you will remember, Professor Bobby Sommerville has worked for years as the editor of the magazine and prepared it for publication. I am grateful to him for his skills and work. In this new version, I am hoping that you will interact with it, either by writing articles or reflections (poetry?) but also letters. Our plan is to continue to produce, as has been the case, three issues of the magazine a year. Feedback, therefore, is important to us!

As most of you know, I produce a 'Bishop's newsletter' once a month. The purpose of that is to tell the Diocese, visitors to the Diocese and those who have an interest and concern for the Diocese, what is happening in the Diocese and providing as extensive as possible a 'what's on'. I also try to make some suggestions for thinking, praying and action. The purpose of the

magazine is different and equally wide-ranging. Primarily, it is to inform the Diocese and beyond about the events and experiences within the Diocese that may be inspiring, informative and encouraging (and amusing!) from across the Diocese. So here's a competition! What name would you give to our Magazine...?

Currently it is 'Argyll and The Isles'? It will be judged by our Diocesan Secretary: Chris Todhunter.

So, for the magazine, I would like to include articles and photographs from your charges about events that have been significant to you. You may have heard a sermon or address, (there is a difference!) from one of the clergy or the laity which has been inspiring and helpful. I hope to include one each issue of the magazine, that others may benefit from it. So in this edition, you will find a moving sermon from one of the Lay Readers at St Moluag's, Tong, on the Isle of Lewis.

Given the interval between each issue, it gives time for articles to be written about 'issues' that face not just our Diocese, but the Anglican Communion and indeed the culture and environment of our region of Argyll and The Isles.

In this issue, there are strong and challenging ideas put forward by David Fuller from Mull on the possible future of our Diocese. They are not as new as he suggests, but readers may have responses to make through these columns.

Peter Rice, the Priest in Charge of The West Highland Region retires on May 1<sup>st</sup>, Ascension Day. All the Charges in the region and the Diocesan staff are grateful to Peter for what he has given in his

Priesthood and humanity. We wish him well, but his wife Fiona will remain Diocesan President of The Mothers Union. (see letter Page 12).

As many of you will know, there has been an energetic debate over the proposed plan to build a huge Wind Turbine 'field' on Lewis. At present, it seems that the Scottish Executive is 'of a mind' not to grant permission for these plans to be realised, because of the number of voices of opposition on the Island. The decision, as I understand it, has still to be finalised. The environmental issues of climate change and our thirst for energy have profound implications for our 'image' of God and Creation. On the other hand, such a farm would have considerable and detrimental affect on the environment. As I consider what my annual travelling costs are for the Diocese, and that a litre of diesel varies from 109p to 119p (!), there are real questions not just about my own 'carbon footprint' but on the use of the Diocesan resources for mission and ministry. This issue of the magazine, I am seeing as 'promotional'. As its publication and delivery costs are considerable, maybe, as a result of the 'take up' of this issue, we will consider a minimal charge for copies, in order to sustain the venture.

You will be receiving this issue during Lent. I hope and pray that you will take the opportunity to think and pray about the Mission of the Diocese and our need to take care of each other. I am concerned with what has been called recently as decreasing 'civility' in how we relate to each other right across the UK. The person of Christ in Passantide is challenging. Of

course, there were moments when he behaved in an assertive manner, not least in the troubling story of the Cleansing of the Temple. However, the strong impression I receive is of the unparalleled strength of Christ in not engaging competitively or defensively with those who were out to destroy him. To be honest, I have frequent moments of defensiveness and they do not add to the creativity of God. Maybe the Passion story is one that the Diocese cannot only listen to in the Liturgy of Holy Week, but absorb as part of our Diocesan Vision: 'Christ calls us to live like Him in Word, Sacrament, Prayer and Service amongst others.'

Prayer and Love to you,

+*Martin. Argyll and The Isles.*

## **ST ANDREW'S CONGREGATION, MILLPORT**

*Advent to Christmas 2007.*

The last quarter of 2007 was dominated by concern that the College might have to close for several months at the beginning of the year due to a shortage of bookings. This would inevitably have had an impact on Cathedral and congregation and our relations with the people of Cumbrae. Fortunately, widespread promotion of the excellent Spring Breaks programme produced an enthusiastic response. Closure was thus averted and we're all looking forward to the start of the 2008 season, with the first concert of the year on St Kentigern's Day, Sunday 13 January, followed by a packed and varied programme to mark the period from Candlemas to Ash Wednesday (which this year unusually fall together). We hope there is something to take everybody's fancy and that you will join us from time to time.

Services have been maintained week by week in the Cathedral, thanks to the faithfulness of our three regular celebrants, Canon Keith Pagan and Canon Hugh Lee of our Diocese, and the Revd.

Joyce Pow of the neighbouring Glasgow and Galloway Diocese. On the few occasions when a priest has not been available, Holy Communion has been administered from the Reserved Sacrament by Alastair Chisholm or Helen Hamilton, and Helen has also conducted midweek Communion services from the Reserved Sacrament, especially if a feast day occurred during the week. Helen has also been conducting Bible Studies on St. Mark's Gospel which have proved enjoyable and edifying. The congregation has also enjoyed the Sunday Congregation Lunches following the morning Eucharist, hosted by Helen. Her contribution, and that of other members of the congregation, to the food has been very much appreciated by all who have partaken.

The Christmas House party, which ran from 23rd to 30th December, was a great success. Thanks are due to Helen who did a great job of organising the whole week. Canon Keith Pagan was our resident priest, presiding at Midnight Mass and the daily celebrations of Holy Communion, and also conducting the Daily Offices. A dozen visitors, together with members of the congregation, feasted sumptuously on Christmas Day. One of the lunches was prepared and served by members of the congregation, giving Helen a bit of a break, and a Scandinavian buffet was enjoyed by all. The week was great fun and it is to be hoped that this will be repeated in 2008.



The two Carol Services took place, with a small but balanced choir leading the Advent Carol Service, with our good and loyal friend Jonathan Cohen coming up from London to play the organ. The

Lessons and Carols for Christmas presented some problems for musical director Alastair as some of the female members became ill just beforehand, and we ended up with three ladies and 10 men, including the Director of Music who gave considerable vocal help to the sole alto! But it was due to Alastair's skill in his choice of music and a certain restraint of volume by the men that the result was of the usual high standard. At both services, particularly the latter, there was a good congregation, and the sound and loop system, installed earlier in the year, was appreciated by hearing aid users.

The New Year was duly rung in on the Cathedral bells, and it was a lovely surprise for the ringers to be greeted outside the Cathedral after their efforts by congregation member Margaret Anderson playing Auld Lang Syne on the pipes! So from all of us in Millport, best wishes to all in the Diocese.

*Janice Lamb*

## **ST JOHN'S CATHEDRAL, OBAN**

On Saturday 10<sup>th</sup> November the Cathedral hosted the annual Charities Christmas Card Sale. There was a steady stream of visitor to the 13 stalls and the total sales amounted to over £2000, a welcome boost to the charities taking part. This event happens every year, early in November so if you are coming to Oban for Christmas shopping, why not make a note in your diary?

Our annual Charity Sale was held on Saturday 1<sup>st</sup> December in the Cathedral Hall. The Charities to benefit this year were Oban Hospice and ABCD (Argyll Beats Cardiovascular Disease).

As usual the Christmas period was a busy time of year, amongst the



highlights were our service "Darkness to Light" on Advent Sunday which was very well attended and beautifully symbolic as more and more candles were lit during the service bringing a warmth and brightness to a cold winter's night; the Carol Service at which *The Christmas Story* by Schütz was performed by the Cathedral Choir and Oban Bach Orchestra; and on the Saturday before Christmas, young and old enjoyed a Christmas Party, with games, party food and a visit from Santa.

The Crib Service on Christmas Eve was well attended by children from the community as well as our own children from the Cathedral. A Retiring Collection was taken for Childline. The Bishop was the celebrant and preacher at Christmas Eve Midnight Eucharist, and on Christmas Day with the Cathedral full of families, the Provost had opportunity to play with some of the children's Christmas presents!

The St John's Cathedral Branch of the Mothers' Union has been busy as usual working in the wings, supporting all the various activities during the year and is now planning its programme for 2008. Meetings are on the first Wednesday of the month and are open to all. The day begins with corporate communion at 11am in the Lady Chapel, followed by coffee. The meeting then moves downstairs for a light lunch in the Lindsay room and a discussion or talk by an invited speaker. Meetings finish by 3pm at the very latest. If you are interested in any aspect of the Mothers' Union you may contact Fiona Rice (01855 811812) who is the Diocesan President or Christine Marlow (01866 822080) who is St John's Branch President.

#### *Music in the Cathedral*

The Pianist Angela Brownridge gave a magnificent recital on 2<sup>nd</sup> November, including pieces by Beethoven, Debussy and Gershwin, amongst others.

On 10<sup>th</sup> November St John's was the venue for a concert entitled Echoes of the Mod.

'Voskresenije' (Resurrection) are a Russian ensemble from St Petersburg who delighted their audience in the Cathedral on 24<sup>th</sup> November with a programme of sacred music, followed by a selection of lively Russian folk songs; we do hope they will be able to return.

On Monday 21<sup>st</sup> January Oban Music Society presented a piano recital by Christina Mairi Lawrie and on Sunday 17<sup>th</sup> February they have a Concert in the Cathedral at 7.30pm.

#### *Looking ahead:*

The Vestry are in the process of planning a Stewardship Campaign along the lines suggested by the Diocesan Stewardship Group. We intend to make this our main "Lenten" exercise.

We look forward to hosting the Diocesan Synod Eucharist on Tuesday the 4<sup>th</sup> March at 5.30pm. The Provost asks me to remind those responsible to make sure they bring a suitable container for the oils, which will be blessed by the Bishop at the Synod Eucharist!

*Jane Elliott*

### **CHRIST CHURCH HARRIS**

Our Christingle Service was lovely, all our children are now grown up and mostly flown and so we were delighted when a large number of children from other Churches joined us. Andrew Johnson one of our servers performed a delightful one man one act play and we had a party afterwards with food provided by the congregation. Some of us suffered the usual weather problems that we always seem to get at Christmas and were unable to get to all the services. This was a great pity because our Minister went away for Christmas and our Local Collaborative Team who were really exceptional took the services which were excellent. Our team are three remarkable women

Linda Wood who takes the service, Eve Reed who writes and gives excellent sermons and Moggie Loughhead who attends to the reserve sacrament. We are indeed very proud of them.

The congregation of Christ Church Harris, would like to thank Professor Bobby Sommerville for all the hard work he has done over the years editing the Argyll & The Isles magazine which we all looked forward to reading. We shall miss him.

*Dorothy Moorhouse.*

### **TURNING BACK THE CLOCK IN INVERARAY**

Slowly and gingerly the Duke of Argyll climbed the circular stairway of his new 'Belfrey Tower', the guttering candle in his hand casting flickering shadows against the grey stone walls & steps. Outside the dark shape of the magnificent tower soared high above the starlit rooftops of the Ancient Royal Burgh of Inveraray, its lower windows twinkling with dozens of candles. Soon the splendid peal of 10 bells was ringing out across the town, castle and loch from its new home for the very first time. It was Christmas Eve in the year 1931, and Duke Niall was proudly celebrating the completion of his life's work – to build this great memorial to the dead of Clan Campbell in the Great War of 1914-18.

All Saints Church, built by his predecessor, Duke George in 1886, for his second wife, Duchess Amelia, was filled with the brilliance of hundreds of candles from its wall sconces & splendid chandeliers for the midnight service, and full to the very back with the people of Inveraray. Christmas in Inveraray was truly celebrated in style.

76 years later, Terry & Margaret Williams also clambered up the same stone stairs, clutching candles to light the ringing room in the tower. Terry is the Chairman of the Scottish Association of Change Ringers and they had come to ring the bells for the

Annual Carol Service for the very first time. The candles were necessary because the electricity supply to the tower had failed. Nevertheless, once again the bells pealed out their joyful message, and the people of Inveraray crowded into the church to marvel at the same candlelit brilliance as they had so many years before.

Not only to marvel, but to join in the singing of long familiar carols, to take part in the Readings & to hear the children of Inveraray Primary School singing their own carols, one in the Gaelic. It was a wonderful evening, conducted by Stella Collyer our Lay Chaplain, the readings taken by Tuggy Delap, proprietor of the Loch Fyne Brewery, Ealasich Mackay, Manager of the Youth Hostel, Lynn Kidd, School Headmistress, Yvonne Black, Organiser of the Seniors Club, & Terry Williams for the Bellringers.

It has become the custom for the carol service to end with the ceremony of "Stripping the Prayer Tree" by the children, who then process out of the church carrying baskets containing the hundreds of Prayer Requests left by the visitors during the year & placing them on a bonfire in the churchyard – the prayers are all carried to heaven in the holy fire of Saint Molaise.

St. Molaise lived in the 6<sup>th</sup> century and was confessor to St. Columba. He was the most important of the Celtic saints to whom our ten bells are dedicated. His inscription (in latin) on the huge tenor bell declares ...

Light and fire Saint Molaise bears as his banner

Remember to blaze with prayers as the flame blazes in the wind

O Holy Fire, blaze with Holy Prayers for us.

On Christmas Morning, for the first time in nearly 30 years, we held a service of Carols & Prayers for Christmas Day. The church was gloriously lit by sunshine pouring in the great west window, and again warmed by dozens of candles around the chancel & nave. We were surprised and delighted to welcome a good

congregation of nearly 30. The service was again conducted by Stella, the Lay Chaplain, and had a Celtic theme including these lines from the Carmina Gadelica ...

The night the star shone was born the Shepherd of our flock, of the Virgin of the hundred charms, the Mother Mary, in the manger cold and lowly. Come and give tithes of your means to the Healing Man, the tender, holy babe, IMMANUEL!

Both of these services were truly ecumenical, members of the other churches in Inveraray giving their full support and taking part. Our own congregation may be tiny, but the God we worship is the same and His love flourishes still in this beautiful and historic place.

*Bob Collyer.*

## **ST PAUL'S KINLOCHLEVEN.**

St Paul's had a frantically busy time in the run up to Christmas.

Early on in November the congregation and friends of St Paul's put some Christmas goodwill into a shoe box when they participated in "The Samaritans Purse Shoe Box Appeal called Operation Christmas Child."

Operation Christmas Child is a project run by Samaritan's Purse International, a Christian relief and development charity.

In 2006, over 1.24million shoe boxes were distributed to needy children in Armenia, Belarus, Bosnia, Hungary, Kosovo, Kyrgyzstan, Liberia, Mozambique, Romania, Serbia, Swaziland and the Ukraine.

The shoe boxes are given unconditionally, regardless of nationality, political background or religious beliefs. For many of the children who receive a shoe box *it will be the first Christmas present they ever receive.*

We were very late in starting this appeal and only had two weeks to collect and deliver the shoe boxes. 36 shoe boxes were collected and delivered to the drop off point in

Perth by the Rev Davidson and his wife Lesley.

If you would like more information about The Samaritans Purse organisation please get in touch with Donald or Lesley Davidson or check out the web site: [www.samaritanspurse.uk.com](http://www.samaritanspurse.uk.com) This is a very worthwhile cause, so why not mark it in your diary for next Christmas, and send a shoe box to a child in need.

The main event was our "Christmas Fair" on the 1<sup>st</sup> December. This was a tremendous success, raising in excess of £1100. A few of our regulars were unavoidably absent but we were fortunate to have the assistance of a few volunteers including two ladies from St Bride's Church in Onich who did sterling work all afternoon in the tea bar.

Our Ecumenical Service of "Nine Lessons and Carols for Christmas" was held on the 18<sup>th</sup> December with some of the readers being from local churches. It was a joy to see so many new faces as well as our usual friends.

A most moving service with the theme "When Christmas Hurts" was held on the 19<sup>th</sup> December. This Liturgy has been developed for those who find Christmas difficult and perhaps lonely.

This was a lovely service and brought such comfort to everyone who had suffered illness and/or bereavement and for whom Christmastide is a painful time.

If you would like a copy of the Liturgy please contact The Rev Donald.

Our joyful "Mince Pies and Carols" evening on the 21<sup>st</sup> December was the usual well attended and happy event when everyone enjoyed the hearty carol singing followed by tea, mince pies, cakes etc and ending with a free raffle when everyone present received at least one gift.

All in all a wonderfully happy evening!

Our Christmas Eve midnight service was also well attended with quite a few of our regular guests from outwith St Paul's.



Looking ahead now we are to have a Local Collaborative Ministry Review on Monday February 11th when we will welcome our new mentor The Rev Susan MacDonald.

Susan will be accompanied by The Rev Anne Tomlinson and Bishop Martin. The Rev Susan's job as mentor is to accompany the LCM congregation on their journey along the LCM pathway visiting them regularly through the year, supporting their progress and assisting in the delivery of study material and the like.

We are now looking forward to spring. The bulbs have been planted at the church door and plans are in hand for our Shrove Tuesday Beetle Drive on which we shall report in the next issue.

*Isobel MacDonald and Lesley Davidson*

## **ST. ANDREW'S, FORT WILLIAM**

During the past 18 months the congregation has rallied together in order in fund raise for our new hall. The old hall was condemned in 1998. Last year plans for a new hall were drawn and approved unanimously by both the Vestry and the congregation at two separate meetings. The Bishop and Buildings advisory committee also gave their approval.

During 2006 the summer was spent providing soup, tea & coffee every week day from July to September. Last summer the ladies had a baking stall in the lych gate every second Thursday. We have had a Whist drive, sales tables and even a bottle stall at the Lochaber Games amongst other ideas to help with fund raising.

Work finally started on May 1<sup>st</sup> 2007 with the demolition of the old hall which brought many nostalgic memories to our congregation along with one or two tears.



We had hoped the new hall would be up and running by St. Andrew's day [30<sup>th</sup> November] sadly this was not to be. We are nevertheless very impressed with the building contractors we employed. We finally received the keys for the hall from the contractor in December. Then the task was to equip the hall, a process we are still doing but are near completing. Unfortunately during the Christmas holidays our hall was targeted by vandals. Our round window at the rear of the hall [known affectionately as the port hole] was shot in two places by an air gun. We are also sorting out one or two teething problems which are only to be expected. At time of writing we have seen the arrival of 100 new padded chairs and hanging trolley to replace our old wooden ones, 12 new tables and rather expensive but beautiful custom - made curtains. The Rector is having an ongoing battle with a catering company to provide the new crockery [it seems impossible for them to provide an accurate invoice]. We are also awaiting delivery of a range cooker but minor problems all.

The congregation is very much looking forward to the Bishop coming to bless and dedicate the hall so we can invite the local churches along to that service. Local groups can then use the hall as the Rector has already received many inquiries.

The building of this hall has certainly pulled the congregation together. We are working as a single determined unit. The fund raising will continue as we have many items we still require for the hall, we had to realise some investments to help with the build cost and we have some outstanding

accounts to pay. With all our fundraising efforts and a retiring collection for the hall fund every Sunday one wag was heard to say St. Andrew's congregation is not so much the flock as the fleeced.

We are very much looking to the future and happy days ahead. The hall may be built but there are still many projects facing us. On the buildings front we have a west wall and a spire that leak like a sieve and a chancel roof filled with rot which requires urgent attention. On the congregational side it is hoped that perhaps now we can start a crèche or Sunday School as well as have some congregational get-togethers and look to rosy days ahead.

*Alexander Guinness*

## **ST MARGARET'S, WHITING BAY**

### **A NEW YEAR**

Well, the Christmas season is past, it is 2008 already, and it seems we will hardly have time to blink before Lent is upon us. But let us hope the early Easter marks the beginning of a steady influx of visitors to our Isle of Arran, as to other parts of the Diocese, and a seasonal boost to our congregations. Advent and Christmas saw the usual events at St Margaret's, with a well-attended Coffee Morning on the December, at which home-made cards, decorations and other seasonal goodies were on offer, and our Carol Service on the afternoon of Sunday, 16 This year, the Revd. Paul Fletcher celebrated for us at Midnight Mass on Christmas Eve, a service is always better attended here than the morning Eucharist on the 25 Father Paul and his family have just taken up residence on the island, and we are delighted to welcome them among us.

Just before Christmas, we were greatly saddened by the death at the age of 41 of Pat Ingham's daughter Beth. She had suffered ill-health and the challenges of kidney dialysis bravely and cheerfully for many years, but was

in the end taken with shocking speed by cancer. Despite her disabilities, Beth greatly enjoyed congregational forays to local restaurants when we entertained the Bishop and other visiting clergy, and they will join us in remembering her fondly. Her funeral took place in Ayr, so few were able to attend from Arran, but we held a requiem mass in St Margaret's at the same time. (see letter Page 12).

I mentioned in the last issue that St Margaret's was to be featured in an article in The Church Times, and this duly appeared in October. In the event, we were very pleased with what Margaret Duggan had to say about us.

For the very first time, Arran Churches Together marked Christian Unity Week not with a weekday evening service, but with a big joint Sunday service in Lamlash Parish Church, the biggest on Arran. The event was accompanied by Clydebank Salvation Army Band, and nearly all the churches on the island, including St Margaret's, took an active part. The way in which the divisions of the past are being left behind in a cause of great joy.

Finally, an item for those who take an interest in the history of Christianity in our area: Cohn Mills, a member of our congregation, has just published *The Vanished and Disappearing Churches of Arran* (ISBN. 0-954-4447-02), price £5.95 from Underhill Publications, Isle of Arran KA27 8EW. It contains a great deal of fascinating information, and may suggest a destination for an ecumenical island pilgrimage this summer.

All of us at St Margaret's offer everybody in the Diocese our prayers for a Good and Blessed New Year in 2008.

*John Roberts*

## **ST PAUL'S ROTHESAY**

The short window this year between Epiphany and Lent means

that in Rothesay, January is a month full of marmalade. Pot after pot, simmering away so that there will be lots to sell at the Lent Lunches. These lunches are a long tradition at St Paul's: soup and a roll, tea and conversation every Friday in Lent, with all proceeds going to Christian Aid.

To make space for all the work that goes into the Lent Lunches (and to accommodate the priest's schedule), we had our Lent Groups early this year – in November. About a third of the congregation gathered, along with a friend or two from other denominations, to explore ways of praying. The group came with diverse background and expectations, but together we shared a range of 'stilling techniques' and meditative practices, explored ways of praying for others, and tried different approaches to praying with scripture. It was also good simply to have a time to talk about prayer – to speak of our experiences and our struggles, to share this very normal part of Christian life which we so often tend to keep private.

Our pattern of worship progresses as normal: the Eucharist alternates with lay-led morning prayer, with occasional days out to Dunoon or Tighnabruaich to join our sister congregations. Sadly, our long standing friend and organist, Bill Felver, died earlier this year. We miss Bill, but are thankful to have had Graeme Allen join us – both for his great skill as an organist and pianist, and for his quiet humour and theological insight.



Sea Sunday 2007  
Olive McLay and Graeme Allan

The singing group continues to surprise and delight us – an anthem here, a duet there; even on Sundays when it seems that most

of the musicians are away, the congregation sings bravely, and soloists come bravely forth. Now, if only we could succeed in our quest to 'go and make disciples among basses', there would be no end to what we do...

## **ST KIARAN'S, CAMPBELTOWN**

To give an idea of subjects covered in addresses since October, the following might be mentioned – the role of science in religious belief, the importance of mission and evangelism, cradle Christianity, the role of the priest in the life of a congregation, Christian blogs and Christian Aid. In addition, the series on looking at the importance of art in religious expression focussed on the celebrated cartoon of the Virgin and Child by Leonardo.

Topics covered in congregational discussions have included the environment and global warming, aspects of the epistle to the Romans, prejudice and justification by faith. At one meeting we were delighted to welcome a member from another congregation in the town, but originating from Brazil, and this enabled us to have greater insight into our discussions.

Megan Hill, who is in her 5<sup>th</sup> year at Secondary School, has continued to help out at the organ and is now able to play for a full service of sung Morning Prayer as well as the 1982 Liturgy.

5 members of the congregation attended the seminar on Human Sexuality in Oban. All agreed that it had been a very worthwhile event and the contribution of all the leaders and witnesses had been both informative and moving.

This year it had been agreed that the service of remembrance at the War Memorial would be observed in situ by the 10.45 congregation. This too was found to be helpful and a shortened Eucharist followed back at the church.

The congregation has agreed to make changes to its Constitution so that it can take better advantage

of some aspects of the new Charities regulations.

Our Christmas celebration was again a happy occasion and we had 33 people in the church, more than double what we normally can expect.

*David O McEwan (Lay Reader)*

## **HOLY TRINITY, DUNOON**



Our little church, stuck, some would say, on a hill above the town, exposed to all that the weather can throw at it, is in its way a beacon in a dark season. Or, put more directly, we do candles, beauty and music very well. We are known for our Advent and Christmas services, all candlelit and numinous, and we are blessed in theological and musical expertise of our rector and our organist. We may be a numerically small congregation, and we may have financial burdens as onerous as any other, but at these moments of contact the dripping walls and the wind outside are forgotten.

Among other events in the past months, we once again hosted the Russian choir Voskresenije from St Petersburg – their fifth visit to Dunoon. A family new to the congregation joined in the hospitality given to the choir, giving all of us a chance to know one another better as we struggled with broken English and a variety of European languages to get the singers off in time for their next performance. And as always, the audience represented the wider community of Dunoon in a way

which can only be good for our own church.

It is noticeable these days how the congregation is pulling together to ensure continuity and care for one another when our Rectory has to be at our sister church in Rothesay. The Lay Team is growing in confidence – not to mention the growth in knowledge of scripture and theology as they attend training sessions with Kimberly. The growth from being a clergy-centred body to one which takes serious thought about its sustainability is exciting and rewarding.

It might be worth noting in a magazine which is being distributed online that our group of churches (Dunoon, Rothesay, Tighnabruaich) keep abreast of each other's doings in part through a series of blogs – take a look at <http://holytrinitydunoon.wordpress.com/> or

<http://stpaulsrothesay.wordpress.com/> or the Rector's blog

<http://wonderfulexchange.wordpress.com/> if you're interested. And for a resource during Lent, you might like to check out the following Lent blog;

<http://beautyfromchaos.wordpress.com/>

which will begin in its due season. The possibilities of this instant communication are boundless – and a real means of growth.

*C.M.M.*

## **THE OPENING OF THE EXTENSION HALL AT ST PETER'S STORNOWAY.**

February 2<sup>nd</sup> 2008.

A hotel in Ullapool may not be the first place I would choose to have a 'haven' in the storm. It certainly was on 30<sup>th</sup> January. However the hotel had that strange combination of mustiness, faint odours of last season's delights and unfinished repair work and promises of completed decoration not quite fulfilled. Fortunately, I allowed an extra day to get to Stornoway, in case the adverse weather should prevent my presiding at the dedication and Blessing of the new

extension Hall of St Peter's, Stornoway.

Eventually, the 'Isle of Lewis' left for the Minch at 2.00pm on Friday 31<sup>st</sup> January. Trying not to exaggerate, the waves reached, from trough to crest, about 15 feet. When I was disembarking at Stornoway, I said 'Thank you' (with some relief!) to one of the crew, who replied: 'Did you see that 45 foot wave'? Well... I wasn't aware that we were in Tsunami conditions!

At 11.00am on Saturday 2<sup>nd</sup> February, the Feast of Candlemas, there was a Sung Eucharist in St Peter's, against the backdrop of snow-clad Stornoway. I was delighted to see that Episcopalians had come from as far as North Uist and Harris, along with the congregation of St Moluag's Tong. The Rector, Stanley Bennie, told us that the suggestion that a hall be built has been around for a long time. I tried to point out that the Hall would not only be a great resource for the educational and social life of the congregation of St Peter's but a means of making more connections to the community of Stornoway itself.



Local architect and builders, along with the project management team in the congregation are to be congratulated for their hard work and a vision realised. As you can see, there was the customary generous buffet lunch with an opportunity to get to know in more depths a wide representation from the community.





What I find impressive about many charges in this Diocese, is their willingness to offer hospitality in Church and Hall (if they have one) as a means of building the Kingdom through practical care and generosity. Thank you St Peter's.

+*Martin. Argyll and The Isles.*

### **SMART ALECs**

Are you ready to become a **SMART ALEC**? This is the third paper of a trilogy in which I have tried to initiate debates about the future of the church we love and serve. It is not that by nature I am a reactionary rebel, rather one who strongly believes that fundamental changes are needed within the church if it is to survive for generations of worshipping Episcopalians as yet unborn. In the first paper I pleaded for empowerment of the laity to adopt many of the responsibilities that are traditionally priestly, and for congregational members to offer themselves for training in those roles. In the second I suggested that a return of the Mass Priest would solve many of the difficulties associated with the provision of regular and frequent sacramental worship, particularly in widely spread, rural areas and islands. Now I ask you to question the very parochial structure that we as a church have inherited.

From Victorian times the church, by-and-large, has had a well-defined, geographical structure of parishes (charges), each one being the sacred and secular responsibility of its Cure-of-Souls, its parish priest. It has become transparently obvious that the modern church cannot support the

financial burdens of such an excellent system and the result has been the diversity of pluralities and multiple benefices that we see around us. Even in the towns and cities of, for example, Scotland's Central Belt the purity seen within the parish system, where each incumbent was responsible for the pastoral care of those living within his parish boundaries, is no more. With increased mobility, church members travel, where the options allow, to worship in the church of their choice, or their churchmanship, or where their friends or family gather, or where they feel more 'at home'. This is not only true of regular worshippers but also for those who are humorously referred to as 'four-wheeler' Christians; those who attend in perambulators (buggies?) for Baptism, in limousines (stretched?) for Matrimony and in hearses (on biers?) for Burial. My contention is that it is time for the present structure of the parish system to be dismantled. How would this proposal affect a rural and far-flung diocese such as ours?

As we have seen, the current system cannot and will not cope. A priest living in Glencoe cannot possibly be pastorally responsible for Christians living on Tiree! And, this is not a unique example. The introduction of suitably trained and warranted lay chaplains, readers and leaders, together with Mass Priests, will undoubtedly help to maintain the current, moribund system but only by propping up the inevitably unsustainable. This is where **ALEC** comes in – more about **SMART** later. In my proposal each worshipping community would become an **ALEC**, an **Autonomous Local Episcopal Church**. Its geographical area and number of communicant members would be largely undefined. It would be the place where the local people worship, meet for prayer or study, visit the sick, or offer four-wheeler and other services. Its responsibility would lie collectively with its Mass Priest (if

it had one) together with all those who helped, in any way, to provide a service for church members – and that means 'service' in the widest sense of the word! It would finance itself, as far as it was able, and (hopefully) provide some funding for the maintenance of its Bishop and the essential structure of its diocese. While it would still receive Episcopal oversight, it would not have direct links to any parish priest or parish grouping. The diocese would obviously need a few stipendiary clergy, particularly for its cathedral and in its principal centres of population. I suggest that, in our diocese, apart from the Bishop, about four of these could be sufficient – the Dean/Provost in Oban, one priest in Fort William (for the northern part of the mainland diocese) and one covering southern Argyll and the Mull of Kintyre. The fourth would be itinerant and have an overview of all the islands. These clergy would provide, insofar as they were able, the external support that an **ALEC** might need. This could include, for example, the provision of pre-consecrated, Eucharistic elements where no Mass Priest existed, or the provision of other sacraments. They could also offer essential training, both practical and theoretical.

A central, diocesan, account, funded from stipendiary savings, reduced travelling expenses and the sale of redundant rectories and parsonages, would probably yield sufficient interest to obviate the financial haemorrhaging that this diocese (among others) currently suffers. Our bishop would no longer have palpitations when the word 'augmentation' was mentioned (especially in relation to his stipend!). Surplus funds could be used for vital, overseas missionary work.

Achieving such a reorganisation will take many years but the seeds for change must be sown.

So, your charge or parish becomes an **ALEC**. What's so **SMART** about that? Apart from the obvious, that it's a **SMART** thing



to do, **SMART** can have any number of meanings and you can probably suggest a definition that is suitable for you. I offer a few for your consideration. Could yours be an **ALEC** that is:

Supportive, Motivated, Attentive, Responsive and There?

Alternatively, could you claim that your **ALEC** is:

- ❖ Sacramental in its worship;
- ❖ Missionary in its outreach;
- ❖ Apostolic in its mission;
- ❖ Realistic in its endeavours; and
- ❖ Traditional in its teaching?

Perhaps you will be:

Spiritually Mature Albeit Religiously Tolerant.

Or, could you define your **ALEC** as:

- ❖ Small – in our numbers;
- ❖ Mutual – in our concern for each other;
- ❖ Alive – in our worship;
- ❖ Realistic – in our expectations; and
- ❖ Transformed – by the Holy Spirit?

These ideas are, of necessity, new and revolutionary, but, as I wrote earlier, a church that doesn't move forward, moves backwards: there is no option for standing still. Canon law may have to change to allow **ALECs** to have their new place within our church structures, but nary a General Synod passes when Canon law does not suffer some degree of refinement and adjustment.

Two thousand years ago, eleven frightened men, led by the power of the Holy Spirit, changed the world for ever. Today, external economic and statutory factors, which apply equally to churches as to secular organisations, demand our actions and reactions. Do we have the courage of the Apostles to look at our church in the light of the revolutionary and reforming

changes that are necessary? Can we survive the next few generations, let alone into the next century, without such changes? Can our congregations be trusted to look after themselves without being under the umbrella of some distant and perhaps little known priest, an expensive Man of God who cannot begin to fulfil all the pastoral burdens laid upon him; or one who may not be adequately qualified to accomplish them? Becoming an **ALEC** must be the way to the future. Better still, be a **SMART ALEC!**

As before, I offer these proposals for discussion by the College of Bishops. It would be wonderful if they promoted a debate at General Synod so that all sections of our church may offer their thinking on their church's future. I commit them to your thoughts and prayers.

*David Fuller – Saint Columba, Gruline, Isle of Mull*

### **THE "JESUS PRAYER" ...**

Having recently read the lovely little book "The Jesus Prayer" by Simon Barrington Ward, it reminded me afresh how important to my spiritual life meditative prayer has become over the years. I was interested to see reference to the World Community of Christian Meditation (wccm.org) - they use the word 'Maranatha' the Aramaic word for – "Come Lord" – as the focus word when preparing for meditation. The whole concept of Christians across the world praying the Jesus Prayer day and night, is quite mind-blowing. Although I have used the prayer often myself, I had not realised that others would be doing so at the very same moment as myself. It gives a wonderful sense of 'community', of being part of something hugely significant.

I am wondering whether there are others around our scattered diocese where time & distance can make us all at times feel isolated from one another, who would be interested in joining me in setting up a group here in Argyll? We

could arrange to set aside a specific time each week when we could all pray the Jesus Prayer together. No travelling is involved, we remain within the comfort of our own homes, yet are united into an active group to pray & meditate together. Please contact me if you are interested ... Stella Collyer, 01838-200293, or e-mail me at stella.collyer@btinternet.com

### **A SERMON FOR PENTECOST 9**

29<sup>th</sup> July 2007

*Luke 11: 1-13 - The Lord's Prayer*

I saw a sign outside a church on the outskirts of Bradford a few weeks ago: "Life is fragile: handle with prayer." I make no apology for a fairly personal approach to today's Gospel reading.

One of my cousins is praying for a miracle. My cancer diagnosis came only a few weeks after Donald, Linda and I were licensed here as Lay Readers. Surely God wouldn't have taken me so far down my lay ministry road, just to abandon me at the point of official recognition? The last time I stood here was November last year.

And wouldn't it be a wonderful testimony to the power of prayer, my cousin reasoned, when I was cured? "Cured" is not a word my oncology consultant uses readily with anyone, although he does appear to be pleased with my response to treatment so far.

Margaret and I have been quite overwhelmed and humbled by the sheer number of people all over Britain and Ireland, and in Delaware, who have been praying for us these past eight months or so. I'm even being remembered in Australia at the moment!

We met someone in the Co-op recently who said he has been praying for us daily since the start of the year. On another occasion, a comparative stranger stopped Margaret in the street, and said she was praying for us.

Her husband had died from cancer last year, so she had some understanding of what we might be going through. It was very kind of her under the circumstances.

I feel a certain affinity with the man on the stretcher who was lowered by his friends through a hole they made in roof. It was the faith of these friends which moved Jesus to heal the sick man. I can say with many people: "I am sustained by the prayers of others." So what do we mean when we say that we are praying for someone? When you pray for me, are you praying for the same things that I'm praying for? What should we be praying for? And what about the prayers which seem to go unanswered?

We could spend a month of Sundays just considering a thousand and one definitions of what prayer is: a wish turned Godward; an uninterrupted dialogue with God; communion with God; the cry of hope. The list is endless. Prayer speaks of a very human need.

In preparing today's address I have to acknowledge Philip Yancey's book: "*Prayer: does it make any difference?*" and also: "*Living the Lord's Prayer*" by Rowan Williams and Sister Wendy Beckett.

Let's face it, many of the things we pray for are frivolous. One writer has classed these as "parking space" prayers. You recognise the scenario: we go shopping; it's wet and windy, so we ask God to find us a parking space as close to the entrance as possible.

We shouldn't be too surprised when such prayers go unanswered! And isn't it misrepresenting God's influence when we do find that elusive parking space?

Sometimes we ask the downright impossible. When you were younger, there were probably times when you would gladly exchange your brother or sister for someone else. What about an amputee praying to have a missing limb grow back? How many Down's Syndrome children have

been changed by a parent's prayer? Who ever woke up one morning 20 years younger than they were yesterday?

Sometimes prayers are simply contradictory or conflicting: six people praying before an interview for one job; or opposing sides in a war, each believing that God is on their side.

So, how should we pray, and what should we be praying for? I warn you now: I don't have all the answers.

Philip Yancey sees nothing wrong with telling God plainly what we want, regardless of how improbable it may sound. Honesty is a good starting point in any prayer, and believe me, I've come straight to the point on many an occasion these past few months.

Yancey argues that we shouldn't worry about complaining to God, expressing our frustrations, even getting angry with him. There are good Biblical precedents after all! Prayer is a declaration of our dependence on God, but we must learn to recognise what it is that we really want. For example, we need to be clear whether we are asking for healing, or for the ability to cope with, or come to terms with an illness. It can be harmful to hold out false hope to someone.

Above all, we need to begin our prayers with God, not ourselves. I'm quite taken aback at times at just how self-centred I've become this year. It's all too human to start off with our own desires. We need to become attuned to the love and blessings God has to offer. I didn't say it would be easy.

We also need to pray for a sense of God's presence, to recognise when he does speak to us, to know when he is with us. We need to remember that we see God in Jesus, and in what he does through others.

Praying is fine when we receive the response we are looking for, but we have an immediate problem when our prayers seem to go unanswered, or we receive an unexpected response.

We wonder if God is paying attention to our demands. He has the power to respond, so why does he do nothing, we wonder? John Calvin said that we must never be weary of waiting for God's help. Theresa of Avila wrote that God is not really silent; it's just that we are deaf.

Sometimes God is asking what part we are prepared to play, because we often ask God for things we should be doing ourselves.

And unfortunately some people simply give up waiting for an answer. Their faith is shaken. The parable of the unexpected late night visitor at the end of today's Gospel reading is about God's bountiful mercy, but it is also about perseverance.

Someone wrote: "Keep it honest; keep it simple; keep it up". Persistent prayer will bring us closer to God; the more we get to know someone, the better we understand them.

We seem to receive mixed messages from the Bible about prayer petitions. "Ask and it shall be given unto you; seek and ye shall find...;" but how many times have we have asked and not received? Did this statement just apply to the disciples in Jesus' time? Why do some Christians survive accidents or illnesses, and others don't?

A friend lent me a copy of David Watson's book: "*Fear no evil: a personal struggle with cancer*". Watson was a world renowned Anglican priest, preacher and author. Literally thousands of people around the world prayed for him. A group even came over from the USA to pray by his bedside, and perform a ministry of healing, but he died six weeks after completing the manuscript of his book. It makes you think; it makes me think.

At times we just have to accept that the answer is: No. Often it's a blessing in disguise when our prayers are not answered in the way we wanted. Our short term demands may have unforeseen long term consequences. And

some people do discover positive outcomes, arising from receiving an unexpected response.

There are no guarantees, no fixed responses when we pray. There is no logical explanation that we can understand in this lifetime. God finds us a parking space, but seems to ignore our pleas to end world poverty. We don't want to be told that it is all God's will, or that we are all part of God's plan. It's not a good enough explanation, when we are desperate for God to intervene on our behalf.

We have to recognise that there are many things in life, and in our spiritual journey which are beyond our comprehension. It truly is a mystery. It's the ultimate act of faith, placing our trust in God. We may need even more faith in God to see us through. Towards the end, amazingly David Watson could speak of being at peace, and of trusting in the Lord, his refuge and his strength.

Despite the theory of prayer, I have to admit having problems with the practice at times. I don't believe for one moment that I'm alone. If I find my thoughts being distracted by worry or more worldly matters, or if I lose concentration as a side effect of my treatment (chemo-brain they call it!), then just repeating the Lord's Prayer silently can be a great comfort.

We have been given an assurance that even when we cannot articulate our needs, God already knows them, and that the Holy Spirit will intercede on our behalf. The Lord's Prayer has been described as: Christianity or the Gospel in miniature. It is simple, deceptively simple. Be warned! It helps us to see the perfect balance between contemplation with God, and raising our specific needs with him.

In the Lord's Prayer, and I'm not distinguishing between Gospel versions here, we start and finish with our thoughts firmly focussed on God. There is a boldness in addressing God as "Our Father", but it is a growing, developing relationship with our adoptive

parent. We acknowledge the "otherness of the nature of God" as Bishop Kenneth Stevenson interprets it.

Despite God's divine nature, his kingdom is not purely heavenly. Jesus came to earth to establish that kingdom. Jesus is that kingdom, and in the words of Pope Benedict, Jesus "is the one in whom, and through whom God's will is wholly done." We need help to learn God's will, and to be agents of God's kingdom. Too often we are guilty of telling God what he should be doing, rather than listening to what he wants us to do.

Having given God his proper place, we can move on to our own needs. The Scottish theologian John Macquarrie once said that we have a tendency to emphasise prayer as contemplation, but we should not forget the scriptural presentation of Jesus' teaching on prayer as petition.

Bread is a basic commodity for survival, especially for the poor. Brennan's, an Irish bakery firm has a slogan on its delivery vans: "Today's bread today", and that's what we're asking God for. There is also a sense of asking for tomorrow's bread today, not out of a sense of greed, but wishing for the bread of heaven.

To come closer to that bread of heaven, we find that forgiveness is a crucial step. When we say: "Forgive us our trespasses", Sister Wendy Beckett asks: Are we really saying to God, treat us the way we treat others? Instant protests all round, I should imagine!

Bishop Tom Wright wrote that God forgives us, which teaches us how to forgive others in return. This prayer commits us to action when we repeat it.

In our Lord's Prayer petitions we speak to God about evil in the world and the temptation we all face. It's not God who leads us into temptation after all. We ask God to be with us, to help us to cope. Temptation here is perhaps better translated as: trial, or tribulation, or testing. We pray that when the time of trial comes

as Rowan Williams puts it, we will have the resources to meet it. Or in the words of Tom Wright: "Enable us to pass through the tempting of our faith."

The Lord's Prayer concludes by returning our thoughts to God. The ending may be a later scriptural addition, but no Jewish prayer would have ended without a doxology, and most Christian traditions have adopted this ending. We have a reminder of the one we are addressing; a reminder of God's kingdom in heaven and on earth. It is giving God his place once more. It is an earnest desire for all our petitions to be answered.

Henri Nouwen wrote: "I learn that I cannot fix the people I'm praying for...I give them up to God, and through that act of submission, God can at last begin to grow in me the qualities that I need..." And so in conclusion, may our petition always be: Lord teach us how to pray.

Amen.

*Bob Eaves, St Moluag's Tong*

## **AN EXTRACT FROM A LETTER FROM PAT INGHAM**

*(A member of St Margaret's Whiting Bay)*

Friday 14<sup>th</sup> December 2007.

*She writes about her daughter Beth who died towards the end of last year.*

"I wanted her Service at the Crematorium to be one of Resurrection and Hope, as it was. .. We walked into Abbe's 'Dancing Queen' and sang 'Lord of all hopefulness'. A music group that plays light classical music played Annie's Song, which we all swayed to, ending with 'One more Angel in heaven' from Joseph and the Amazing Technicolour Dreamcoat....

Donations will go to the Renal Unit at Crosshouse Hospital, Kilmarnock towards a peritoneal



dialysis machine, to the Ayrshire Hospice and Arran Cancer Support. ... My friends at St Margaret's have been true Christian Brothers and Sisters and shown me love and compassion... My son-in-law's father was very fond of Beth and said he would pay for everything to do with the funeral. He is a professed Atheist. How does one explain that? ... I do think things are swinging back, from the glitter and glitz of Christmas, to deeper truths... Praise the Lord, Alleluia."

*Pat Ingham.*

## **A LETTER FROM THE REVEREND PETER RICE.**



*Dear Friends,*

As we start our Lenten period of reflection it is timely that Bishop Martin has kindly invited me to write a short article on my time as Priest in Charge of the old West Highland Region, as inherited from David Day in May 2003, and its enlargement into the West Highland Mission in February 2004 to include Charges previously cared for by Rev Betteley.

Firstly, I want to thank Fiona for her support and encouragement in this task. Her willingness to give

up our secure comfortable lifestyle in Salisbury, along with her vital work as Diocesan Secretary of the (huge) Mothers Union there; a vocation of enormous importance to her, is simply breathtaking. Also, our two daughters Elle (Eleanor) and Bella (Alice) have been wonderful in the way they have supported (and endured!) their parents sudden departure to a very uncertain lifestyle (certainly for our first year) in the Highlands. Thank you, team from the bottom of my heart.

Secondly, I must apologise to the Islands of Coll, Tiree and Eigg. When I was called by God to Argyll, it was first and foremost in my mind to serve the Island communities. I am an ex-mariner, ergo I go to sea! My calling was (and probably remains) to the Itinerant Ministry as advertised in September 2002. I therefore have a sense of enormous regret that, that Ministry has not been fulfilled in the way I would wish it to have been, for reasons that are beyond my control, in terms of the additional commitments, leaving an enormous sense of frustration.

Thirdly, well what second Curacy! Seven church communities spread across the mainland and the Isle of Mull. I am enormously grateful for the way you have put up with my spasmodic Ministry and coped with my mistakes. I have learnt an enormous amount, and the vocation has been inspiring, frustrating, difficult, sad, exciting, and humbling, but NEVER dull. However Bishop Douglas placed me under a five year contract, the task is too big, and it is time to move on.

I am not retiring, just refitting as the Royal Naval person within me would say. Time to reflect, get fit, read, spend time with Fiona, get used to the idea of my free bus pass next year, and perhaps prepare for a future Ministry somewhere!

I leave you with these thoughts. Ministry for any Priest or Minister in the Highlands or Islands will never be as it was, in days gone by. The cost of Stipends, Pensions

and Housing has seen to that. Communities need to look to their own resources to do the daily work of God (Opus Dei) namely the Office (Morning/Evening Prayer), visiting the elderly and sick, and being the presence of Christ in the community. We need to talk to other church communities (Presbyterian and Roman Catholic) to see what we can do together. Above all, the future are, the Children of our communities. Thank you for your friendship.

*Yours in Christ, Peter.*

## **NEXT MAGAZINE**

Most charges in the Diocese have a correspondent, who has agreed to ensure that articles are contributed to the Diocesan Magazine.

However, if you do have an article, just send directly to the Diocese office....

[bishop@argyll.anglican.org](mailto:bishop@argyll.anglican.org)

If you are using email and you are including photographs, please include them separately from the text as attachments.

Alternatively, you can send the text and the photographs to the office on a CD-ROM.

If you have any questions about this process, please call the Diocesan Office and you will receive helpful advice.

For the next Magazine, please send in the contributions by Friday 30<sup>th</sup> May.

## **SOUP AND CHEESE LENT LUNCHES**

Fridays 15<sup>th</sup>, 22<sup>nd</sup> and 29<sup>th</sup> February and 7<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> March, 12.30-1.30pm, in The Diocesan Centre, Croft Avenue, Oban from 12.30-1.30pm. All welcome. Proceeds for The Bishop's Lent Appeal for The Diocese of Zanzibar.

## **LENT APPEAL**

The Bishop's Lent Appeal this year is for our companion Diocese of Zanzibar.

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