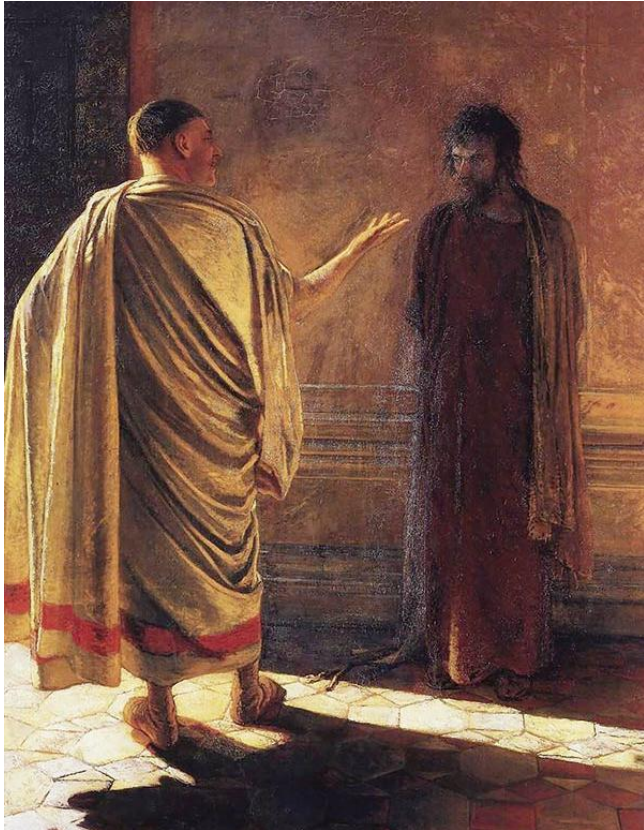


# Avoch linked with Fortrose and Rosemarkie Church of Scotland

Quarterly Newsletter Issue 7 March 2021

George Bernard Shaw was once asked which painting in the National Gallery he would save if it was on fire. 'The one nearest the door,' he replied. Wise man! However, for this time of year, a more appropriate question might be, which painting, in all the world's galleries, best depicts the Easter story? So many to choose from. Here are three for a start.



On the left, *What is truth?* by Russian artist Nikolai Ge. A tall, self-confident Pilate, standing in the sunlight, has just asked Jesus, standing in the shadows, if he is a king. Jesus responds, 'You are right in saying I am a king. In fact, for this reason I was born, and for this I came into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone on the side of truth listens to me'. 'What is truth?' asks Pilate rhetorically as he terminates the conversation.

*John 18:37.*

As gospel readers, we know, of course, that only a few hours before Jesus, in comforting his disciples, has said, 'I am the way and the truth and the life.' *John 14:6*



In Titian's *Christ Carrying the Cross* (right), Simon of Cyrene is seen supporting the heavy cross Jesus is carrying.

Jesus is looking directly at us. What are his eyes saying?



In Caravaggio's *Supper at Emmaus*, the artist captures the exact moment that the two disciples recognise that the stranger who has accompanied them on the road is the Resurrected Christ while a bewildered innkeeper looks on. The scene is full of symbolism and, as onlookers, we are invited to join the disciples in recognising and accepting the Risen Christ.

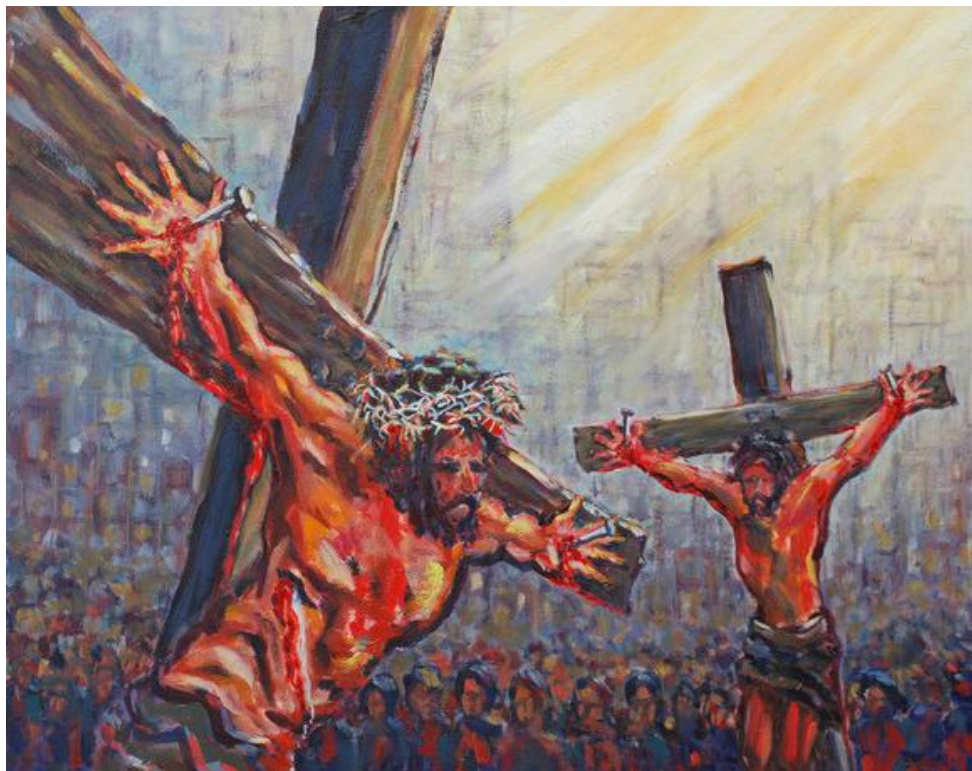
Locally, we are fortunate to have an artist in our midst in William Mather whose range covers portraits, landscapes, seascapes, abstracts and faith subjects. On the next page William takes us back to the Crucifixion via a recent painting.

## With Jesus in Paradise

This is not a nice picture. In fact it is pretty horrible. But then that 2004 film: 'The Passion of the Christ' was pretty horrible. It was controversial for its goriness and violence. Yet director Mel Gibson deeply wanted it to be real without any sugar-coating.

I would very much like to think that this painting might have a similar effect.

At first glance, it is gory in the extreme. Two men nailed to crosses with blood pouring down their arms, bodies and legs. A horrible sight. Terrible pain. Barbarism from 2,000 years ago.



But wait a minute. Look at all the people. Why are they there? What are they thinking? Am I there as well? And the background of high-rise flats and buildings – that's today. Also what are the bright shafts of light flashing down from the top right side? Is there something else going on? If so what?

Let's remind ourselves of the story. It's from the Bible and about the murdering of Jesus, nailed to a cross alongside two criminals. Only one of them is shown here but Jesus was not a criminal. He was innocent. He was indicted under fake charges that he was trying to foment insurrection and become King. The authorities decided crucifixion was the best way to stamp out his revolution.

The crazy thing was that he was saying things like we are all sinners and all deserve to die for our sins. Even more he said he would die for our sins – instead of us - so that like the Old Testament sacrifices of animals we could be washed clean by his blood. Crazy or not, people believed him and began to follow him in huge numbers. A lot did not believe, particularly those in power. Killing him was their solution.

Now he is on the cross – nails in his hands and feet; blood everywhere. But amazing miracle, one of the criminals does believe. He says to the other criminal that the two of them are “being punished justly, for we are getting what our deeds deserve. But this man has done nothing wrong.”

Then he calls out: “Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.”

Jesus replies: “I tell you the truth, today you will be with me in paradise,” (Luke 23:42).

And that's what this painting is about – the moment of heart realisation, belief and faith. It is the moment that has given hope to millions of people. It is the moment that Jesus brings life and new life to anybody however bad or hopeless they feel. It is the moment of being washed clean by his blood on the cross and moving into his wonderful new place of freedom and forgiveness.

It's for all of us wherever we are in that crowd. It's for all of us wherever we live, whether high rise flats or the Highlands. It's only then that the true light of Jesus begins to shine into our lives. From there we can walk freely, faithfully and forgiven into the future – with Jesus in the world and in Paradise.

**William Mather**

**Once again, a huge thanks to the many contributors to this newsletter. We actually had more material than we could use and so the June newsletter is already underway. Plenty room for more contributions, though. Deadline for the June newsletter: Saturday 1st May. But it's always good if we have them articles or ideas well ahead of the deadline. Thank you! [calum.macsween@btinternet.com](mailto:calum.macsween@btinternet.com)**



## Teachings for Troubled Times

In church over the last few weeks, we have been exploring the theme of “Teachings for troubled times.” It is not difficult at such a moment in history with the impact of the pandemic extending on for months and months to be conscious of the uncertainties of life. The death toll from Covid-19 in this country is one of the highest (proportionally) in the world. That is our current reality despite a modern medical system that offers universal coverage to the population and does not charge at the point of delivery (unlike many other health-care systems ...) We are especially grateful for the work of medical scientists and clinicians as they produce a vaccine and facilitate its uptake by the wider population.

Life is transient and we, as human beings, do not have control over our own lives or of the world in which we live. As we confront those realities, and look afresh at our lives and the need to make sense of who we are and where our priorities

should lie, as a church we have been looking at the teaching of Jesus in Luke chapter 12.

In response to the challenges of his day, Jesus tells two very vivid stories to prod his hearers into thinking hard about the direction of their lives. When a man asks Jesus (as a Rabbi – a teacher) about inheritance, Jesus tells the parable of a rich landowner. This man suddenly has plans to expand his farming activities - to tear down his barn and build a bigger one. However, his plan moves from prudent business and stewardship to something rather more personal and we overhear his thoughts: “And I’ll say to myself, ‘You have plenty of grain laid up for many years. Take life easy; eat, drink and be merry.’” The story has a gritty punchline: “But God said to him, ‘You fool! This very night your life will be demanded from you. Then who will get what you have prepared for yourself?’”

The reason for such a hard-edged response comes in the next phrase. “This is how it will be with whoever stores up things for themselves but is not rich toward God.” Jesus’ hearers would have all shared common perspectives about the reality of God’s sovereignty in the world – and an interest in lively stories that ‘pack lots of punch’ (a characteristic of Jewish story-telling). Life is short – we need to have a care about our destiny beyond this life – as well as our comforts during it! Not to mention the concerns of our neighbours ...

The other story is about a traditional middle Eastern household looking for the houseowner coming back from a wedding banquet. No-one knows exactly when he’s coming back so what should the household do? The answer of course is that they need to be prepared. “It will be good for the staff of the household whose master finds them ready, even if he comes in the middle of the night or toward daybreak.”

In our day, most of us don’t normally have staff at home – so we might think of the latest TV series of “All Creatures Great and Small” and the redoubtable housekeeper Mrs. Hall (right) looking after the collection of vets and animals from two families ... We could imagine that she is the sort of person who would be ready – even in the middle of the night! That’s the kind of person in mind here and the response to them from the master is equally remarkable – “Truly, I tell you, the householder will dress himself to serve, will have them recline at the table and will come and wait on them.” Whether, Mr Farnon would do that or not for Mrs. Hall - we’re to understand that this is definitely the posture that Jesus would take towards those who are watchful for him when he returns.



Both stories make us think about our priorities. What happens if we have to leave our lives –soon and in an unexpected way or at an unexpected time - are we ready? Have we set our "life-compass" in the right direction? Have we learned to be rich towards God and others and not just turned in on ourselves?

Hearing these and similar stories, Peter asks Jesus an interesting question: “Lord, are you telling this parable to us [meaning the inner circle of disciples], or to everyone?” The response from Jesus is yet another story about being ready ... Perhaps, that says it all!

# A Life Well Lived

## A Tribute to Sheena McLeman

Sheena was born in 1954, at Geocrab, on the Isle of Harris. Her childhood was happy and sheltered on the beautiful island and she went to school at Sir E Scott in Tarbert.

Sheena went on to complete her studies in Domestic Science at Inverness College and further employment took her to Glasgow where she met Andy McLeman. They were married in 1979 and settled in Avoch where the McLemans, both near and far away in South Africa, welcomed Sheena into their family.

Sheena took an active part in the life of the community and Parish church where she used her skills and talents in many ways. Who can forget the lovely strawberry teas, soup and sweet lunches and the Friendship club in which she actively engaged with the team of willing helpers?

She actively supported the Rosemarkie, SWI, Blythswood Shoebox Appeal and Macmillan Cancer Care whose services she was recently to benefit from herself. Not to mention the difficult task of training Andy in domestic skills.

Over the years Sheena and Andy loved to have the children of both families to stay. The visit of niece, Christine, and her baby triplets from South Africa was a joy, as well as days spent with Sharon and her children on their way to Harris. Lately she was cheered by videos of the antics of niece Elspeth's toddler Filip, jumping in puddles. They enjoyed many sun-filled, adventurous trips to South Africa for family events there.

Sheena's warm and caring nature (though those closest to her knew the fiery nature of the red-haired) endeared her to those she met, and through her practical hobbies of knitting, baking and WI activities, she made many friends, among them Mary MacKenzie, who became like another sister to her.



In typical Sheena style and with help from Andy, she dealt so bravely with her illness and kept her sense of humour till the day before she passed away.

Sadly, with her passing, we have lost a special person who touched our lives as a loving wife, a caring sister, a loyal friend and much-loved family member. All of us who knew and loved Sheena will agree that hers was indeed a life well lived.



Left - Loch Geocrab,  
on the east coast of the  
Isle of Harris

# Sheena Munro 1938 - 2020 - a remarkable and multi-talented woman

Sheena Simpson was born in Peterhead on 22 January 1938, just before the start of the World War Two. But our story starts during WW1 when her father served with the Gordon Highlanders and was a POW from early on in the war. There, he became friends with a couple of the German guards and some French POWs. By the time he was released, he was fluent in French and German. Sheena's lifelong love of languages was instilled from an early age.

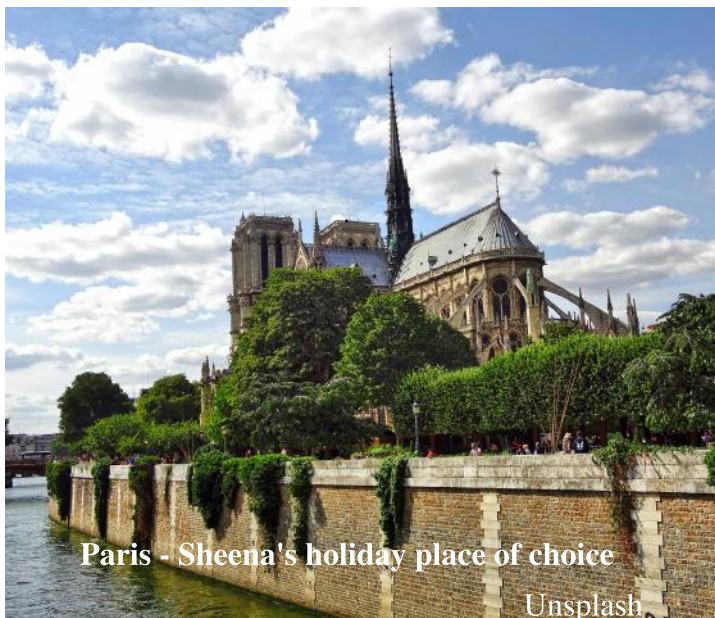
Languages (particularly French) and travel became passions. In the 1950s, as part of a her French and German studies at Aberdeen University, Sheena spent 3 months in Vienna with other students. One day, an invitation was received to attend the Ambassador's Queen's Birthday Party where, instead of their normal frugal lifestyle, they partied in slightly different company, namely Vivienne Leigh and Sir Laurence Olivier! Sheena loved to recount this rags to riches tale.

Sheena Simpson and Graham Munro met at a language conference in Dundee. It was the evening session.....eyes met across a crowded room.....immediate attraction.....post conference liaison.....Graham (the romantic) took Sheena for a fish supper! Love blossomed but lack of money made marriage problematic. Moving in with Sheena's parents was a definite 'no' from the prospective groom so (in Graham's words) a massive £2,935 was invested in their first home with 'crippling' monthly payments of £40!

Sheena's first teaching post was The High School for Girls in Aberdeen. With the arrival of Catriona, the family made the move to the Black Isle, staying initially at St Anne's schoolhouse. Two years later, with Claire's arrival, they moved to what was to become their family home since 1967.

Sheena secured a French teaching post at Fortrose Academy in the late 60s before moving to be head of the Modern Languages Department at Culloden Academy in 1979, later returning to a similar post at Fortrose Academy in the mid-80s. In addition, to running a highly successful department, Sheena established several foreign exchanges, particularly with France. Indeed, the exchange she established with a school in Provence in 1990 was due to celebrate its 30th anniversary last year had Covid not intervened - one of the most successful and long lasting in the country. Leaving a pupil behind in a packed Paris Metro station was one of Sheena's more traumatic memories of foreign exchanges, particularly when the pupil was the Director of Education's daughter!

A more typical memory is that a French student (now 48) from an exchange in 80s, having found out about Sheena's passing, contacted the family to let them know he'd never forgotten Sheena. 'The happiness of her' was still strong in his memory more than three decades later.



Paris - Sheena's holiday place of choice

Unsplash

Travel remained an important part of Munro life with numerous holidays throughout Europe, Paris being Sheena's location of choice. Although many of their interests were very different (Sheena maintained that as far as sport was concerned she was right handed but left eyed), a love of language and travel was a core element of a wonderful marriage so much so that Graham maintains that arguments were very rare in the Munro household.

One exception was the time Sheena came home after a particularly stressful day at school but perceived that her husband was paying insufficient attention to her travails. Increasing annoyance was followed by some foot stamping and a raised voice but when this failed to achieve the desired effect she flounced across the room

and plonked herself down on a chair - which, unfortunately, wasn't there! Gales of laughter ensued - and the argument soon forgotten.

Towards the end of Sheena's highly successful teaching career she secured the post of Adviser in Modern Languages for Highland where her love and knowledge of her beloved subject were able to positively influence the development of Modern Languages not just in Fortrose Academy but right across the Highlands.

Outwith her teaching career, Sheena's interests were many and varied, playing a leading role not only in the evolution of the Black Isle Theatre Club but in many of its productions, notably as Yentl in *Fiddler on the Roof*. Sheena was also a great supporter of St Boniface Fair, making 'sweetmeats' and funny hats; a great fan of quizzes, especially if they required an in-depth knowledge of Greek Mythology; and a valued and talented member of the Writers' Group.

Sheena had a special gift for poetry which gave her an outlet to express the depth of her faith. She produced and contributed to several books of poetry which have been appreciated and enjoyed by many on the Black Isle and beyond. In recent years she also drew great pleasure from her weekly get together with the 'coffee quines'.



Sheena's faith was a central part of her life and she was a devoted and immensely respected member of Fortrose and Rosemarkie Church of Scotland where she served in a multitude of ways including as much loved Sunday School teacher, newsletter editor, elder and session clerk. She leaves a very big gap in Fortrose and Rosemarkie Church of Scotland.

It was no surprise, then, that she was highly delighted when she found out that one of her most distinguished former pupils, Warren Beattie, was returning to be our minister. But perhaps her greatest teaching achievement was tutoring the linguistically challenged rector of Fortrose Academy to gain an A pass in Higher French!

Sheena Munro was a remarkable and multi-talented woman with a formidable intellect, with a keen but gentle wit and a deep, abiding faith. She was loved and respected by many and leaves a legacy of faith, warmth, generosity of spirit and concern for others that will not be quickly forgotten. But along with the inevitable sadness of loss, Graham, Catriona, Claire and grandchildren, William and Lucy, have the comfort of a host of joyful memories of a truly wonderful lady.

**Douglas Simpson**

## **A Sonnet for Sheena**

How we will miss you in so many ways.  
Your kindly face and twinkling eyes no more.  
Wise words from out your heart and mouth did pour;  
strong faith in God to whom you offered praise.  
How we will miss you on the silver screen  
beside that lovely vase of fresh sweet peas.  
Our Thursday group you led with expert ease  
and kept us focused on your chosen theme.  
That gift for language shone in poems you penned.  
At writers' group you freely shared your skills  
to demonstrate just how to get things right.  
The Coffee Quines will miss a cherished friend  
who chose to speak her mind eschewing frills  
and now has passed into that velvet night.

**Maggie Wynton, Coffee Quine and poetry student  
of Sheena's.**

## **EPILOGUE**

Thank you, Lord, for your words,  
For the gifts of listening, speaking, writing  
of hearing in our hearts the still small voice  
that speaks the infinite wonder of your Creation  
of opening ears and minds to listen and learn  
and echo your truths that shine there;  
of sharing praise, questions, epiphanies;  
of bringing to you our thoughts.

**Sheena Munro in *Times and Seasons***

# My Life in Christ

*'Still not enough football in the newsletter'- a repeated quip from a regular reader. Well, here's no less than General Assembly Moderator, The Rt Rev Martin Fair, on his passion for football and where it sits in his life.*

The one-time legendary Arsenal manager, Arsène Wenger, once said the following:

*'All I watch is football. In the morning I watch the games that were on last night. It's my passion. When you're born, your first instinct is to survive. Then you must find the meaning of your life. My life is football.'*

I like football too. Okay, let me be clearer, I love football! I played football from my youngest years and continued with 5-a-side football until more recently. I've supported my favourite teams – including Arbroath FC where I presently minister – and I've travelled home and away as part of the Tartan Army to cheer on Scotland.



And it's one of the ways in which I've enjoyed being a dad. Going to the football with my three boys, just as I went with my dad. If I live to be 100, I'm not sure there will be a more special father-sons moment than when we were celebrating together at Hampden after Leigh Griffiths's second goal had put Scotland 2-1 against the Auld Enemy. A moment to cherish – just before Harry Kane equalised for England moments later.

Yes, all of that. But football is not my life. I love the Scottish mountains too. But mountains are not my life. In fact I've got lots of interests and hobbies and passions but none of them define me. I have political and cultural persuasions but neither do these define me

**The meaning of my life – what defines me – can be nothing other than my relationship with Christ. So much else flows out of that, of course, but the starting and finishing points are in Christ. And with that the final whistle blows.**

I guess another way of thinking about this. If Arsène Wenger and I were to have headstones erected after our respective deaths, would he want a picture of a football on his? I'd want a cross on mine.

The apostle Paul is very clear on this throughout his writing. He tells us that in former times he was one thing but now Christ is all that matters to him – all else being so much refuse. He tells us that he's a new creation in Christ: that the old has gone and the new has come. And he makes clear that in the final analysis, whether he lives or dies, Christ is his all in all.

This is so very different to that version of Christian faith in which it functions as some kind of bolt-on, or as one of our interests among many. What Paul speaks of is an all-consuming love for Christ and it's what we're called to.

As we navigate our way through what remains of this pandemic and as we continue to think where we are as a Church, I'd want to argue that the first and most important consideration is the vitality of life in Christ – individually and collectively.

Whether the focus on back-in-the-building worship or online; whether we join forces with the neighbouring presbytery to the north or to the south; whether we look to close some of our buildings or raise money to patch them up – all of that is secondary to who we are in Christ.

**I love football.**

**But my life is in Christ.**

Sincere thanks to **Life and Work** for permission to reprint this article from the February 2021 edition



# Favourite Easter Hymn

My Easter hymn is *Jesus Christ is risen today*.

This is such a triumphant joyful hymn to sing. It goes to the heart of our Christian faith, that Jesus chose to come to earth to live among us, and went to His death so that we can be forgiven, and know that we will join Him in Heaven (as well as being reunited with all those who have gone before).

At the time of writing, we don't know if we will be singing Alleluia together in our church buildings on Easter Day, though it seems unlikely. But, after the gloomy time we have all had, perhaps Easter is a good time to look forward to a better future, and I am sure we will all appreciate the things we used to take for granted so much more in the future.

Alleluia!

Jesus Christ is ris'n today, *Alleluia!*  
Our triumphant holy day, *Alleluia!*  
Who did once upon the cross, *Alleluia!*  
Suffer to redeem our loss. *Alleluia!*

Hymns of praise then let us sing, *Alleluia!*  
Unto Christ, our heav'nly King, *Alleluia!*  
Who endured the cross and grave, *Alleluia!*  
Sinners to redeem and save. *Alleluia!*

But the pains which He endured, *Alleluia!*  
Our salvation has procured, *Alleluia!*  
Now in heaven Christ is King, *Alleluia!*  
Where the angels ever sing. *Alleluia!*

Sing we to our God above, *Alleluia!*  
Praise eternal as his love; *Alleluia!*  
Praise him all ye heavenly host, *Alleluia!*  
Father, Son and Holy Ghost. *Alleluia*

First written in Latin in the 14th century, the hymn was originally 11 verses long. In the 17th century the first three verses were translated into English. Charles Wesley (right) added a fourth and is now credited with the hymn.



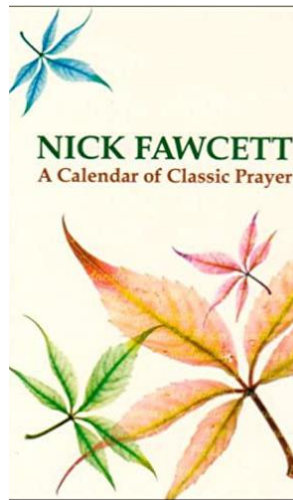
**Bridget Houston**

trypraying.

Prayer is the lifeblood of faith and also, as Rev Graeme and Sandra Bell observed in launching the **trypraying** initiative last year, a means of deepening our relationship with God.

The hardest part can be to get started, as Linda Simpson notes in her introduction to a book of prayers that she has found helpful.

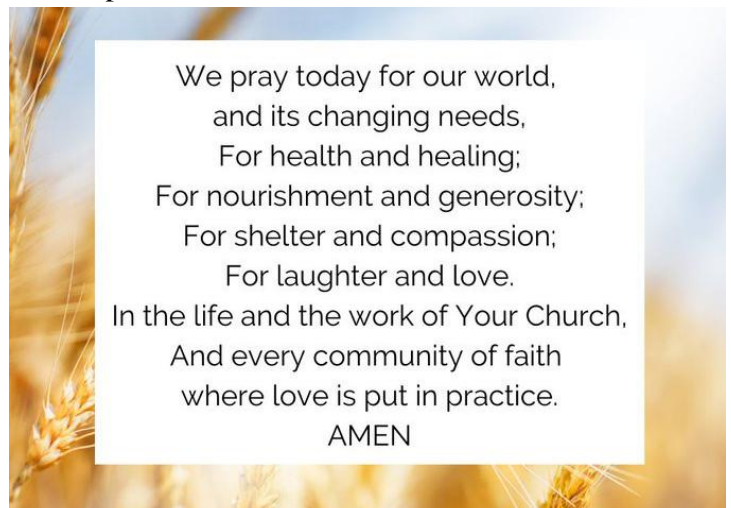
*Do you find prayer hard sometimes? A book of prayers which I have found extremely helpful, encouraging me to talk to God is called A **Calendar of Classic Prayer** by **Nick Fawcett**.*



*He compiled these prayers from many different people, many different ages and even different religions. Some are hymns, poems, some from scripture but they all point to God, our Father, who loves us, cares for us and longs to hear from us.*

*Prayer is simply described as talking to God. Not meditation or quiet reflection but a direct address to Him whether it be in thanksgiving, praise, or a pouring out of what is in our hearts. Prayer is not always easy, sometimes impossible, but always worthwhile. In short, prayer keeps us linked to God and in a relationship with him.*

The Church of Scotland, and some individual churches issue short daily prayers which are readily available online and a good starting place for daily prayer. An example:



A longer, personal prayer from Catherine Kernahan follows on the next page. As we read it, it can be our prayer too.



*Heavenly Father, you have asked us in your Word, "to give thanks in all circumstances" and we come to You today to express our gratitude even (and especially) in the circumstances of the pandemic of the past year. Thank you for your love for us and your sending of the Holy Spirit to dwell within us to guard us, guide us and keep us.*

*We give you praise that you call us to love and look out for one another: thank you for your church Lord, for our brothers and sisters and families, our communities, our country, and across the world. We praise you that we can draw near to you in prayer, even when our Church is closed. Help us at those times to remember the many who live alone and are feeling lonely and isolated, and our calling to respond and reach out with the love of Jesus to our communities.*

*Thank you that in these times of uncertainty, in the times of suffering, in this time of sorrow and grief, we know that you love us. Though much has changed all around us, thank you that you remain unchanged.*

*God of all hope, we call on you today. We pray for those who are living in fear, fear of illness, fear for loved ones. Help us to consider the lilies of the field and the birds of the air. We remember your Word to us that not one sparrow will fall to the ground apart from your will, that even the very hairs of our head are all numbered. You tell us not to be afraid; "you are worth more than many sparrows". Thank you for your Word. Guide us and help us to see you even amidst trials and testing times of our faith.*

*May your Spirit give us a sense of calmness and peace.*

*If we are ill, strengthen us, if we are tired, fortify our spirit and help us to rest in you.*

*We especially pray for those who are caring for loved ones at home: would you strengthen them and bless them, Oh Lord, that as their days so their strength would be. Lord, we think of those who live with chronic pain, those who have gone through invasive treatments and surgery and those who have been through trauma and trials, particularly the MacDonnell family who suffered in the fire tragedy. Thank you that you are the great I am, the God who sees me.*

*We remember the many who are unemployed and have lost their jobs, and the many whose businesses have suffered as a result of the pandemic. Lord draw near to them in your mercy.*

*Thank you for those who have looked after the food banks and thank you for the many who contribute to this worthy cause. We praise you for the many who have looked after our health needs: the many nurses and doctors who have worked so long and hard in difficult circumstances to administer their loving care. We praise you for care workers, district nurses, dentists, for those who have been delivering our shopping, emptying our bins, delivering our mail, gritting our roads and the many teachers who have had to remain in their posts as well as the shop assistants, all of whom have been exposed to the risk of catching COVID-19 themselves.*

*We pray for parents who struggle with the challenges of home schooling and ask that you would give them grace and patience.*

*We praise you for the many who have now received their vaccines and for all the scientists in their research. Lord, we pray for your protection over us all.*

*Thank you Lord for Spring, signs of new life, bulbs, flowers and trees which flourish, the light in our lives and hope in our souls. Oh Lord, you are the great creator, thank you. We praise you Lord for where we live, for the beauty of your creation all around us, the birds, the flowers, the colours, the sky and the sea. Thank you that we can walk into the beautiful countryside and by the seaside to enjoy it.*

*We bless you for your faithfulness to us Lord. Thank you Lord for the hope we have in you. May your protection and loving care be around us whatever our circumstances.*

*We pray for our country and our Government ministers as they make decisions through these challenging times. Give them strength and your wisdom Oh Lord.*

*Help us to look to Jesus and wait for you in expectancy and hope: revive us again Oh Lord we pray. Amen*

# Prayers in The U.S Capitol

*Among all the accounts that emerged after the storming of The Capitol in Washington last January, the turn to prayer inside the building was not widely reported. Here it is in summary.*



There aren't many Presbyterian ministers who carry the title of Rear Admiral! But American Presbyterian minister, Rev Margaret Grun Kibben does after serving as chief of chaplains in the U.S. Navy 2014 - 2018. Her experience of combat and the need to stay calm served her well on 6 January of this year. She was only three days into a new post as the first female chaplain to the U.S. House of Representatives. It was an historic day: lawmakers were meeting in joint session to formally approve President-elect Joe Biden's victory.

As she walked through the Capitol, Rev Kibben, became aware of a growing crowd of Trump supporters gathering at the front of the building. She gave it little thought other than to recall words she used in a prayer to the House shortly before when she referred to America enduring a time of "great discord, uncertainty and unrest". She continued to the House Chamber to witness the joint session.

It was from there, about an hour later, she observed "a flurry of activity" around House leadership as Speaker Nancy Pelosi and others on the dais were ushered away. Then, confirmation came: the crowds outside had turned into a violent mob. They had overpowered police and were storming into the U.S. Capitol. It was time to evacuate.

A House clerk looked over at the chaplain and asked if she could offer a prayer. Rev Kibben had been praying quietly all along but now went to the microphone offering comfort to those gripped by fear while asking for God's care and protection to surround them.

Shortly afterwards, Capitol police began escorting staff out of the room. As others concentrated on escaping, Rev Kibben began working the column of evacuees, offering what comfort she could to anyone who needed it. "There were people of varying abilities, health conditions and emotional states," she later said. "My concern was to keep an eye on who was frightened, who was struggling, so that I could come alongside them."



The group eventually reached a secure location but tensions continued to run high with violent clashes that would leave five dead. Rev Kibben was asked to pray once again. She began by reading from Psalm 46, "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear, though the earth should change, though the mountains shake in the heart of the sea." She then lifted up prayers for those ransacking the Capitol — that those "who felt so strongly against us" might come to understand that the lawmakers, whom they decried, wanted precisely the same as the attackers insisted they had been denied, "that our legislative process is appropriate and legal and representative". As she finished, the room went quiet.

Rev Kibben then engaged in what she called a "ministry of walking around," talking to members of Congress, staff and Capitol police who appeared to be in distress, meeting many in the room for the first time. Through it all, she later said she felt "a sense of 'God's got this' and I am but an instrument of bringing God into this moment." By 6pm, the building was cleared and two hours later Congress reconvened to continue their work ahead of a joint session that finished at 4am with a closing prayer.

Later, Rev Kibben reflected on the importance of her role. "It's important because ... our daily lives are not separate from God's involvement in them. God is very much present and has come alongside each and every one of us as we labour in the vineyard. And if that labour is tedious, God understands the tedium. If the labour is under siege, God understands the crisis and walks beside us in still waters — as well as in the shadows of danger." She concluded: "Faith matters. It mattered on Wednesday 6 January, it matters today and it will matter tomorrow."

# Our Man in Jerusalem

*The Church of Scotland has two congregations in the Holy Land, St Andrew's, Jerusalem and St Andrew's, Tiberias. The latter is currently vacant but St Andrew's, Jerusalem is led by Rev John McCulloch. We caught up with John recently.*



## What drew you to St Andrew's, Jerusalem, John?

I first came to Jerusalem in the summer of 2015 for my summer placement whilst training for Word and Sacrament. I was immediately drawn to the place, with all of its complexities and difficulties. Places I had read about in the Bible came to life in a new way, but it was mostly the people that really impacted me, and the hope that in some small way, the church could act as a bridge into different communities whilst standing up for justice. We've settled well but Covid has been a big challenge as my family have not been able to come back to Israel/Palestine for now. We will see what the months ahead bring, but it is so difficult to plan ahead in the midst of a pandemic (not just for us but for everyone!).

## What are the positives / challenges living and working in Israel / Occupied Palestinian Territories?

The positives are that as the Church of Scotland minister you are invited into every sphere of life here. One week you may be with Rabbis in Jerusalem, the next in Gaza. One week you may be processing through Jerusalem with other church leaders, another week you may be standing with Bedouins in the desert after their homes have been demolished or visiting the President of Israel. Add pilgrim groups, church life, serving Tabeetha School and our institutions with pastoral care, and engaging in widespread advocacy for the causes of justice here, are all part of it. The challenges are to do with navigating all of this within the structural injustice of the Occupation and also having a very small congregation that mushrooms when the pilgrims are here.

## What do you see as the key issues facing the Christian community in the area?

Christians in Israel Palestine constitute less than 2% of the population. In Gaza, there are only 800 Christians from a population of 2 million. Across the wider Middle East Christians are fleeing because of war, conflict, persecution, and other socio-economic issues. In the Palestinian Occupied Territories Christians are living under military occupation.

## Describe Easter in Jerusalem for us.

Holy Week is an amazing experience. On Palm Sunday thousands of Christians process down from the Mount of Olives waving olive branches and worshipping. Throughout Holy Week we process and take part ecumenically with the services across the Old City of Jerusalem. Pilgrims come from around the world. Of course, Covid has put an end to all of this for now, but that is what it is usually like.



## What can we do to support you and the wider Christian community in the Holy Land?

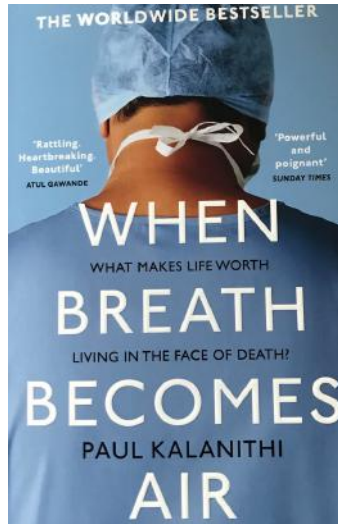
Keep praying for the church here and its witness. Not just the Church of Scotland but all churches. Read and disseminate my partner letters to draw attention to the issues here and what the Church of Scotland is doing, even though it is a drop in the ocean. Come and visit! Many thanks for your prayers and support. John

## Visit Jerusalem this month?

It is possible! **Green Olive Tours** ([www.toursinenglish.com](http://www.toursinenglish.com)) run 90 minute interactive virtual tours every Thursday at 9am (our time) and Sunday 5pm (our time). The tours are free to join and you pay what you think the tour was worth at the end. The tour looks at the Christian, Jewish and Muslim influences on the Old City and the current political situation from a resident's point of view.



## From the Bookshelves



You might imagine that reading about the progress of someone's terminal illness wouldn't be a particularly positive way to pass your time, but in this case you'd be wrong! *When Breath Becomes Air* is a stunningly original and deeply moving autobiographical memoir by brilliant young neurosurgeon, Dr Paul Kalanithi, tracing the progress of his battle with metastatic lung cancer.

Despite the devastating nature of the subject, it is a beautifully written and highly original book which is full of life affirming wisdom as Kalanithi ponders the deepest of questions around what gives a life real meaning and purpose. Indeed, it contains one of the best attempts I have read to relate science with faith.

Here's a flavour:

*Although I had been raised in a devout Christian family, where prayer and Scripture readings were a nightly ritual, I, like most scientific types, came to believe in the possibility of a material conception of reality, an ultimately scientific world view that would grant a complete metaphysics, minus outmoded concepts like souls, God, and bearded men in robes. I spent a good chunk of my twenties trying to build a frame for such an endeavour. The problem, however, eventually became evident: to make science the arbiter of metaphysics is to banish not only God from the world but also love, hate, meaning – to consider a world that is self-evidently not the world we live in.....*

*(The) paradox is that scientific methodology is the product of human hands and thus cannot reach some permanent truth. We build scientific theories to organise and manipulate the world, to reduce phenomena into manageable units. Science is based on reproducibility and manufactured objectivity. As strong as that makes its ability to generate claims about matter and energy, it also makes scientific knowledge inapplicable to the existential, visceral nature of human life, which is unique and subjective and unpredictable. Science may provide the most useful way to organise empirical reproducible data, but its power to do so is predicated on its inability to grasp the most central aspects of human life: hope, fear, love, hate, beauty, envy, honour, weakness, striving, suffering, virtue.*

*(And so) I returned to the central values of Christianity – sacrifice, redemption, forgiveness – because I found them so compelling.*

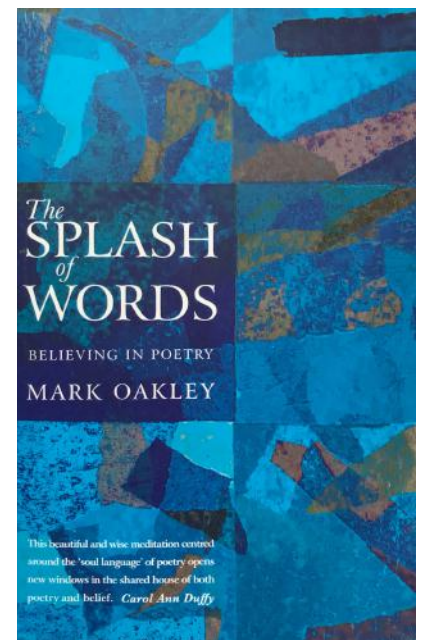
Truly, Paul Kalanithi's death was a tragedy but his life was not tragic. 'The book's only fault', wrote one critic 'is that, like his life, it ends much too early.'

**Douglas Simpson**

Picking up on forgiveness as a central Christian value, Mark Oakley in his splendid book, *The Splash of Words*, Mark Oakley shares a family story:

*I was brought up by my grandparents. As a boy I knew that my grandfather had flown in the Royal Air Force in the Second World War and he was a bit of a hero to me but he never spoke about his experiences, except one day mentioning 'Dresden' and weeping. He has since died but a few years ago I was asked to preach in the reconstructed Frauenkirche in Dresden. He was very much in my mind.*

*On the way to the railway station at the end of my visit the taxi driver asked me why I was in Dresden and I told him I'd always wanted to come. 'Why?' he asked. I took a deep breath. Because my grandfather was a navigator on a Lancaster bomber and I knew he flew here on 14 February 1945 as part of the bombing raid and he could never talk about it.' The man was quiet and then said, 'Ah that was the night my mother was killed.' He pulled the car over and turned the engine off. He then turned round to me, put out his arm towards me and said, 'And now we shake hands.'*





Many of us have been listening more to 'the wireless' during lockdown, including the perennial favourite, *Desert Islands Discs on Radio 4*. Maggie has agreed to be our first 'castaway' in what we hope will become a regular feature.

To be honest after a bitterly cold winter, the idea of being a castaway on a desert island is extremely appealing. My choice of music is as follows:

**1. 'Morning' from the Peer Gynt suite by Grieg**

For me this lovely piece of music has often been both the perfect encouragement and accompaniment to get up and start my day with a cup of peppermint tea. From its gentle beginnings, the piece lasts long enough for the kettle to boil and for me to pour my tea before the crescendo synchronises my completed task and the end of the music. I recall that Nescafe used it some 50 years ago as the background music to advertise a perfect cup of coffee.

**2. 'Vltave' by Smetana**

John Watson, my music teacher at school, was truly inspirational. He made his subject come alive and introduced those of us taking Higher Music to a wide ranging selection of composers one of whom was the Czech composer Smetana. The Vltava, the second of six symphonic poems from *Ma Vlast*, is one of my favourite pieces. Although deaf when he composed this piece, Smetana's musical depiction of the river Vltava as it makes its journey from a tiny, tinkling brook in the mountains of Bohemia, increasing in size as it passes through valleys, villages, towns and cities, finally reaching Prague, is truly amazing. The instruments of the orchestra exquisitely describe the movements of the river.

**3. 'The Hebrides (Fingal's Cave)' by Mendelssohn**

This is another piece of music that I have loved since my school days and have listened to countless times since. Mendelssohn immortalised Fingal's Cave after a visit to Staffa in 1829 and was inspired to write the music by the sounds of the Atlantic swell of the waves crashing into the cave. On a trip to Iona, Ron and I found that both weather and tide were perfect for us to make the 50 minute trip to Staffa and see the basalt sea cave. Though the Atlantic swell was heavy, the sun shone brightly while diamonds of light danced and made the waves sparkle. After disembarking, we walked over the basalt rocks and followed the natural walkway, now with a roped handrail and a steep flight of steps that led up to the gallery and into the cave - such a vast cathedral of sounds, for during the time I stood there marvelling at nature's beauty, and imbibing the atmosphere, the wonderful music rang in my ears.

**4. 'The Radetsky March' by Johann Strauss**

On a memorable visit to Vienna, where we stayed in the Emperor's Guest House, I really wanted to visit the Spanish Riding School to see the Lipizzaner stallions and their riders perform their divine movements to classical music in the palatial hall at the school. Unfortunately, they were on tour but some time afterwards, our daughter Linsey bought us tickets for a performance at the new Wembley Arena. It was absolutely amazing to see these majestic creatures perform to classical music and of course the finale was performed to Strauss's Radetsky March accompanied by appropriate clapping to the beat by the audience. What an anti climax walking out into the night and to the tube station!

**5. 'Thank you for the music' by ABBA**

The sound of ABBA is unmistakeable and I'm not ashamed to admit to being a fan. I thoroughly enjoy the music and the distinctive lyrics.

*'So I say thank you for the music the songs I'm singing.  
Thanks for all the joy they're bringing.  
Who would be without it I ask in all honesty?  
What would life be?  
Without a song or a dance what are we?  
So I say thank you for the music  
For giving it to me.'*

My choice of book is *'The Keeper of Lost Things'* by Ruth Hogan. It is a charming modern day fairy tale and is one of those books that can be read over and over again by both men and women. From beginning to end this novel is a MUST as a gift for any occasion.

I would also take my C.S.Lewis Bible with me.

My luxury items are paper and pens and pencils so that I will have not have any excuses for failing to write!

# The House that Shook

Acts 4:31



Between 1949 and 1952 the Isle of Lewis felt the breath of revival, a real movement of the Holy Spirit, the effects of which are still felt by some today, and which have left many reports of conversions which would appear to be miraculous, and, without the involvement of God, totally inexplicable.

There had been earlier revivals in the island, notably in the 1820s and 1939, but the events of 1949 to 1952 are probably the most well known. In 1949 two elderly ladies in Barvas on the west side of the island, Christine and Peggy Smith, were greatly burdened by the situation of godlessness in their parish, where no young people attended church. They were gripped by Isaiah 44:3 'I will pour water on the thirsty land and streams on the dry ground.'

The two ladies continued in prayer twice a week, on their knees from 10pm until 4am the next morning! One of them received a vision of the local church crowded with young people, packed to the doors, and a strange minister in the pulpit. They called their local minister to discuss this vision and, at their suggestion, prayer meetings of the local office bearers were held on Tuesdays and Fridays, simultaneously with the elderly ladies praying in their home. Nothing happened for around six weeks. Then at one of the meetings a deacon read Psalm 24: 3-6, and said, probably so much more effectively in Gaelic, 'why are we praying and waiting as we are, if we are not rightly related to God?'. He then fell into a trance. The events convicted all there that a God-sent revival must always be related to holiness and Godliness. When this was realised, the power of God swept through the parish. On the following day hardly any work was done, as everyone gave themselves to thinking of eternal things.

To cut a long but fascinating story short, a man who had no connection with Lewis was invited to come to the island. He was Rev Duncan Campbell, who knew that it was the Lord's will that he come to the island to take a leading part in the revival. Born just north of Oban in 1898 he became a Christian at age 15 having become aware of the Lord in the middle of playing the pipes at a dance! On 7 December 1949 he found himself on the steamer to Stornoway, having cancelled all the plans already in place for him to lead conferences and preach elsewhere that month. Immediately on his arrival he was asked to address a meeting in the church at Barvas that evening at 9pm, about two hours after his arrival. Around 300 people were at the meeting which concluded around 11. But this was just the start. On leaving the church around 600 had assembled. Many had risen from their sleep and headed for the church – all this with no publicity whatever! The meeting was resumed and continued until 4am. At this time a further 400 had gathered at the police station, close to the house of Christine and Peggy Smith. The Lewis revival had started!



Rev Duncan Campbell with 'prayer warriors' Christine and Peggy Smith

There are many wonderful examples of the Lord's working in the souls of men and women throughout the revival in Lewis. I will mention only two.

Donald Campbell was by no means the only minister used by the Spirit in the revival. One night early in 1950 a concert was under full sway in Carloway when the local Church of Scotland minister, Rev Murdo MacIannan, a fiery red haired man, entered and was confronted by the master of ceremonies who asked for his ticket. Rev MacIannan showed him his Bible! He asked if a girl who had been singing would lead the assembled company in a psalm. The MC's mother, who was running the concert, trying to keep the peace, suggested that the minister be allowed to have his say, and he quietly explained about the conversion at a meeting earlier that evening of a piper who had been due to play at a dance. He wondered how all those with sore heads the following morning would feel compared with the joy which the piper would feel. He pronounced the benediction and left. The MC could not be found immediately.

Eventually he was found - broken by God. He came from a Godless family, but the following day his father, a school-master, found a Bible unused since its purchase. He went to Church the following Sunday, and within a few months he and his wife were converted and the hall used for concerts and dances was turned into a meeting hall used only for worship and prayer. This was just one example from many of instant and permanent conversions during the revival.

In 1952, towards the end of the revival, a remarkable manifestation of the power of the Lord took place in Arnol, a township about two miles south of Barvas. There was still much opposition to the revival in Arnol. There was no church building there, but Donald Smith, a sympathetic God fearing farmer who was not himself a Christian, was willing to allow a prayer meeting to take place in his farmhouse. There were around seventy at the meeting, including five ministers, but prayer was not flowing easily. Then around 1am Duncan Campbell felt a prompting from God to ask John Smith the blacksmith to pray. Up to this point John had not prayed. For around half an hour he prayed, then after a pause he looked up to heaven and exclaimed “God, do you not know your honour is at stake? You promised to pour floods upon dry ground and God, you’re not doing it! If you don’t do it, how can I ever believe You again? I am thirsty to see this community gripped as you gripped Barvas. You are a covenant-keeping God. God, I now take it upon myself to challenge you to fulfil your covenant engagement!” Imagine challenging God like that! Yet, it is reminiscent of the several psalms of lament and other forms of lament to God. It teaches us to unburden our thoughts, just as they are, to God.



The effect was immediate. The house (shown left) shook. A jug on a sideboard fell and broke. No other house was affected. Physically that is, but when the meeting finished after 2am it was discovered that the whole community, many carrying chairs, were making their way to the meeting hall. God had answered, and revival swept through Arnol, with not a house in the village which was not shaken spiritually by God. That night the drinking house closed and was later boarded up. Fourteen drinkers instantly became men of prayer.

Most accounts of revivals stress the utmost importance of urgent and persistent prayer, although this tends to be more individual rather than group. Both have been seen to have been answered by the movement of the Spirit in Lewis in 1949 and the following years. Prayer meetings were said to have resulted in the revivals throughout the Black Isle in 1905 and 1906, some of the gatherings taking place in the then newly opened Gordon Memorial Hall in Rosemarkie. May Psalm 85 be our prayer.

The first individual prayer warriors were Christine and Peggy Smith, Christine bent double with arthritis and Peggy totally blind physically, although neither was blind in spiritual vision. They had a niece who had emigrated, age 18, to America in 1930. By the time their revival prayers were answered she had a three year old son, Donald John, who went on to become, in 2017, the 45th President of the United States.

**Jack Kernahan**

With thanks to Norman and Joni Morrison, who live at 10a Arnol now, for the photo of the house as it was in 1952.

## **Fortrose and Rosemarkie Church of Scotland Financial Report 2020**

The ordinary income for 2020 was only 7% less than for 2019, which is remarkable considering the fact that we have been unable to hold conventional services for three quarters of the year. After including the gift aid tax recovery, a legacy, income from investments and funeral donations, the total income for the year was £33,374, £229 above the income for 2019. There was no exceptional expenditure in 2020, so the total expenses, which included donations to Christian and local charities of £1,490, amounted to £27,801. This gave a surplus of £5,573 to be used to rebuild reserves eroded by deficits in previous years.

We continue to benefit from a reduction in our ministries and mission payment as this is based on the reduced level of givings in the years from 2016 over earlier years. Our requirement for 2021 is £12,874 (2020 £13,585). If givings continue at their present level we should be able to meet all the costs of maintaining the ministry and the church in 2021.

The Kirk Session continues to be greatly sustained by the generous offerings of the members and adherents and record their thanks for these.

The accounts will soon be sent for independent examination. When the final version is available, copies will be available from the treasurer, and hopefully we will be able to hold a stated annual meeting at which they can be discussed and reviewed. In the meantime, if any questions arise regarding the congregation’s finances, please do not hesitate to contact me.

**Jack Kernahan, Congregational Treasurer**

# Haiku

Well done to Bob Moore on mastering the Haiku technique so effectively and with illustrations too! Bob's three Spring haiku prompted the thought that we should aim for a Haiku page in the June newsletter.

For anyone unfamiliar with the format it is simply a short poem of 17 syllables set out in three lines of 5 syllables, 7 syllables and 5 syllables.

The form originated in 17th century Japan but its simplicity has made it widely popular. The content usually evokes or celebrates a thought or observation on nature or the little moments in life that matter to us.

So, how to start? Pay attention to the natural world around you. As summer approaches, sun warming, gardens blooming, crops growing, days lengthening. Or think about your faith life and capture it in 17 syllables. Some examples to get you started:

Picking up seashells  
Or pebbles spread on soft sand  
Such simple pleasures

Southerly winds blow  
Warm air northwards to revive  
Our cold, frozen land

Our heartfelt prayers  
Knowing God will understand  
We offer them up

In faith I live life  
Among people whom I love  
His church lives in us

**Go on, give it a try. You might just surprise yourself!**

Jump in with both feet  
And re-discover talent  
Hidden for too long

Please send to [calum.macsween@btinternet.com](mailto:calum.macsween@btinternet.com) or pass to your elder by Saturday May 1st.

I look forward to receiving them!



*Brave herald of spring  
Pushing through autumn's blanket  
Displacing winter*



*Sun seeking flower  
Raising its trumpet skywards  
Heralding springtime*



*Warmth and light return  
Trees wearing their spring wardrobe  
Nature's cycle*



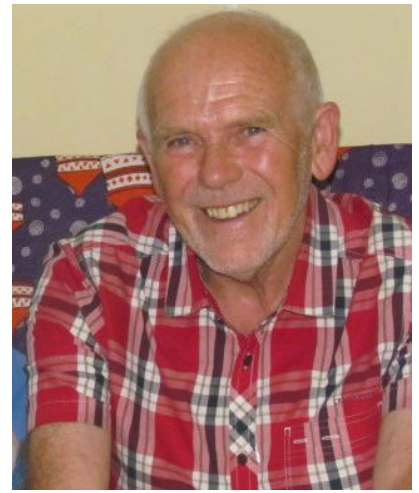
# Nature Notes - Douglas Willis

*'For, lo, the winter is past, the rain is over and gone. The flowers appear on the earth; the time of the singing of the birds is heard and the voice of the turtle is heard in our land.'* (Song of Solomon 2:11).

Those lines powerfully capture the moment in a part of the world with a climate where the rains are concentrated into the winter time. The ground has been refreshed after the summer drought and the countryside bursts into colourful bloom. The birds are pairing and their song is to be heard everywhere. But you may be forgiven for wondering how a turtle got in on the act. In fact, it's the turtle dove, a beautiful bird with a really delightful purring sort of song that carries surprisingly far in the clear air. We don't see them here but many years ago I was standing beside the site of an ancient lost village in the English Midlands. The low evening sun suddenly started showing up the last shadowed traces of a mediaeval settlement abandoned perhaps at the time of the Black Death. All the time, the voice of a turtle dove carried across in the still of the spring evening. It was an atmospheric moment. Alas, that summer sound is hardly to be heard these days since the number of turtle doves has dramatically dropped as the birds have fallen foul of the hunters' guns as they cross the Mediterranean countries on their migrations to and from the British Isles.

In the middle of winter, I've sometimes recalled that long gone magical moment, as well as the many times my wife and I used to go botanising in Mediterranean countries in the Easter holidays. The rains had ceased and a profusion of bright flowers carpeted the ground where gnarled old olive trees grew and mules pulled old fashioned ploughs.

This dramatic change from winter to spring was what spurred the Old Testament writer to pen those powerfully descriptive words. Even here, in the Black Isle, Spring truly comes like an assured tonic after the long and sometimes dreich winter days. This time, perhaps more than any other I'm sure we'll all welcome the coming of Spring and we'll have had a special appreciation for the very first flowers of the season representing spring's renewal. In the Victorian language of flowers, snowdrops symbolized hope. This time round, they will have been especially appreciated and we can give thanks to Almighty God for the lift that such things surely bring us.



# Avoch Parish Church of Scotland Financial Review

The Congregational Board very much appreciate the loyal, continuing support from our small Church family this past year. Thank you all.

Our congregation is small in number, an average of 23 regular attendees, with our weekly support coming from 17 Freewill Weekly Offering envelopes, 6 standing orders and a small Open Plate. We have experienced extremely unusual times this year due to the Pandemic and the subsequent closure of our Church and Hall did have an impact on our finances.

Our Accounts include the General Account, the Savings Account, the Fabric Account, the S Club Account and monies held by the General Trustees in Edinburgh. The General Account is used for the day-to-day running of our Church and this is the most important account for us to look at.

We started the year with a balance of £8,867 and ended the year with a balance of £6,093. However, we also hold General Account Savings of £10,269.00 which we keep as a backup. The total income for the year was £13,553 and the total expenditure for the year was £16,327.

The breakdown of the income is as follows – Offerings, Donations, Tax recovered on Gift Aid, Tax recovered on Small Donations, Funeral Payments and a small Hall rental. The Hall rental income ceased after 23 March 2020 and there were no Development team events. Last year these two sources of income contributed 45% of our total income but, thankfully, this year, we only had a shortfall of 22%. This is because our small congregation have been very supportive financially and we also received many extra donations from them in December.

On the Expenditure side, there were the normal expenses – Ministries and Mission Allocation, Presbytery Dues, Fabric Repairs & Maintenance, Insurance and the Shared Manse Expenses. There was a minimal cost for Heat & Light which helped towards lessening our shortfall.

Unfortunately we were unable to support any charities this year but we did distribute our Jars of Grace in February before the Lockdown. The Congregational Board had chosen the Macmillan Cancer Support to benefit from this Jars of Grace Appeal. We hope to collect the jars later in the summer.

As treasurer, I am always extremely grateful and appreciative of all the support given by our small, loyal church family but this year I have been greatly encouraged and deeply touched at their exceptional generosity.

**Jane M M Patience M.A. Church Treasurer**

## A Man of Wit and Wisdom

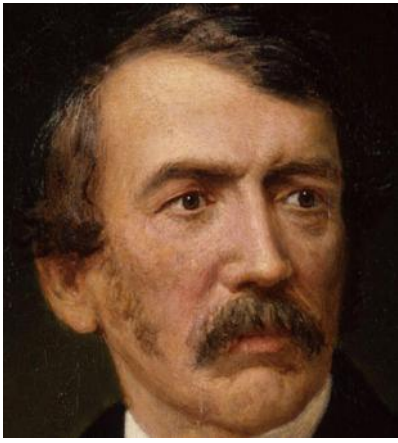


‘Start worrying – details to follow’ was said to be the favourite Jewish saying of Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks, whose untimely death at the end of 2020 was mourned by many. Brought up in London’s East End and educated at St Mary’s Primary School and Christ College, Finchley, he acknowledged that the respect shown to his Jewishness in these schools influenced his notably respectful attitude to people of all faiths and none.

In his final year, he spent much of his time stressing the importance of ‘Living The We’ rather than ‘Living the I’ When you emphasize ‘the We,’ he argued, something extraordinary happens. You get the most heroic behaviour — from doctors, from nurses, from health care workers, from carers, from people who are stacking the shelves in supermarkets and so many others . These are people who live ‘the We’.

Rabbi Sacks liked to wear a sunshine yellow tie when speaking in public and he loved to bring humour to his audience. This was one of his favourite stories. *A learned rabbi and a taxi driver depart this world at the same time and arrive together at the gates of Heaven. The angel at the gate signals to the taxi driver to enter, then turns to the rabbi and sadly shakes his head. ‘How can this be?’ asks the rabbi. “I am a learned rabbi and he is a taxi driver who was known to drive much too fast.’ ‘Exactly so,’ replies the angel. ‘When you spoke, people fell asleep. But everyone who got into his taxi immediately started to pray!’* His wit and wisdom will be much missed.

# Getting Close to David Livingstone



David Livingstone (left) occupies a special place in Scottish history. Born in Blantyre in 1813 to parents who were poorly off and living in an over-crowded tenement, he left school at the age of 10 and began working 14 hours a day in a local spinning mill. The previous year at the age of 9, he was awarded a special prize by his Sunday school teacher for reciting from memory the 22 stanzas of the 119th metrical Psalm!

He later left the mill to fulfil his ambition to become a medical missionary. By 1840, he was ordained as a missionary and qualified as a surgeon. He sailed for Africa, in the words of a biographer, “to devote his life to the glory of God and the alleviation of human misery”. Over the next 30 years he worked tirelessly and gained worldwide renown.

Around 1870 nothing had been heard from him for a long time and there was great concern for his safety. The Editor of the New York Herald, no less, sent a telegraph to his London based reporter Henry Stanley. It was brief and to the point: “Find David Livingstone!”

Stanley mounted an expedition and spent 11 months searching for him – travelling through swamps and rough jungle country. They eventually found him, a tired and broken man and very sick with fever. This meeting resulted of course in the famous greeting: “Dr Livingstone I presume”. They tried to persuade him to return to Britain but he declined the offer as he felt his work in Africa was incomplete.

David Livingstone died three years later at the age of 60. Fearing that something was amiss as there was a light in his quarters at 4am, his fellow workers were broken hearted to find that he had passed away while kneeling by his bedside in prayer.

Some of his close friends subsequently carried his embalmed body to the coast at Zanzibar, from where it was shipped back to the United Kingdom. This journey on foot across 1500 miles of rough and sometimes very dangerous territory has been described as one of the finest examples of human devotion known to mankind.

When his remains arrived in this country, the outpouring of national grief reminded many of the occasion earlier in the century when Lord Nelson’s body was brought home from Trafalgar. Queen Victoria declared a day of national mourning. He became the first missionary to be given a state funeral in Westminster abbey. Many tributes were paid including one from Florence Nightingale who described him, “as the finest man of his generation”.

In 1989 our elder daughter Alison and her husband William went to Zimbabwe as William had been selected by the British Council to lecture in the University of Zimbabwe in Harare.

Kay and I had two superb lengthy holidays there during the period and we found that Zimbabwe justified its reputation as one of the most beautiful countries in the world.



Throughout his time in Africa, David Livingstone maintained a diary. For example, he became the first white man to see the Victoria Falls (above right) which is one and a half times wider and twice as deep as Niagara. That night he wrote, “Scenes so lovely must have been viewed by angels in their flight.”

The diaries are kept securely in the national archives in Harare where copies can be studied at computer terminals. Alison and I went along to the archives one day and we spoke to one of the archivists, a lovely local girl. She said, “As you will appreciate the diaries are beyond price and must be safely guarded. However, in view of your great interest and the fact that you are native Scots, I am going to make an exception. Just come along to my room.” She then went out and came back with one of the original diaries, bound in the most exquisite leather.

This rare privilege to visualise the great man completing each page was an experience which will live in the memory forever.

**Dannie Reid**

# Around the World with the Royal Signals



*Joining the Royal Signals 1961*

*When Peter McLoughlin submitted **The Prayer of the Royal Signals** for inclusion in the December newsletter to mark the centenary of the formation of The Royal Signals in 1920, he mentioned that he'd served as a signaller and officer from 1961 until 1996. His duties took him to Malaya, Singapore, Saudi Arabia, Cyprus, Italy, Belgium, Germany and UK. His wife Isobel supported and accompanied him throughout. Peter kindly agreed to share some of that story.*

## **Can you share something of your early life, Peter?**

I was born in Forres in 1943. My mum was local and my father, from London, was an air photographer in the RAF and away for the first two years of my life.

After the War, we moved to London but the marriage didn't work out so my and I headed home to live with ~~granny~~ in Forres. I have to say that my mum spoiled me rotten; anything I wanted I got including being allowed to leave school at 15. I got a job with Scott's Electrical Engineering as a surveyor's assistant. By 17, I'd passed my test and was deemed experienced enough to do surveys on my own. But I couldn't be paid the rate as I'd no qualifications.

My older cousin, David, was like a big brother to me and a great influence. He was in the Royal Signals and suggested I join the army and specifically the Royal Signals. He recommended I specialise in cipher. It was all great advice. I found out I was good at maths, algebra came really easy to me, and within 9 months I was a corporal thanks to my cipher skills. It was the time of the Cuban Crisis and I was immediately sent to Germany to be part of the special unit where all the secret messages came and went.

## **Was the chance to play sport an attraction of joining the military?**

Oh, yes, definitely. Football first. I played for Brodie men's team at 13 and the army gave great opportunities to play wherever I went as a young man. I played mainly as a centre forward but when I went with the Gurkhas to Malaysia, I was always going to be the tallest in the team so got shifted to defence. During National Service days, professional footballers were commonly in regiments. It was a great thrill to play with them. My claim to fame is arriving in Germany in 1962, and going straight into the regimental team to play in the semi-final of the Army Cup – a BIG THING in these days – and Gordon Banks wasn't picked for the team! (for non-football fans, Gordon Banks was arguably England's greatest ever goalkeeper - **Ed**) I hurt my spine in a game with the Gurkhas and switched to badminton and enjoyed a lot of success, travelled a lot, eventually running the Army Badminton Team for 6/7 years.

## **Where did Isobel come into the story?**

Right at the beginning. We met at a dance in Arderseir village hall and by the time I was 18 we were married. They said it wouldn't last but we celebrated our Diamond Wedding last month!

## **You must have moved house a lot?**

Oh, yes. We had 31 different army quarters in 35 years, in addition to different homes. But we saw a lot of the world and made great friendships.

## **You mentioned, the Cuban Crisis earlier. There must have been other big moments?**

The Royal Signals provide communications in war and peace to the British Army so, yes, there were many memorable moments. Providing the mobile communications for the Queen on a visit to Catterick was a great honour. So, too, being given responsibility for moving the whole British Army on exercise in Luxembourg back to Hanover in 1985. It went like clockwork and was a proud moment.

In the 1970s being part of a team, code-named Live Oak, at Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers in Europe (SHAPE) based in Mons, Belgium was interesting. Basically, we ensured the corridor to the divided city of Berlin, then in East Germany, was kept open. So, too, being in the Operations Room at UK Land Forces during the Falklands War. Just before the War, the British Army decided to change radios to Clansman radios. It was a huge logistical exercise to ensure every single soldier had a new radio.



*1987 in Saudi - Isobel and Peter with Col Abdulah Yossof and translator Hassan, now Arabic instructor for the British Military*

But when it comes to Saudi Arabia, I could talk for days and I mean days! Just one incident as an example. There were 30 of us there as advisers to the King on communications, 28 based in Riyadh, one in the east at the oil centre of Dhahran and me in the west from the Jordan border to Yemen. I drove 140,000km in one year. My beat included Mecca and involved providing communications – from a distance, of course – for the annual Hajj.

You might remember in 1987 the Iranian pilgrims wanted to protest against Israel and the USA and the Saudi officials forbade it. The two sides clashed, shots were fired and a stampede followed that led to over 400 deaths. The 150,000 Iranian pilgrims were corralled and a 9 day stand-off developed

until the Iranians agreed to go home peacefully. All the time, I was living in an air-conditioned vehicle, attending daily meetings with Saudi forces and ensuring all communication systems were available and working. It was a tense time.

**The Prayer of the Royal Signals would have been well used, I'm sure! Were you always a church goer?**

No not at all. I went to Sunday School as a child but the army was a rough, tough world at the start. Two different padres were a big influence later, though. Rev Eustace Annesley was Irish and a great communicator. We were in Catterick and Isobel had become a church member.

‘What about you, Peter? Will you come to church too?’ he asked.

‘Oh, no, I said, I’m a rough soldier, a rogue....church is not for the likes of me.’

‘That’s where you’re wrong, Peter, you’re exactly the kind of person the church is for.’

I’ve never forgotten these words.

The other big influence was padre Rev Matthew Robertson. We got to know him in Aldershot and became great friends. When we moved to Edinburgh, who came to Craigiehall Parish but Matthew Robertson. Then when we moved north, Matthew moved to Cawdor and Croy. But, yes, to your first point The Prayer for The Royal Signals was a constant in my army life for which I’m very grateful..

*Almighty God whose messengers go forth in every age  
giving light and understanding  
grant that we of The Royal Corps of Signals,  
who speed the word of man to man,  
may be swift and sure in sending the message  
of the truth into all the world.  
May we serve thee faithfully and,  
with the help of The Holy Spirit  
make such success of our soldierly duties  
on this earth that we may be found worthy  
to receive the crown of life hereafter,  
through Jesus Christ Our Lord.  
Amen*



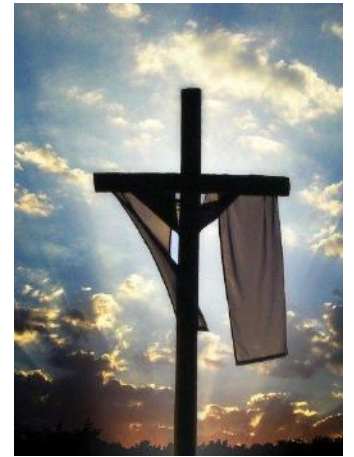
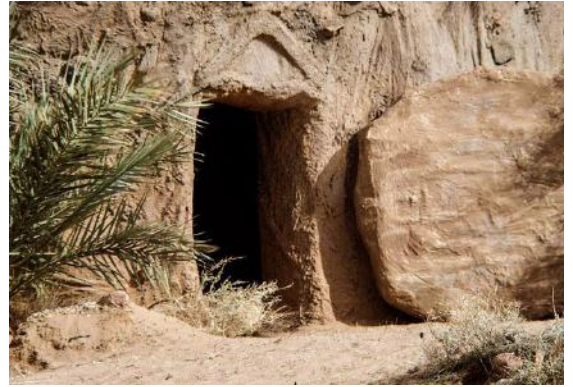
*Receiving the Malayan Medal in 2008  
for Peacekeeping in Emergency 1961-66*

# For the Young.....and the Young at Heart

## A Who's Who Easter Quiz

20 Questions each with a chapter to read if you're stuck.

1. I betrayed Jesus for 30 pieces of silver. (Matthew 26)
2. I was the Roman Governor in Jerusalem. (Matthew 27)
3. I denied Jesus three times before the cock crowed. (Luke 22)
4. I was the ruler of Galilee at that time. (Luke 23)
5. I was surprised to be released instead of Jesus. (Matthew 27)
6. I was crucified next to Jesus. (Mark 15)
7. When Jesus was on the cross, he asked me to look after his mother. (John 19)
8. I was the High Priest who accused Jesus and wanted him dead. (John 11)
9. I anointed the feet of Jesus with expensive perfume. (John 12)
10. I cut off the High Priest's servant's ear. (John 18)
11. I am the servant whose ear was cut off. (John 18)
12. I carried the cross for Jesus when he struggled. (Luke 23)
13. My two sons were there too. Can you name them? (Mark 15)
14. People thought they heard Jesus call my name while on the cross. (Matthew 27)
15. I laid Jesus in a tomb I owned. (Mark 15)
16. I was also there when Jesus was laid in the tomb. (John 19)
17. I went to the tomb and found the stone had been rolled away. (John 20)
18. I told the women at the tomb in the early morning not to be afraid. (Matthew 28)
19. I walked with Jesus on the road to Emmaus but didn't recognise him. (Luke 24)
20. I am the mother of James the younger, Joses and Salome. (Mark 15)



## Blythswood Shoeboxes

The total number of shoeboxes contributed and delivered in 2020 was an impressive **75,218**. Deliveries were made in Albania, Bulgaria, Hungary, Kosovo, Moldova, Romania, Serbia and Ukraine.

A huge thank you to all involved - just look at that face on the left!



# Travelling Through 2021 with Bear Grylls

Back in December when I was looking for a book of Daily Readings for 2021, I didn't expect to find one by Bear Grylls. Not that I knew much about him other than he was an adventurer who sometimes appeared on tv. Grandchildren described him as 'cool', 'awesome' and, when they described his wilder adventures, 'not for you, granny!'



But Bear Grylls is a man of faith with an engaging, fresh way of communicating that faith. *Soul Fuel* is not specific to 2021 and there are twelve big themes such as Forgiveness, Vision, Wisdom, Faithfulness, Purpose. For February, the theme was Hope which was an appropriate month long reminder during lockdown. The following reading was one of many that resonated with me.

## Hope For You and Me

However difficult our situations may be - however much trouble we are facing in life – there can always be hope. Hope transcends everything: every pain, sorrow, fear and loss. Hope is what sets us apart as children of God. Hope is the light to the dark, the comfort to the pain.

Hope comes from knowing God's love for you. We might not look very hopeful of anything, but His hope is out there – close. Just look for it. Trust it. Even a tiny glimmer is enough. Great fires are started by tiny embers. Just hold on and look up.

Hope through the pain and through the doubts. Have faith, and know that faith and doubt are simply two sides of the same coin. You will have many doubts. Don't worry. Accept them and know that faith must be close by. Whatever we face, He faces it beside us. He will never desert us.

*The Lord is close to the broken-hearted  
and saves those who are crushed in spirit*

*Psalm 34:18*

Take heart. All will be well.

**Hope comes from knowing God's love for you.**

**Margaret MacSween**

## A Quick Look Back.....

Just before the latest lockdown, on the afternoon of Christmas Eve, some of our younger members and their parents came along to Rosemarkie Church for some socially distanced fun. With Christmas carols playing in the background of a nicely decorated church they participated in some Christmas craftwork after which Santa appeared with early Christmas presents. Fun was had by all! Many thanks to Linda and Douglas Simpson for organising.





*If anyone has material possessions and sees his brother in need but has no pity on him, how can the love of God be in him? Dear children, let us not love with words or tongue but with actions and in truth. 1 John 3 v 17-18*

Fairtrade is a simple way each of us can make a difference through our everyday choices. It's about better choices, decent working conditions, local sustainability, and fair terms of trade for farmers and workers in the developing world. Fairtrade aims to enable the poorest farmers and workers to improve their position and have more control over their lives.

Despite lockdown, Traidcraft has seen an uptake of thousands of new customers, some of whom are from our own congregation, and they are encouraging us to 'Make the Switch'. By making small, simple swaps in our day to day consumer choices we can make the biggest difference to our planet and the 7.5 billion people who call it home.



**TRAIDCRAFT**  
Fighting poverty through trade

A big thank you to everyone for your support for Traidcraft. I plan to streamline the ordering by doing it at the start of each month. Therefore, if you have an order please get it to me by the end of each month.

Looking forward to hearing from you.

**Linda**

**simpsjo5@hotmail.com**

**01381 620433**



There were two 'big birthdays' in the manse recently, both with a zero but thirty years apart.

Congratulations and warm best wishes from us all, Violet, as you move into your 91st year.

**PS** Please don't let Warren see the piece below. It may give him ideas.....

### **Times Past.....**

When Jack was looking for information about who built the houses on the Black Isle Railway for his book of the same name, he came across the following details from the 1891 Census.

#### **Inhabitants of the manse at Avoch:**

**John Gibson**, 55, parish minister, born Avoch

**Elizabeth Gibson**, 53, his wife, born Edinburgh

**Elsie Hunt**, 24, domestic cook, born Fife

**Mary Ann Munro**, 24, domestic housemaid, born Inverness

**Bella Gilmour**, 19, domestic under housemaid, born Avoch.

#### **Key Contacts:**

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**peterisobel@yahoo.co.uk**

**Fortrose and Rosemarkie Session Clerk: Jack Kernahan**

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