



St Martin of Tours

Diocese of Edinburgh Scottish Charity No: 011137

Living our faith in our community
through prayer, reflection and action



April May 2022

St Martin of Tours Episcopal Church

is part of the Worldwide Anglican Communion

www.stmartinsedinburgh.org.uk

Who are we?

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Message from John Vincent

These last weeks have been challenging as much of the world has gone through a Lenten experience; uppermost in our minds are the Ukrainians as they face destruction, displacement, and death; the war that is raging as I write this serves as a close reminder of our fallen humanity and the destructive nature of sin. For once, rather than us using Lent to withdraw a little from the distractions of life and journey into the wilderness, it feels like the wilderness has come to us with the regular reminders on our news feeds of our inhumanity to one another and the devastation this brings.

The close proximity of the current war in Ukraine, and the potential for the conflict to escalate has understandably heightened our anxieties, yet conflict is nothing new; the story of Cain and Abel is a salutary lesson that conflict has been with us since the beginning of time. Even today, whilst our focus in The West is understandably on Ukraine, there are wars raging in Ethiopia, Yemen, Afghanistan to name but a few. These are the reminders that our world is not a perfect place and we fall short of what God wills for his creation. Such events, when they impede on our daily life challenge the assumptions we have about our world and our relationship to it and one another.

But there is another side to this, because when confronted with the most evil of actions, it can draw out surprising examples of goodness and Christian love; at an international level, there is a desire for countries to put differences aside and work together to limit the damage of war by defending its victims, and to seek a diplomatic resolution to conflict.

At a personal level, we see people offering donations, places in their homes and an incredible generosity of heart and talents.

Isaiah spoke of the wilderness as the place where a straight highway will be built to God, and the desert was thought not just to be where the Devil lived, but also where God can be found: The Wilderness is a metaphor for extremes, reminding us that it can bring out the best as well as the worst in human nature.

Our liturgical journey through the desert in Lent ends with Easter, assuring us that whatever the challenges, this wilderness is not the end but part of the journey. Even death itself has been conquered and one day, by grace, we will enjoy an abundant life lived in the presence of God.

The first Easter began in darkness, with confusion and uncertainty, but as the day broke, the light penetrated the darkness of broken lives, the warmth of the sun warmed the hearts of those who mourned and the risen Christ stood among those he loved bringing hope.

There will be many dark days ahead but we face those days as Easter people. We pray in hope for all victims of war, we pray in hope for our world leaders carrying a very heavy burden of responsibility, and we pray in hope for God's love to penetrate the hearts of all, that we may work together for peace and journey together on that straight highway through the desert to God and his perfect kingdom where war shall be no more.

John

West Ukraine before Putin's war

The Kyiv express trundles towards a country town
so slowly you can count the trees or orchestrate
the symphony sunlight plays on branch and bough:
 grace-notes of amber, russet, brown.

Birches wear a radiant crown.

So beautiful this land, so little known:
lost lyric rich in memory; lush earth sown
with crumbled castles, unremembered graves. Ukraine,
land that time forgot, though war and tyranny have not.

Apples bend
the boughs of village trees. Hens,
ignorant of cages, peck and scratch.
Vines entwine around well-weathered thatch
where red grapes gleam.

Cornflowers, poppies, marguerites
embroider fields ripe with wheat

 where Moshe, Shosha once took trembling cover.
 Creep deeper, deep for gunmen hover.

 O, plover, plaintive in long grass,
 tell me when the children pass.

 O, hawks that spy
 scurrying things with unblinking eye,
 tell me where those small ones lie.

 A shower of leaves – sheerest lace
 shrouds an unmarked burial place.

No synagogue now, no Hebrew school.
You buy train tickets in the shul.
The Armenian temple is a swimming pool;
Streletski's villa's a plush motel.
Our Lady of Mercy's walls are bare:
no Polish rosaries are murmured there –

but autumn's bounty fills the market square.

Twilight brings the Kyiv express,
a long night journey in reverse.

Crowds cross the rails.

Young women, arm-in arm, in highest heels,
old women drag home-grown goods for sale.

Men in black caps, roll-ups tossed away,
heave mighty bundles city-wards to trade,

travel on hardest seats. The old, betrayed
by empty promises, journey to survive,
to keep drug-addicted children's bairns alive,

offer purple asters, sweetest plums,
embroidered napkins, honey-combs.

Shapeless as their bundles, doze and snore.

Newspapers are spread.

Neighbours sprinkle salt on hard-won bread.

Jenny Robertson

Interview with Brian Kilbey

Brian, thank you for agreeing to be interviewed. - and for the coffee! I want to start by asking you whether you have always been aware of God in your life or did that awareness come to you later on?

Well, you know, my parents were both Christians - they belonged to the Plymouth Brethren so hearing about God was quite normal. Even when I went to secondary school, I was a member of the Christian Union. It was very evangelical of course. It was the time when Billy Graham came to Britain and we were inspired by all that and actually got one of the Graham Team to come to the school. I think it surprised some of the staff because the school hall, which could seat 600, was packed. After school I decided to go to university. It was easier to get financial help then than it is now and my father had shocked me one evening by telling me that he didn't have the money to send me to university and if I wanted to go, I had to be self-financing. I'd always thought he would put me through the system so suddenly my attention in class and my position in the class rankings dramatically improved! I read Botany at University College London. Don't ask me why someone brought up in Tottenham with not a flower in sight would want to do that but I wanted to, so I did. But it changed my thinking. I no longer felt I could believe in a literal six day Creation and for someone brought up to believe that the Bible was absolutely and

literally true, that was a bit shattering. For some reason I still believed in God but it meant some realignment of ideas was called for.

Is there someone in your life who has been a great influence on your beliefs?

I left the PB and started to go to Anglican churches in North London - very low evangelical ones, to start with, of course, but then I met Sarah who was also an Anglican and she was obviously moving towards the higher end of the scale and talked about things like incense, *incense!* - I thought she was practically in Rome! I'd better check this high church stuff out, I wasn't going to let the Pope steal her from me without a fight! She trained to be a teacher in Chichester and it was there, in the parish church at West Wittering, that I think I became convinced that I had come to the right place. The service was very high, I remember, but the sense of the Holy and the welcome every time we went to the Parish Communion was so affirming. I always think of that Church and its vicar (whose name I can't even remember) as the turning point I shall always be grateful for.

Apart from the unknown vicar, the influences I have had over the years have mainly been through congregations. When we came back from two and a bit years in Tennessee, we had three small children and the fourth was imminent and we were pointed in the direction of St Columba's by the Castle (where children were just a part of things). That was another eye opener because there were people there who one could talk to and discuss things with. In fact St Cs was called rather derogatorily 'the University Staff Club at Prayer!' And we did discuss - on one occasion, the parish weekend fell on the weekend the clocks all went back an hour and we argued the toss about when precisely we should change the clocks; before we started on Friday or when we finished up on Sunday and we were still arguing about it as we left! But there were some people there who have remained good friends like Nick Sagovsky, vice principal of the theological college who went to be Canon Theologian at Westminster Abbey and John Clark, the SEC information officer, who ended up as Dean of Wells Cathedral. And I must mention Brian Hardy who was our rector for some years and who mentored us and many others until he died two years ago. As I look back I have been so blessed in the people who have influenced and guided me. The person who has always been part of this, of course, has been Sarah who has encouraged, argued and been part of the long discovery process that being a Christian is.

And what is God for you?

I don't know and perhaps that isn't surprising because with my limited mental powers I think I would have got God wrong if I thought I knew. Not knowing is OK. Do you remember God says, "My ways are higher than your ways, my thoughts than your thoughts." And Jesus said "You think as man thinks not as God

thinks." We just get glimpses of God in all sorts of people and situations but we have to be prepared to recognise them. Thinking like that didn't satisfy me to start with, I wanted it all cut and dried, but I had to learn that it isn't. That's all right though, I can still pray and expect to be heard but I can't ever say as some do, "That was my answer to prayer." I can *believe* it is and it often is, I'm sure, but I can't prove it.

When you were child, did you go on any trips with the Church?

That was during the War and there weren't many opportunities for trips but we went out all together on Bank Holiday Monday with our packets of sandwiches and flasks of tea and a blanket or two to sit on. We usually had an old tennis ball and a bat or two and we enjoyed ourselves but - it nearly always seemed to rain. You know, church congregations are a marvellous social experiment. While I was in Rochester, USA by myself, Sarah was still looking after several lipreading classes so she stayed at home most of the time, Christ Church in Rochester became our second home and when I finished, she wanted to give a party to say thank you to all the people who had been so kind and who had become our firm friends. We held it in a friend's house and Sarah and Clare, my friend's wife did all the food preparation. It was December and their attic was as cold as a deep freeze so we put all the food up there. That evening was a huge success. There must have been nearly 80 people. People I worked with and people from the Church, local radio people (my friend presented a music programme that went out over not just New York but was syndicated to places as far away as Alaska, Hawaii and Florida. At the end, Chris, with whom I worked, came up to me and said, "I've lived in Rochester for 25 years but I don't know as many people as this." "Ah well Chris", I said, "I've told you before, you should go to Church!"

How did you feel at the start of the pandemic when we had to stay at home?

Actually I didn't mind. I was an only child and I guess I am a bit solitary by nature so staying at home wasn't hard. We both missed seeing the kids and we were particularly worried about the two of them who are self-employed and need to interact with people to earn any money. They seem to be weathering the storm so far. The pandemic is an opportunity to be doing something different - like the Goldberg Variations! I don't think our neighbours are quite so keen on that activity though. When Sarah took our big gong into the street to bang for the NHS, our next door neighbour, who is a GP himself, called out. "At least it's not the piano!"

Brian, thanks for agreeing to be interviewed.

It's a pleasure, Diana, thanks for asking me.

Brian

PLANTING TREES - A GIFT TO FUTURE GENERATIONS

The St Martins Eco-Group would like to invite **donations from the congregation towards planting trees** as a practical gesture of hope for the future.

We are asking members of the congregation, and anyone else who would like to support this initiative, to give a donation on **Easter Sunday 17 March**, towards planting trees, as a sign of our belief in new life, not only in Christ's Resurrection, but in the renewal of the Earth. There will be a prominently displayed offering plate for your cash donations, which if you prefer, you can put in an envelope marked "Trees". If you prefer not to give cash, you can also give a cheque payable to "St Martins SEC" in an envelope marked "Trees".

It has been said that the one who plants a tree plants it not for him or herself, but for the next generation. The native peoples have always known that humans need to live in harmony with nature, and importantly with trees, to care for them and replace those lost through harvest or weather events. Subiyay, an Elder of the Skokomish people from near Seattle, wrote "Together we are stronger". Let's learn from his wisdom and help to revive the nature that surrounds and protects us.

We intend to divide the amount donated between a Scottish project such as Trees for Life, an overseas project such as Tree Aid (planting trees in Africa), and possibly a local project. It will depend on your generosity, our donors!

With many thanks,

Elizabeth and George South on behalf of the Eco-Group.

Friends of the Holy Land Institute for the Deaf

Director's Update

The Institute had to close temporarily but when classes were allowed to resume for a variety of reasons not all the children returned. Fr Luay attributed this to several factors, one being the opening by the Government of a number of schools for the deaf. Sadly, these schools are poorly equipped and the teachers not well trained; they lack vocational training facilities - especially important given the poor job prospects for the deaf. But on a positive note, this indicates the growing awareness of the need in the country for more support for deaf community. There are 79 children currently attending the school in Salt - 12 having left (4 graduated; due to

bad behaviour; 2 went to Syria and 1 to Egypt 3 left). Work continues in Jofeh (115 children), Kreimeh (54 children) and the two refugee camps at Za'atiri (52 children) and Azraq (51 children). A new project for the deafblind has commenced - Deafblind Outreach Project which sends teachers to children's homes in order to teach basic skills. Government regulation for combating the coronavirus and new stricter regulations on safe-guarding have been Fr Luay's particular challenges, as well as getting to know the new Bishop in Jerusalem who is very active in the diocese.

Message from Diana

Now, more than ever, it's important that we keep our spirits up and support each other in that regard. Just a reminder to keep in mind anything that's lifted your spirits and write it in our "cheerful book". It sometimes seems that everything is dark but there's a light that will never be extinguished. No matter what prevails God is always here for us, holding our hands. See if he can steer your hand towards writing something positive in the book! And a big thank you to all of you who have already put pen to paper.

Diana

Craft club

The craft group continues to meet in Monika & Sonia's lounge on Saturday afternoons 2.00 - 4.00. We stop for tea, coffee and biscuits at 3.00 pm, and of course, we have a good natter too. We have been knitting blue and yellow angels.

Diana

St Martin's Strollers

Hopefully the walking group will start again soon.

Zoom and Church Services

Church services are now in Church and on zoom.

A big thank you to Rosie for hosting the Zoom Service.

