

THE SIGN SEPTEMBER 2016

As you will all know Chris Davies has, after long, dedicated and enthusiastic service, stepped down from his role as editor of THE SIGN. We had an opportunity to thank him at the beginning of July and record here also an appreciation of the wonderful work he has done to make THE SIGN such a good magazine throughout the years he was responsible for its production.

We hope that a new team will be in place very soon, but in the meantime this issue of the magazine concentrates mainly on the ongoing day to day work of St Cuthbert's. So apologies to any group or person who feels a regular aspect of the Sign is missing.

This month we enter the interregnum and there is a message from Fred Tomlinson who is to be our Interim Pastor. Fred is Rector of St Peter's, Luton Place and along with support from others will steer us through the coming months.

If you would like to contribute to the Sign or add a notice of an event, please keep writing.

A Message from Revd Canon Fred Tomlinson our Interim Pastor

Dear Friends

I'm very much looking forward to working as your Interim Pastor over the next few months until a new Rector is appointed. Some of you will know me already either from the time when I was Rector of St Hilda's or from my work in the Diocese as Synod Clerk.

St Cuthbert's is a key charge in the Diocese of Edinburgh – we need the congregation to continue to be strong and outward-looking.

The transition time which you're entering is not a time to do radical new things without a Rector, but nor is it a time to stand still.

A glance at the Vestry minutes shows there's plenty to be going

on with, not least your new doors and other areas of work which you've identified over the past few months.

As Interim Pastor I will look to help and encourage you with these, in addition to seeing Sarah through the final year of her curacy with you.

Due to my commitments at St Peter's I won't make many Sunday services at St Cuthbert's, but will attend church events when I can.

In the meantime, please be assured of my prayers.

Fred

Sarah's View September 2016

While we were on holiday in August I have to admit to not keeping myself up-to-date with what was happening in the world. It was part of escaping the concerns of day-to-day life, facilitating my 'switching off' and enabling me to relax. Even the Olympics passed me by! Nevertheless, in many places we visited in Burgundy, I was constantly reminded that turmoil and upheaval have been constantly – as they are now – part of the human condition. The destruction of buildings and sacred edifices has been carried out frequently in the name of progress, or as a desire to go back to something purer and uncorrupted. In Burgundy, reminders of the devastation unleashed during the French Revolution were everywhere. When we were in Dijon (a city much to be recommended by the way – relaxed and beautiful, not to mention the mustard!) we visited the church of Notre-Dame, a 13th century Gothic masterpiece. Above the doorway openings there are tympana - semi-circular sculpted friezes, depicting saints and other religious imagery. These were savagely defaced in 1794. We encountered this type of damage many times in our visit. Sometimes the damage had been left as it was (as at Notre-Dame), and elsewhere such artworks had been restored.

Immediately after our return from holiday we visited St. Triduana's Well, which is in the grounds of St. Margaret's Parish Church in Restalrig. It, too, is associated with

iconoclasm – that of the Scottish Reformation. The Well is named for St. Triduana, whose legend describes her as a high-born, holy virgin, who settled there in the 5th or 6th century. Accounts witness to hundreds of pilgrims visiting her Well for healing, particularly of the eyes. By the 16th Century a magnificent Collegiate church was on the site, reportedly with 32 altars. However, at the first Reformation General Assembly John Knox declared the site ‘A monument of idolatrie, Restalrig should be utterly casten downe and destroyit’. All that was there was razed to the ground – except for, amazingly, the lower storey of the hexagonal chapel above the Well, which can still be visited. How such destruction would have affected the villagers around it, in terms of their attachment to the Church and Well, not to mention their livelihoods, can only be guessed at.

Such histories are sobering, their violence and pain reverberating through the ages. But then there are other histories. The stories which give us hope, and sustain our desires and wills to work and pray for peace. Going back to Burgundy, the Basilica of Sainte-Marie-Madeleine at Vézelay is an outstanding Romanesque Church, with sculpted capitals and portals – but fairly plain, and filled with light. What I remember most are the plain wooden crosses around the walls, which had been processed from many places in Europe to Vézelay in 1946, as part of the Croisade de la Paix. One particular cross has lettering on it. It was carried by local German prisoners-of-war who, observing the peace march going by, asked to join the procession and carry their own cross. That is a story I hope I never forget.

Report from July Vestry

At the Vestry meeting on July 12 the following issues were discussed.

Vestry is to consider whether to support the Big Switch initiative led by Christian Aid when the energy contracts come up for renewal.

The Property Committee reported that work was needed on the north garden wall of the Rectory and that it would be necessary to check responsibility for the maintenance of the walls with the Diocesan registrar.

Calum Gourley has resigned as caretaker for the church and Vestry has agreed to examine the various tasks involved, housekeeping, security, supplies and liaising with the public and report back in August.

Historic Scotland has approved the plans for the proposed church doors and responses from The Scottish Civic Trust and the Architectural Heritage Society are awaited

Margaret Holmes has agreed to head a small group to organise catering for church events.

The meeting closed with thanks to Maurice for his work for the church and best wishes offered to him and to Anne in their retirement.

Copies of the full minutes may be found at the back of the church or from Hilary Pritchard

A MESSAGE FROM FIONA SMITH

To our dear friends at St Cuthbert's,
I wish to say a heartfelt "THANK YOU" for all your lovely cards, wishes, flowers and prayers during the last few weeks, while I have been undergoing chemo and an operation. I know that all your kindness and thoughts definitely helped me through the testing time. I would like to say a particular "thank you" to Judith, as she ended up being the go-between and kept you all up to date with my progress. As some of you are aware, I am back in circulation and doing well, although I do overdo things some days! John would also like to thank you for all the support given to him, as it has been a horrible time for him and the family.

God bless you.

Love from Fiona and John xx

BEN EMMERSON IN CAMBODIA

In July I travelled as part of a group from South Morningside Explorer Scout Unit to the village of Banteay Kabalchin in Cambodia to help build two new classrooms and refurbish existing parts of their school, ravaged by termites. On arrival we had two days acclimatisation in Phnom Penh learning about the recent brutal history of the Khmer Rouge regime. We then travelled six hours by bus to the village and set up our campsite in the school grounds, living alongside the local community and mosquitoes! For a fortnight we worked at moving stones, compacting sand and rock, brick laying, sanding, grouting and painting in temperatures in excess of 40° and humidity of up to 90%. We also had the opportunity to meet the villagers, Buddhist monks from the local temple and spend time with children from the school. They were fascinated by our kilts, enjoyed listening to us sing Scottish songs and had fun competing with us in a Sports Day. A group of Cambodian Scouts came to visit us and swap stories (their English was better than our Khmer!) The school was officially opened on 17th July with a blessing by the monks, speeches, the unveiling of a plaque inscribed with all our names and a party involving the community and partner charity who had facilitated the whole project. We spent the next week in Siem Reap having cooking lessons from a local restaurant, visiting the world heritage site Angkor Wat and taking a guided quad bike tour at sunset along paddy fields. Our month in Cambodia concluded with a few days on an island jungle trekking, snorkelling and relaxing. I returned to Edinburgh with incredible memories and the knowledge that I have made a small difference in enabling the children of Banteay Kabalchin attend full time rather than part time education.