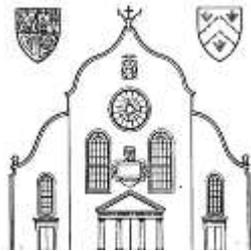


CANONGATE KIRK
THE KIRK OF HOLYROODHOUSE
& EDINBURGH CASTLE
www.canongatekirk.org.uk
Newsletter April 2021



MINISTER'S LETTER

Last month I suggested James Runcie's *The Road to Grantchester* as an alternative Lent book this year, and later in this newsletter you will find a piece that James has kindly written which eloquently explains why I thought it might be suitable for this season of reflection. I'm very grateful to him for this and hope to invite him to come and give us a talk one day when such things are possible again, but for the moment it's not too late to read his book!

In the meantime the reflective season of Lent is coming to an end and Holy Week and Easter draw near. It seems especially appropriate that Palm Sunday – when we recall the triumphal entry to Jerusalem – marks our first Sunday back in church since the New Year. Though numbers are still restricted to 50, face coverings must be worn and hymn-singing is not permitted, so the sense of triumph is not yet unrestrained.

As before a weekly e mail will be issued from the office to produce a register of those planning to attend – if you, or someone you know, would like to be added to our distribution list, please let us know. Please note that this year short services for Maundy Thursday and Good Friday will be available **online only**, uploaded on the day and then available indefinitely. All Sunday services will be livestreamed and available from 10.30am onwards.

For the last three months I've been pre-recording the service in an empty church on a Friday morning, and I'm grateful to Simon Leach, our organist, and to Imogen Gibson, our Kirk Secretary, for their invaluable support. For me, Friday was the new Sunday, which usually meant that by the middle of the week I had no idea which day it was!

Easter on the other hand is all about the distinction between Friday and Sunday, the transition from the darkness of Good Friday to the dawning of Easter Day so fundamental to our faith in the crucified and risen Jesus. Even though our celebration of Easter is necessarily muted this year, as individually we make our way from the shadow of the cross to the threshold of the empty tomb, may we look to the future in faith and in hope, mindful of our risen Lord's promise to be with us always – and everywhere – to the end of the age. Happy Easter!

PARISH REGISTER

Funerals

8 th March	Melissa Fergusson	Windsor Street
26 th March	Jocelyn Tait	Inverleith Terrace

“Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid.”

WORSHIP FROM AFAR

A reminder that although restricted services are permitted once again, there are still alternatives to attending in person. The weekly service is livestreamed to our website at 10.30am every Sunday and then available online at any time, and from Mondays onwards may also be heard on a landline telephone – simply dial 0131 546 4001 and press 1 when prompted. Calls are charged at your phone provider’s usual local rate – please let anyone know who is unable to access the internet but might appreciate this kind of connection.

CLARINDA’S

The local tea room which takes its name from the pen-name of Robert Burns’ favoured correspondent Nancy McLehose, who lies buried in our Kirkyard, has reopened after a year of closure. So far it’s only open 10am-4pm Saturdays and Sundays for takeaway, but if you find yourself in the parish at a weekend (after church on a Sunday?!) why not drop by? Maggie and her team will be pleased to see you, and we wish them well as we welcome them back to the Canongate.

THE ROAD TO GRANTCHESTER *by James Runcie*

It’s my belief that part of the widespread popularity of crime fiction is because it offers us an entertaining way of contemplating our own mortality. A hundred years ago, people used to recite the Book of Common Prayer twice a day, at morning and night: *Good Lord, deliver us from lightning and tempest, from plague, pestilence and famine; from battle and murder, and from sudden death.* Now, in a less traditionally Christian world, crime writing has become the secular space in which we address our deepest fears and anxieties and, at the same time, we look for the consolation, justice and closure that is found wanting in real life. As a writer, I think this kind of fiction has to be more than a case of making up an intriguing plot. A novel can’t just be a conjuring trick with people’s lives. It has to have a moral purpose. Why do people commit evil acts? Are some sins beyond redemption? Can you hate the sin but love the sinner? What is justice and what is forgiveness?

After writing six books of Grantchester Mysteries featuring the clergyman detective Sidney Chambers, and five television series of *Grantchester*, I thought I must surely have finished, but there were still issues that remained unaddressed. I realised this when I was interviewed for the Salvation Army Magazine *War Cry*. I thought I could get by with the usual charm and Anglican bluster, quoting Thomas Carlyle on having “a life of doubt enriched by faith” and answering the standard questions about my father, Robert Runcie, who fought in the Second World War with the Scots Guards and became Archbishop of Canterbury. But I was completely thrown by the first question: ‘I’d like to begin by asking you to describe your relationship with Jesus Christ.’ ‘Well, it’s a bit on and off’, I replied, which wasn’t really adequate. And I realised two things – one, that I had never properly addressed the reasons why Sidney Chambers became a priest in the first place – and second, how the word “Jesus” has, in many circles, become something of an embarrassment, even a taboo. People are often more

comfortable talking about the intimate details of their sex lives on television than they are about Christianity in their front rooms.

So, *The Road to Grantchester* is set in the Second World War and its aftermath, and it's about fear, faith and loyalty, love, death and secrets – faith in God, faith in oneself, and faith in other people. Sometimes, in order to find out where you've got to, you have to go back to the start and know the place for the first time. *In my end is my beginning*. And so, I thought hard about what it might be like to find faith in war time, not suddenly and blindingly, as a Damascus Road experience (or more accurately on the road to Monte Cassino in the middle of the Italian campaign); but slowly and inevitably, like the dawn. I wanted it to feel both difficult and natural, to come to sense the strangeness of the sensation: 'What does it matter whether I believe in him or not? He is There.' I found the whole experience far more difficult than I thought I would. It took ages to get even vaguely right and even then there are lapses and stretches of credulity. I know this; but it is an attempt to discover love and grace in a time of conflict; to find calm in the strife, stillness in the storm.

Because, to quote from T.S. Eliot in *The Four Quartets*, we cannot cease from our exploring. We have to keep the faith and finish the course - in the work we do, the friends we care for, and the love we share - and continue the search for meaning and spiritual value.

*Old men ought to be explorers
Here or there does not matter
We must be still and still moving
Into another intensity
For a further union, a deeper communion
Through the dark cold and the empty desolation,
The wave cry, the wind cry, the vast waters
Of the petrel and the porpoise. In my end is my beginning.*

KIRK SESSION RECORDS ONLINE

Thousands of volumes of historic Church of Scotland records held in the collections of National Records of Scotland - including those of Canongate Kirk - are now available online for the first time. Images of more than a million pages from the kirk session and other ecclesiastical court records containing details of key events in communities across the country between 1559 and 1900 have been added to ScotlandsPeople, the National Records of Scotland's online research service. These records offer remarkable insights into the everyday lives of ordinary Scots, recording important moments such as births, marriages and deaths. The church also adjudicated on paternity of children and provided basic education, as well as disciplining parishioners for what could be called anti-social behaviour - drunkenness, cursing and breaking the Sabbath. The newly added records also include accounts of how people dealt with exceptional historical events such as wars, epidemics, crop failures and extreme weather.

Records specific to Canongate Kirk include Minutes and Accounts going back to 1613, long before our current building was envisaged. They are handwritten of course, and not at all easy to read, but it's fascinating even to make out the names of ministers like Hugh Blair, one of the leading lights of the Scottish Enlightenment, and Robert Walker, the Skating Minister. Documents can be seen online for free, and it's easy to set up an account at www.scotlandspople.gov.uk Well worth a browse!

TEDDY BEARS FOR THE ROYAL MILE PRIMARY SCHOOL

Nicky Jessop, Head Teacher at RMPS, writes that this year the transition from nursery to Primary 1 will probably be a bit different and across the city primary schools are using a character called the Edinburgh Bear to engage children in work and play. With this in mind she would like to distribute tiny knitted Edinburgh Bears on key chains as a welcome to new P1 pupils and has asked for our help. They need a number of teddies by mid-May and a free pattern is provided at <https://pin.it/6HRgINe> This is a great way to maintain the good relationship we already have with our local primary school and if you can help or would like further details please call Etta Geekie on T:0131 657 1236.

EDINBURGH WORLD HERITAGE FREE PUBLIC EVENT

Over the past three years, the Atlas.WH project (<http://www.atlaswh.eu/>) has explored the sustainable management of the World Heritage Sites in Porto, Bordeaux, Florence, Santiago de Compostela, and Edinburgh. As this major project draws to a close, and to mark the week of World Heritage Sites, Edinburgh World Heritage will host the fifth and final series of partnership events, bringing together leading experts to explore the role of heritage in solving issues related to the climate emergency. Guests include the five project partners, experts from the Scottish heritage sector, Edinburgh city managers, and international partners. Over two days, the plans for each urban World Heritage Site will be presented, and there will be a discussion of how the impact of climate change is assessed and addressed through case studies and the latest in sector research. For tickets and more information on this free event on 13th and 14th April go to <https://bit.ly/3tX2UIk>

FRESHSTART

Freshstart, the local charity that helps people make a home for themselves, is collecting donations again from 6th April. Please look at their website to see warehouse opening times and which items they need the most. Details of their forthcoming fundraising virtual kiltwalk over the weekend of 23rd – 25th April can also be found at <https://www.freshstartweb.org.uk/>

OFFERINGS

Weekly free will offering envelopes are now available. Please let us know if you'd prefer not to receive envelopes but instead to arrange electronic transfers or other means of direct giving to continue to support the Church's work during the pandemic. If you'd like further details please e-mail canongatekirk@btinternet.com Donations can also be given via our website. Meanwhile we're grateful to everyone who continues to support Canongate Kirk any way at all in these challenging times. We are also now registered as a beneficiary of the Amazon Smile scheme, whereby 0.5% of the net cost of purchases you make on Amazon can be donated to us at no extra cost to yourself. To set the ball rolling you need to register at <https://smile.amazon.co.uk/> and nominate Canongate Parish Church of Scotland, Edinburgh as your chosen charity. Please note you need to use our formal Scottish charity name rather than Canongate Kirk.

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