

THE SIGN

JUNE 2021



**ST. CUTHBERT'S
SCOTTISH EPISCOPAL CHURCH
COLINTON**

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**St Cuthbert's
Scottish Episcopal Church
Westgarth Avenue
Colinton
EDINBURGH
EH13 0BD**



St Cuthbert's endeavours to be a community in which all are encouraged to participate in worshipping God and serving the wider community. It welcomes those who are doubters and sceptics as well as those who are committed in faith, and has a concern for those who have been hurt by their experiences of life.



Facebook: @stcuthbertscolinton



Instagram: stcuthbertscolinton



Twitter: @stcuthbertsSEC



**St Cuthbert's Scottish Episcopal Church
Colinton**

*** Front Page Photograph – the St Cuthbert's Ant Hotel!**

Dear Friends,

Alleluia! Christ has risen, ascended and we have received the Holy Spirit at Pentecost - so now we enter the long 'green' season of Sundays after Pentecost, which ends on the celebration of Christ the King in November. My



hope and prayer is that during this season of green, we will all be able to return to church, with less, or no social distancing and be able to sing. Philip has chosen so many wonderful hymns each Sunday, I wonder which has been the hardest for you to sit and reflect upon and not sing? Mine was definitely 'Thine be the glory'. I feel a theme for a Songs of Praise coming on!

Following last month's notice of Martin standing down as Rector's Warden, I am pleased to let you know that Judith Mackintosh has kindly agreed to take on that role. I look forward to building our relationship as we serve God and this community together.

We had a wonderful visit from Bishop John in May when he presented Megan with the St. Cuthbert's Award (more about that later) and blessed our wild area, ant hotel and Sunday School.



I had my second vaccine at the end of April and have begun to visit with Home Communion again. I am limiting the number of visits per week, to avoid any potential transfer of the virus, but it has been good to see people who are housebound after so long – even though I have to keep my mask on. I have my first care home visit this week, which takes longer as I will have to take a lateral flow test on arrival and wait for the result before going in.

It is lovely to hear of people visiting family and friends again and even travelling outside of Scotland. I believe hugging is also back on the agenda (that's probably one of the covid rules I would keep). I know it's probably strange for a church leader but I'm not really a hugger – unless it's family or close friends. It has been suggested I get this t-shirt!



I hope this finds you all well and looking forward to time with friends and family over the summer, or even a break alone. Let's hope we get some of last year's sunshine to add to the joy.

Every blessing.

Nicki

VESTRY REPORT MAY 2021

- Nicki informed Vestry that the new photocopier is now in place and the old one has gone.
- We have received a letter of thanks from Holy Trinity Church.
- We received a letter from the Youth Group of St Cuthbert's asking the church and its members to pledge to divest of investments with companies that do not support the environment. Nicki is investigating the possibility and consequences of this.
- Martin had distributed the 7-month accounts (and budget) up until 31 March 2021, via email, and reported that the accounts remain in line with expectations.
- Patricia, Philip and Wendy proposed several charities for the church to support this year. Vestry voted that £1000 be given to each of the following: Local charity- Tiphereth; National charity- Scottish Association for Mental Health; International charity- Vaccination Aid Covid-19 Appeal.
- Several church members received a spam email from a church member. This was investigated and found to be due to the member's email account being hacked and the spam email was sent to all on their mailing list and was not due a leak from the church Database.
- The work on the Rectory roof has been completed and the work on the Church roof is ongoing.
- Security door cameras for the Church have been installed on the choir vestry door.
- Reports on the Organ acoustic audit and the Heating audit for the Big Project in the church are pending.
- Martin has stood down as Rectors Warden and Judith Mackintosh has agreed to take on the role with immediate effect.
- Nicki gave thanks to Martin for his wisdom while serving as Rector's Warden and is grateful that he will stay on as Treasurer and Chair of Property.
- To keep within Covid-19 regulations, anyone who has not booked to attend church services cannot be allowed to enter.
- Current Covid-19 restrictions allow a soloist to sing in church but not a choir. Donald is willing to sing for us at one service a month. Humming by the congregation is not to be encouraged.
- Nicki would like to have a service to mark the deaths of Church members that occurred during the time of the Covid-19 Pandemic. She will wait until we are allowed singing and can invite the family members.
- Caroline provided a written report via email on her work with the young people. Going forward they are excited to be able to meet in person for Sunday school. The Youth Group has been meeting online and they are particularly interested in looking at environmental issues. They also led a beautiful Compline service.
- Caroline herself has been attending several conferences and courses to support and inform her work at St Cuthbert's.

The full minutes are available from the Vestry Secretary. An electronic version can be requested by email, contact: julia.roberts01@btinternet.com

June News from the NSM

As I write the frosts seem to have departed and I've been able to start planting in the garden, even if it means darting in and out between showers! The trees are putting on mantles of green and the beauty of the colourful blossoms is a joy to see. That's the first area of hope!



The second area of hope surrounds my new ministry. After weeks of Zoom services, (not my favourite medium) we're planning to return to worship together in church at St. Fillan's on June 6th. Not knowing the congregation well enough to know who is responsible for what, it's been quite an undertaking, but it's all coming together well now, and I'm blessed with a truly friendly and helpful group of people. This is making my caretaker ministry with them so much easier.

The third area of hope surrounds the relaxation of Covid regulations and restrictions. I've already been able to take advantage of some of these, with a lunch out, a walk on the beach at Yellowcraigs in East Lothian and a wonderful visit from my daughter, Michelle, all the way from the wilds of Fife (Dunfermline!). Now we can look forward to meals out 'en famille' and more visits, including from my daughter in Ayrshire, who has MS.

But there have been challenges too, as I'm sure so many of you are finding. For many, particularly the more elderly among us, there's the anxiety about going out and about again, despite the loneliness and depression that pandemic restrictions may have brought. My personal issue, as a 77 year old practising priest, was experiencing a need to get away in order to totally unwind and recharge my batteries. Unfortunately, although The Bield Retreat Centre opened its doors again on 11th May, I found myself unable to get a booking till late June. On the holiday front, with original holiday bookings for cruises having been cancelled, I eagerly booked a couple of short Welcome Back ones, only to have them cancelled too on 6th May! Does this all sound only too familiar?!

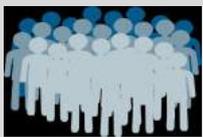
However, God is the God of love, and the death, resurrection and ascension of his Son, followed by the gift of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, should tell us not

to lose hope! And indeed I'm sure it was God's Holy Spirit moving in me that encouraged me to take matters in hand and this very day, (May 11th), I booked a Wildlife Week at the Aigas Field Centre, a large estate near Inverness, from the 3rd of July. We're all becoming more and more aware of the damage we humans are doing to the environment, God's incredible Creation, and the importance of retaining biodiversity for the future health of this planet. So, I reckon this was God's way of telling me that I should be looking into this, and I'm only too delighted to do so! Hopefully I'll come back with stories to tell when I take services later in the summer. I certainly know I shall come back refreshed from the beautiful and peaceful surroundings.

So, may hope rest with you all and God's loving presence surround you as we move into warmer weather and long hours of daylight. Plus, I hope to see some of you in church on a Wednesday in the coming weeks.

**Love and blessings,
Margaret.**

Returning to Church



Numbers are limited based on distancing.



Keep 2m physical distancing at all times in church:
follow signs and markers.



Welcomers wearing face coverings will greet and direct you.



You should wear face coverings at all times.



Your attendance details will be maintained for 21 days for "Test and Protect".



Use the hand sanitiser as you enter and leave the church buildings.



Avoid physical contact with fellow worshippers. Greet with smiles and waves



A welcomer will guide you to your seat.
Households may sit together.



Use the printed orders of service and take them home afterwards.



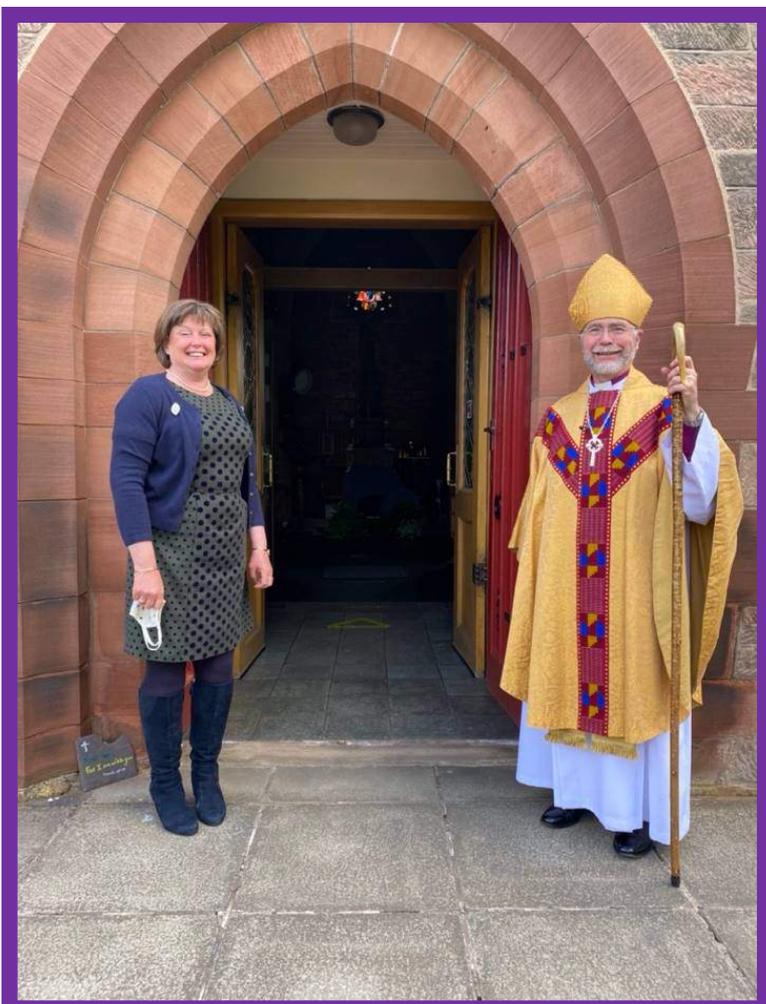
No: Congregational singing: Yes: Organ, recorded music or a soloist.



No collection plate will be passed: place offerings in the plate left out.



At the end of the service leave carefully as directed by a welcomer.



On May 16th Bishop John presented Megan with a St. Cuthbert's Award for her work with the youngsters over a number of years. Her nomination said:

Megan moved to Colinton with her family at the age of 8 and joined the choir when children sang in the services twice a month. She was promoted to head chorister at 16.

Megan helped with the Youth Fellowship camps in

her early 20's. During this time, she set up a music group to play in church, using whatever instruments they played and introduced a few new hymns to the congregation (not all of them were well received!)

In 1999, Megan started helping in Sunday School, her first was to set up the 'Cuthbert's Class' when Ben, her son, was creche age to ensure the under 5's had bible stories and related play during the service. With the help of others, Megan wrote and directed Nativity Plays from 2005.

In 2007 Megan set up the Junior choir, running practices twice a month with the help of Donald Mackintosh and organised the children to sing in church once a month and for all festivals. In the 8 years of running it, 14 youngsters joined the choir. In 2010, Megan became the organiser of the Sunday School.

Megan has been a vestry member twice and sat on the Christian Aid Committee in the early 1990's, when she started the tradition of carol singing around the Bonaly courtyards at Christmas – 29 years on, she is still leading the hardy singers, only missing one when Covid prevented it.

Megan retired from Youth Work at Easter 2020 when a Children, Youth and Families Worker was appointed. This, however, has not stopped her being an enthusiastic and committed member of St. Cuthbert's who is valued by all.

Rachel Johnson (nee Holmes) sent some of her memories of Megan working with the youngsters:

Megan was just starting to be involved in the youth group (ages 12 - 18) as I was coming through. I think she may have just graduated from University and have started teaching; I think it was '87, '88, time frame. Anyway, at that time we had an Irish curate called Gary and the two of them took us away one summer to a bothy on the shore of Loch Etive. I think that there were about ten of us - the Russell boys, the Hume twins, Andrew Bent, Vickie House, Alison Hume and I.

We had a girl's room, a boy's room and a central kitchen/ living room area. I don't remember any luxuries and know there was no shower or bath. I remember that every other day or so, I assume when all of us teenagers started to smell, they made us get in the loch to bathe. I remember leaving trails of bubbles on the water surface!

I also know that I didn't appreciate her cooking since I don't remember what we ate but I'm sure it wasn't a well-stocked kitchen, but I do remember her being very strict on us about our table manners and when we finished our meal, we had to put our knives and forks together on our plate.

It was a great week away, we swam, climbed, abseiled, hiked, had campfires and made lasting memories.

I know there are others, but this was my first and most memorable.

**Congratulations
and
thank you to Megan!**

A beautiful, peaceful area to reconnect with nature, a haven, somewhere to chat with friends, a lovely setting for wedding photographs, all very apt and valid descriptions of our church gardens. However, keeping the lawns manicured, the verges weed free and the hedges and trees trimmed is no mean feat. So, the Gardening Team meet at 10 am on the second and fourth Mondays of each month during the summer. Please think about joining this friendly, but slightly aging group, you would be made most welcome. No experience is necessary, except perhaps being able to identify a weed, just turn up, with your favourite trowel and, more importantly, a drink and a snack, as we are allowed a wee break for a natter.

Bryan, Ross, Nick, Mary, Vivien and Margaret

The Youth Group have been continuing to meet over zoom in the first few months of this year. Joan and I encouraged them to think of projects that we could work on together and as part of the wider congregation. They came up with the idea of exploring eco-issues and how that can and will affect us. This is very relevant to us all just now especially with COP-26 being held in Glasgow later on this year. On the 6th June they will be leading the service and are looking forward to sharing their thoughts on many eco-issues.

We sent them away to come back with thoughts on what they wanted to look at specifically, how they wanted to share the project with the wider congregation, Church and local community and the young people came back with different issues:

Locally – exploring how to help nurture bees, hedgehogs and birds within our gardens. Looking at the impact of roads, pollution and other environmental factors on local wildlife population. This is of course not just a local issue but when we were originally discussing this we were in the height of lockdown. In the Church Garden the Sunday School helped create a Bee and Butterfly (insect) hotel on the 16th May with Bishop John coming out to bless it. The group had a great time looking for hollowed out sticks they could use and fallen flowers that they could use to decorate it. The Sunday School are very keen to continue doing more work in the garden as a way of helping local wildlife have a place to rest, live and multiply.

Another angle that came into discussion was looking at Climate Change. We discussed small ways we can reduce our carbon footprint and found this website:

<https://www.carbonfootprint.com/calculator.aspx>

It will help you accurately predict your carbon footprint against the UK national average, the World's average and the worlds target to combat climate change. There are even tips on how to lower your own personal carbon footprint here:

<https://www.carbonfootprint.com/minimisecfp.html>

We invite the congregation and anyone else who you might talk to about this to look at their carbon. We have also asked the Vestry to look at our investments and to make sure they are environmentally friendly and we ask each and every congregation member to consider their own personal investments and the impact that these companies have on the environment.

We also thought of bigger personal changes like changing cars for electric versions which will help reduce pollution and increase life expectancy. This also includes looking at other forms of travel and encouraging people to fly less.

Lastly, we thought of the impact of waste on our world, especially the rubbish that is floating in the sea and how that impacts the food chain (including us) and how much more we need to care for our seas and the delicate eco-systems contained in the water. Rubbish ends up in the sea mainly due to human negligence, through not picking up rubbish on the street, not recycling properly and lastly people actually dumping their rubbish in the sea. As Christians, we have a duty to God's earth, to all the wildlife and creatures which he charged us to protect and look after.

[Caroline](#)



Curious about our Area Council? Then read on ...

St Cuthbert's Church belongs to Edinburgh South Area Council(ESAC) along with Christ Church Morningside, St Fillan's Buckstone, St Matthew's Roslin, St Michael and All Saints Tollcross, St John's West End and the joint charges of St James' Penicuik and St Mungo's West Linton. Each of the seven Diocese in the Scottish Episcopal is divided into a number of Area Councils that meet three times a year to discuss matters of common concern. These meetings usually occur shortly before the spring and autumn Diocesan Synods and in the summer before the General Synod which is a gathering of representatives from the seven diocese.

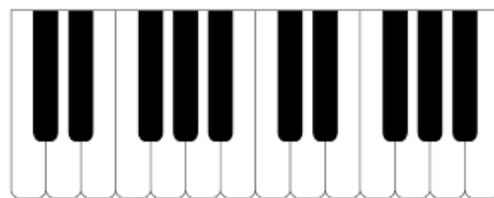
The focus at Area Council meetings is on the main agenda items of the upcoming Synod and in my experience the various charges bring a rich variety of experience and views to contribute and share, and as Lay Representative of St Cuthbert's I always come away feeling that I have learnt a great deal from the contributions of others and hope that I make a meaningful contribution to the shared dialogue. So far this year we have had two Area Council meetings, both necessarily via zoom. At our February meeting we focused on the main agenda item at the forthcoming Diocesan Synod in March; the proposed changes to Canon 4 which concerns the election of bishops. Relevant papers had been circulated beforehand including an outline of the two options for change being proposed. The first would offer a significant revision of the present Canon but would retain the Electoral Synod as the key decision-making body. Option two would be to replace the Electoral Synod with an Electoral Council

Eleven of us were present at the February meeting of SEAC. Discussion was energetic and diverse with a number of key concerns emerging with regards to the current process of selection. That is it that it lacks confidentiality and could be an overly public and pressured experience which might dissuade nominees from seeking future nomination following an unsuccessful application. It was agreed that the whole process could be tightened up and less drawn out than at present. Although overall SEAC favoured retaining the current system, there was support for option two in that the smaller Electoral Council might engage in the responsibility of selection from a more informed and considered position. The meeting was informed that any church member from any Diocese could make a nomination with the agreement of the nominee. Many of those present were not aware of this and raised the question of how widely this knowledge was available amongst church members.

Openness in all aspects of the electoral process emerged as key along with kindness and courtesy being evidenced in all aspects, whilst highlighting the importance of confidentiality. Our attention was drawn to the importance of 'prayerful discernment and careful listening for the guiding voice of the Holy Spirit' (Canon 4). That the selection of a bishop is not an ordinary process of application for a position and the Holy Spirit might be calling someone who could be seen as the least suitable nominee and equally failure to appoint does not display a failure in the Holy Spirit. I was pleased to present the reflections of SEAC at the Diocesan Synod which overall favoured retaining the current practice of Electoral Synod as the key decision-making body in the election of bishops.

Margaret Temple Lay Representative

Music Notes



Services in St Cuthbert’s continue to follow their usual pattern, but it has been good that we have been able to reintroduce some singing in recent weeks, within the prescribed protocols which have to be followed. Instead of congregation members merely following the words of hymns whilst the organ plays, on Wednesday 21 and Sunday 25 April, Donald Mackintosh sung them for us. From the comments made afterwards, it seems that this met with the general approval of all those present – thank you, Donald.

We look forward to this happening again at the end of May, when one of the hymns will be “How shall I sing that majesty”. This is a new hymn to St Cuthbert’s, and one which I have heard numerous times on television and radio during the lockdown. The words were written by John Mason in the 1600s, but have only recently reappeared in contemporary hymn books, thanks to the great tune written for these words, entitled “Coe Fen”, which was composed by Kenneth Naylor, who died in 1991. It is a stirring tune, with wonderful harmonies, and the background of the composer has a certain resonance with me: he taught music at several independent schools, and then moved into housemastering. This aside, I hope that the St Cuthbert’s congregation will enjoy getting to know it, and hopefully singing it in the not-too-distant future.

Philip Rossiter

READINGS FOR JUNE 2021

Year B

2 June – Pentecost 2

Genesis	3.8-15
2 Corinthians	4.13-5.1
Mark	3.20-35

6 June – Pentecost 2 – readings to be confirmed

9 & 13 June – Pentecost 3

Ezekiel	17.22-24
2 Corinthians	5.6-10, 14-17
Mark	4.26-34

16 & 20 June – Pentecost 4

Job	38.1-11
2 Corinthians	6.1-13
Mark	4.35-41

(Wednesday 23 June – no service)

Sunday 27 June – Pentecost 5

Wisdom	1.13-15; 2.23-24
2 Corinthians	8.7-15
Mark	5.21-43

30 June & 4 July – Pentecost 6

Ezekiel	2.1-5
2 Corinthians	12.2-10
Mark	6.1-13

Services in Church:

As of Easter Day 2021, services restarted in Church each Wednesday and Sunday at 10.30am (and will continue on-line on our YouTube channel)

As numbers are restricted, as before, booking is required to attend.

How to book:

By Email: stcuthbertscomms@gmail.com
By Telephone: 07305 911986

When to book:

Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday 10am – 1pm

If there is a place available at the service requested, you will receive confirmation by email, or telephone.

If you are not booked in, you will be unable to attend.

If you would like any further details, please contact stcuthbertscomms@gmail.com.

We look forward to welcoming you to a service in church.

Unanswered Prayer? – By Bishop Bob

Some years ago I was lucky enough to be present when Professor Robert Davidson of Glasgow University was giving a lecture on the Psalms. He demonstrated that there were several levels of meaning in these poems. The familiar phrase as we read or say or sing it triggers our devotional response and we start to pray the words, or to ponder them in awareness of God's presence. From time to time, as we do that, it strikes us that what is being said is outrageously naïf, is ignoring the realities of life. And if we wrestle with that, we begin to perceive – as we wouldn't if we hadn't taken issue with the poem – that at a deeper level what is being said is profoundly true.

We have to do something like that – argue through to new levels of meaning – if we are to assimilate the well-known words of Jesus found both in the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 7.⁷) and in the diary of the journey up to Jerusalem in Luke 11.⁹:

“So I say to you, ask, and you will receive; seek and you will find; knock, and the door will be opened to you.”

Jesus has just told the story of a family in their one-roomed house being woken up in the middle of the night by a neighbour who wants to borrow food. Guests have unexpectedly just arrived, which was not as strange as it would be among us, for people in Palestine then often chose to travel by moonlight rather than in the heat of the day. The little story is a verbal strip cartoon. First we have the embarrassment of the host who hasn't a morsel of food in the house with which to fulfil the sacred duty of hospitable welcome. Then we see him rousing his friend in the village (and all the friend's family) by knocking at the door and requesting help. Next is a scene so unthinkable that the surprised crowd of listeners must have roared with laughter: the householder tells the man in need to shove off, he's not getting up! Some friend! But the last scene is that eventually he *does* get up and lend the three loaves, not for friendship's sake but merely to get the blighter off his back. What then is the moral? What has this to tell us about our praying? That we are to keep on pestering God till he gives us what we want? Surely not! The surly householder is not an image of God, but a contrast: how much more of a friend in need is God.

“So I say to you,” Jesus continues (as above). We are too familiar with the words: they flow over our passive acceptance. Surely, on the original occasion when Jesus said these words, there was at least one honest person in the crowd thinking, “Everyone's assenting. Maybe it's just me who finds you *don't* get everything you pray for.” And then Jesus tightens the screw: there are no exceptions. “For everyone who asks receives, those who seek find, and to those who knock the door will be opened”.

This is a provocative device well known to those who teach in school, college or university. You trail your coat until an alert student jumps on it in protest, and in the deep hush the teacher sets out what he or she really wants everybody to grasp. Provoked beyond endurance, the honest listener in the crowd yells, "That's simply not true!" Whatever anybody asks for in prayer, they get, is not *your* experience, nor mine, nor that of the prophets, nor that of anybody else who isn't kidding himself. With the hushed crowd eager to hear how Jesus gets himself out of this one, Jesus proceeds to inculcate the truth he wants them all to absorb. Would any father among you give his son, asking for fish, a live snake instead, or a deadly scorpion in lieu of an egg? Do you really imagine you are better disposed towards your children than God is towards his? How much more can we rely on our Father in heaven for a consistently loving response to those who pray to him!

There seems to me to be three implications here that are fundamental for our praying. First, praying to God is not fully automated. It is not putting a coin in a slot machine which is thereby obliged to provide you with the product you have selected. Or as Bishop Bruce Cameron once said, prayer is not taking our shopping list into God's supermarket. Prayer takes place within a direct personal relationship which is the miracle Jesus has pioneered for us all.

Secondly, that relationship matters more than whatever particular bounty we crave. The love God has for us is not only the primary gift, but is also the only proper context for all requests, the answers to which come as gifts from heaven, with all God's love. In the Lord's Prayer, between a third and a half of the prayer is over before we get to us and our needs; it begins with God himself, and then what God wants. In that context, there is nothing good we need be afraid to ask for.

Thirdly, in the words of the late Bishop Ian T Ramsey, "The implication is not that the request for a loaf necessarily brings a loaf; it is rather that the response, whatever its precise form, will not be inappropriate to the request. It will be neither useless nor harmful. It will be a positive response."¹

And so this saying of Jesus returns to us at a deeper level of meaning. When you and I are being self-centred or acquisitive, it is simply not true that anyone who asks gets what he asks for. God loves us too well to set up such an arrangement. But when we know ourselves to be enfolded in God's unfailing, unceasing, undeviating love, then indeed there is no such thing as unanswered prayer, and it becomes profoundly true that everyone who asks receives, even if it is not what they were after that they find themselves being given, with all God's love.

N O T E ¹ - Ian T Ramsey, *Our Understanding of Prayer* (SPCK, 1971), p.11.



COP 26

Eco Congregation Scotland

Where you live and where you work will make a difference to the kinds of transport you use. If you live in a city with good public transport links, that may be your preferred way of getting around. If you live in the countryside with few buses going near your home you may rely on having your own car or motorbike to get to out and about, even to go to the nearest shops. If you don't have far to go from home to work perhaps you simply walk, roll in your wheelchair or take your bike.

Some types of transport have a larger impact on the environment than others. Engines that use fossil fuels have a larger carbon footprint and so do more harm to the planet than electric vehicles. Using public transport is better as one engine gets many people around. Active travel by foot, bike and wheelchair is even better. It's healthy for us and the planet too.

What transport choices do you make?

How do you prefer to travel for short journeys? Do you make the same choice if you have to travel a long distance? Did lockdown change the way you prefer to travel?

What encourages you and what discourages you about using public transport? Has your view of public transport changed since the Pandemic?

Dear Supporter, May 2021

Thank you for your generous donation of £1000 to the Covid-19 Appeal.

Unicef has been working closely with governments and the World Health Organization (WHO) since the start of the Covid-19 outbreak.



We've worked to limit the spread of the virus and reduce the impact on children and families, especially in countries with weaker health systems. Basic health services in countries all over the world are under immense strain, and lockdowns have hampered efforts to reach some of the most vulnerable communities.

150 million more children have been pushed into poverty since the beginning of the pandemic, and countless millions more continue to miss out on education, protection and care.

Although essential to beating this virus, vaccines alone won't be enough. Unicef's role is to lead the end-to-end supply of vaccines, tests and treatment in low- and middle-income countries. This includes:

- * procuring and transporting 2 billion doses of Covid-19 vaccines around the world
- * distributing 1 billion syringes and 5 million safe disposal boxes for the vaccines
- delivering 245 million treatments and 500 million test kits
- * ensuring countries are ready to receive and store the vaccines safely
- * helping manage in-country logistics so we can reach even the most remote places
- * ensuring health and community workers are trained in administering the vaccines
- * engaging with communities to address misinformation and build trust in the vaccines.

If you would like to learn more about what your support is achieving, please visit our website at www.unicef.org.uk

Thank you, once again, for your incredible support.

From the Archivist

This is the continued account of the history in the Old Testament after the death of Solomon:

The Kingdom of Judah

The Kingdom of Judah, although poorer than its northern neighbour, proved more stable. All their kings were descendants of David. Judah suffered no military coups from people like Omri and Jehu. Yet the same problems remained.

The struggle between the supporters of Yahweh and the surrounding pagan cultures continued. Church and state were not separated as in our modern world. The whole culture and identity of the Jews was at stake. The laws, laid down in Leviticus and Deuteronomy, covered every aspect of life from farming to social responsibility.

From 913 to 849 BC, Judah was ruled by Asa and Jehoshaphat, both of whom supported traditional Jewish values and ways of worship. There then followed a period of conflict with the Kingdom of Israel and the Arameans of Syria. This was the time of Jezebel, Jehu and Elijah in the northern kingdom.

Joash became king in Judah at the age of only seven. He set about returning Judah to the traditional Jewish values although he must have met with resistance. (2 Kings Ch 12 v 3) Pagan places of worship remained and the Temple required money spent on repairs. He was forced to bribe the Syrians to keep their army away from Jerusalem. For much of his long reign, the kingdom was threatened by its powerful northern neighbours, Israel and Syria.

When Uzziah became king in 783 BC, he began to build up his army. The king captured the Philistine cities on the coast and occupied much of the lands to the south. Half way through his reign, Uzziah contracted leprosy and his son, Jotham, acted as regent. Although Uzziah supported the traditional ways, he may have been a bit of a tyrant. He entered the Temple and burnt incense to the Lord, thus usurping the rights of the priests.

‘In the year of King Uzziah’s death (742 BC), I saw the Lord seated on a throne, high and exalted, and the skirt of his robe filled the Temple.’ (Isaiah Ch 6 v 1) The Prophet Isaiah arrived to advise the new king, Jotham. The call of Isaiah was only twenty years before the Assyrians marched into Samaria and destroyed the northern kingdom. (It is believed there were two Isaiahs because in Ch 45 he speaks of ‘Cyrus, his anointed’. Cyrus did not become king of the Medes and Persians until 550 BC, more than 200 years after the death of King Uzziah.) The Prophet Micah also appeared during the reign of King Jotham.

When Jehoahaz (also known as Ahaz) succeeded to the kingdom in 735 BC he was faced by an alliance between Judah’s two old enemies, the Kings of Israel and Syria. However, a much more powerful enemy threatened them all. In 722 BC the Assyrians took Samaria.

The Fall of Judah

When Hezekiah succeeded to the throne in 715 BC, he was also faced with the threat from the Assyrians. Political divisions at home had probably prevented the Assyrians from following up their successes against the Syrians of Damascus and the Jews of Israel. Judah, for the Assyrians, lay between them and the biggest prize of the all – Egypt.

In 701 BC Sennacherib, King of Assyria, invaded Judea. He captured the fortified town of Lachish and moved on to besiege Jerusalem. The city held out and the Assyrian king eventually withdrew his army. There are various reasons given for this success against the mighty Assyrians.

Hezekiah set about returning the land to the traditional ways. ‘He did what was right in the eyes of the Lord as his forefather David had done.’ (2 Chronicles Ch 29 v 2, 2 Kings Ch 18 v 3) Symbols of pagan worship were removed. (2 Chronicles Ch 31 v 1) The Temple worship was reformed and religious festivals celebrated.

In 687 BC Hezekiah died and he was succeeded by his young son, Manasseh. Father and son could not have been more different. Not only did Manasseh restore all the pagan places of worship but he also introduced pagan worship into the temple in Jerusalem. Then began a reign of terror directed at the supporters of Yahweh. ‘Manasseh shed so much innocent blood that he filled Jerusalem to the brim.’ (2 Kings Ch 21 v 16) It is believed that Isaiah was one of the victims of this purge.

Upon the death of Manasseh in 642 BC, his son, Amon succeeded to the throne. He was murdered by his own courtiers. However, another group restored the House of David by bringing Amon’s son, Josiah to the throne. Josiah returned Judah back to the traditional ways.

This is the time when the Prophets Zephaniah and Jeremiah warned of the doom to come. Josiah restored traditional worship but he found himself in the midst of a power struggle. The Assyrian Empire collapsed leaving a power vacuum. The Egyptians decided to strike first. Josiah resisted the advancing Egyptians but was defeated and later killed. Judah then became a vassal state, controlled by the Pharaoh Necho. The issue was decisively settled in 605 at Carchemish with the Babylonian victory over Egypt.

Nebuchadrezzar (various spellings) took Jerusalem and replaced Jehoiakim with his son, Jehoiachin. He was removed after three months. During this time (597 BC), the Babylonian king also took many leading Jews to Babylon leaving Zedekiah as king. Pressed by his nobles, he turned to Egypt and in 586 BC Zedekiah was killed and more Jewish leaders were taken into exile.

CHRISTIAN AID

If you weren't able to be at the Quiz Night, you missed a treat. Because it was on Zoom, we had visitors from England, Ireland and elsewhere in Scotland. It was a joy to have Stephen and Frances Parsons back on our team! My thanks to Wendy who did most of the planning and organisation, but our greatest thanks go to Marie, who fathomed the workings of Zoom (not an easy task) and spent her Saturday evening using her technical wizardry to move us in and out of our virtual team rooms with nary a hitch.

We raised about £750. Thanks to all of you who took part.

I'm writing this at the end of a rather strange Christian Aid Week – yes, there were envelopes, but only for delivery, and generally no knocking on doors. From the number of envelopes that have been returned, it's clear that more people give if there's someone waiting patiently on the step! We'll know the total in the near future.

We haven't got a specific long-term project at the moment, but I hope to hear about one soon from Christian Aid. In the meantime, the work goes on around the world.

Call the Midwife (in South Sudan!)

56% of the population can't access primary health care services, and many women rely completely on traditional birth attendants during pregnancy and birth.

Aluel is a traditional midwife. She explains how things used to happen.

“Pregnant women would come complaining of stomach pains. I would receive the baby with bare hands, without gloves or cleaning materials.”

Aluel asked to join a programme (run by a Christian Aid partner), which trained her on the importance of exclusive breastfeeding, nutrition and sanitation.



“We talk to pregnant women about going to hospital for treatment and to get vaccinations. We do the same for their children. There is a change of mindset.”
(Silvano Yokwe Alison/Christian Aid)

Traditional midwives used to receive payment from families when attending births at home. Despite losing this income, Aleul encourages women to access healthcare for themselves and their children. She says, *“Women were dying at home during delivery. We now tell people to come to the hospital. The way women used to die, this does not happen anymore.”*

She continues to support the women in her local villages, but now she goes to health centres for the birth. Thanks to her hard work, people in her community are now changing their ways.

Achoya is the Head Woman in Kolo village. Using her important role, she now trains mothers about good nutrition and hygiene and breastfeeding. She understands the challenges that people face in her community, as she too has struggled to support her five children since her husband died in 2011.



Her community has been affected by drought and many people’s crops were destroyed last year. Despite these challenges she values her work and believes that the mother-to-mother groups are making a real difference in reducing malnutrition in her community.

Thanks to Achoya’s efforts, supported by our partner Hope Agency for Relief and Development, her community is working together to help themselves.

Using songs they have created, mother-to-mother groups are now taking messages about the importance of breastfeeding and nutrition out into the wider community.
(Silvano Yokwe Alison/Christian Aid)

Aleul and Achoya are unsung heroes who, along with others, have played a critical role in ensuring that **15,000 women** and more than **10,600 children under 5** have now been screened for malnutrition in this region.

<https://www.christianaid.org.uk/news>

Patricia

THE LEPROSY MISSION SCOTLAND



Dear Friends,

Many thanks for the Blue Tubs and donations handed in during May. I will be sending the total amount to TLMS at the beginning of June. You are all aware of the terrible situation in India; so any money we can send to TLMS will be gratefully received and put to good use.

Thank you for your continued support, which is much appreciated.

Barbara Tatlock

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Oxgangs Community Church Foodbank

This is a relatively new project within our boundary who are looking for donations of food. If you are able to help and can get to the rectory, please drop off any non-perishable items into the porch please, to help them feed the vulnerable in the area.



Please continue to support Trinity Food Bank as you have been during the pandemic. Thank you.

2021 Magazine Subscription

We all know how strange this last year has been, and 'The Sign' was not issued for a number of months during Covid-19, so no subscriptions were requested.

We have now got to the time where we need to request them again for all who receive hard copies. I'm afraid we cannot leave them in the church for collection due to covid restrictions.

If you would like a paper copy of 'The Sign' magazine until the end of 2021, which will be posted or delivered to you, the cost will be £12.

**2021 Subscription Cost is £12
(Paper copy posted or delivered)**

Thank you to everyone who has already made a donation towards the cost of The Sign.

We value your continued support.

**If paying by cheque, please make payable to St Cuthbert's Episcopal Church, and either hand in or send to Marie Neil, Church Administrator
c/o The Rectory
6 Westgarth Avenue
Edinburgh, EH13 0BD**

If you would like to pay by bank transfer, please contact Marie – stcuthbertscolinton@gmail.com

The Sign Magazine

This issue has been sent by email to those who receive their order of service this way. If you would like a hard copy, please contact:

stcuthbertscolinton@gmail.com

Please note - the deadline for information and articles for the **July/August Issue will be **Sunday 13 June 2021.****

**Please send to
stcuthbertscolinton@gmail.com**

Thank you!

If you would like to attend the service on Sunday, 27 June, please email or telephone Marie by Friday 18 June to reserve a place.

Thank you.



St Cuthbert's Scottish Episcopal Church
Westgarth Avenue, Colinton, Edinburgh EH13 0BD
Tel: 0131 441 7580
Email: stcuthbertsrector@gmail.com

Website: www.stcuthbertscolinton.org.uk

Services as of 4 April 2021:

Wednesday:

10.30am Eucharist

Sunday:

10.30am Eucharist

**BOTH SERVICES WILL BE THE SAME.
THE WEDNESDAY SERVICE WILL BE RECORDED FOR
YOUTUBE.**

**PLEASE NOTE: IN ACCORDANCE WITH CURRENT
GUIDELINES, AND AS NUMBERS ARE LIMITED,
PLEASE BOOK YOUR ATTENDANCE AT ONE OF OUR
SERVICES –**

**email: stcuthbertscomms@gmail.com or
telephone: 07305 911986
(Monday – Wednesday between 10am and 1pm)**

Scottish Charity Number: SC007578