

Cathedral News

April 2026



Who's Who at the Cathedral...

...and who is the contact for what

Provost

The Very Rev'd Dr Stephen Holmes

07584 091870

Manager

Chris Ahern

manager@perthcathedral.co.uk



From the Provost

Dear friends,

'April is the cruellest month
Breeding lilacs out of the dead land'

T S Eliot's words at the beginning of his great 1922 poem *The Waste Land* have always struck and puzzled me. We cheer up in spring, the flowers and dazzling green speak of new life after the death of winter. Why did Eliot see this as cruel? Perhaps the date of the poem can help us understand. The new life of spring seemed cruel after the destruction of the Great War and Europe was devastated and wracked again by pandemic and social unrest. It all seems rather familiar.

I write this as we prepare to enter Holy Week, and this year April begins for us with the great three days - Maundy Thursday, Good Friday and Holy Saturday - when we accompany Jesus through his passion to the glory of Easter. As in 1922,



Contents

Who's who	2	Angels in Lent?	19
From the Provost	3	Fit for Funding webinar	20
Readings/collects for April	4	Net Zero Roadshow	22
Easter and special services	5	Mothers' Union	22
Remembering the departed	7	Forthcoming piano recital	25
Happy birthday!	7	Christian Aid booksale	26
New lay canon	8	Warm Space/Coffee and Chat	27
New altar frontal	8	Summer opening	27
Destratification fan	9	Christian Aid Week 2026	28
Icon of St Ninian	10	From the Farquhar diaries	30
Book reviews	15	Mary's challenge	30
Community of Nazareth	16	Eddie the Eagle	31
Global perspectives	17	Times of services	31

though, the world around us seems bleak. Missiles fly through the air in the Middle East and buildings and people are turned into dust. The agony of Ukraine and South Sudan continue. At home the war is causing economic troubles. But still, amidst the pain, hope springs up. The hope of Easter, the hope of new life in our society and community.

We saw that last month at the Choral Evensong for the blessing of our beautiful new icon of St Ninian. Our cathedral community came together to provide great music, worship, food and welcome. We were celebrating our patron saint, sacred art, the ministry of Canon Celia Matthews and the generosity of her family. Our doors were open and we welcomed ecumenical guests, the Vice Lord-Lieutenant representing His Majesty the King, the Provost of Perth and Kinross, politicians from all parties and representatives of civil society.

The celebration was like an icon of St Ninian's Cathedral itself. A community centred on Christian worship but open to the world and a place of culture, encounter and conversation. If our world seems a dangerous place, the Mystery of Easter shows us that our God is here with us, giving us hope and helping us embrace the joy of new life.

A very happy Easter!

The Very Rev'd Dr Stephen Homes, Provost

Readings and Collects for April

Maundy Thursday: The Evening Eucharist of the Lord's Supper - 2 April

Collect: God our Father, you have invited us to share in the supper which your Son gave to his Church to proclaim his death until he comes: may he nourish us by his presence, and unite us in his love; who lives and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever.

Readings: Exodus 12.1-14, Psalm 116.1-2, 12-19, 1 Corinthians 11.23-26, John 13.1-15

Good Friday - 3 April

Collect: O Lord, look with mercy on this your family, for which our Lord Jesus Christ was willing to be betrayed, given up into the hands of sinners, and to suffer death upon the

cross; who lives and reigns for ever and ever.

Readings: Isaiah 52.13-53, Psalm 22.1-22, Hebrews 10.16-25, John 18.1-19.42

Holy Saturday - 4 April

Collect: O God, who made this most holy night to shine with the glory of the Lord's resurrection: stir up in your Church that Spirit of adoption given to us in baptism; that, being renewed both in body and mind, we may worship you in sincerity and truth; through Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, world without end.

Readings: Genesis 1.1-2.4a, Psalm 104.1-10, Genesis 7.1-5, 11-18; 8.6-19; 9.8-13, Psalm 36.1-12, Genesis 22.1-18, Psalm 16.4-10, Exodus 14.10-31; 15.20-22, Isaiah 66.6-16, Psalm 113, Ezekiel 36.24-28, Psalm 42.1-7, Romans 6.3-11, John 20.1-18

Easter Day - 5 April

Collect: Lord of all life and power, who through the mighty resurrection of your Son overcame the old order of sin and death to make all things new in him: grant that we, being dead to sin and alive to you in Jesus Christ, may reign with him in glory; to whom with you and the Holy Spirit be praise and honour, glory and might, now and in all eternity.

Readings: Acts 10.34-43, Psalm 118.1-2, 14-24, Colossians 3.1-4, John 20.1-18

Second Sunday of Easter - 12 April

Collect: Almighty Father, you have given your only Son to die for our sins and to rise again for our justification: grant us so to put away the leaven of malice and wickedness that we may always serve you in pureness of living and truth; through the merits of your Son Jesus Christ our Lord, who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever.

Readings: Acts 2.14a, 22-32, Psalm 16, 1 Peter 1.3-9, John 20.19-31

(continued page 22)

Easter and Special Services

Wednesday 1 April

7.00pm: Tenebrae

Maundy Thursday 2 April

11.00am: Chrism Mass for the diocese

7.00pm: Evening Mass of the Lord's Supper

Good Friday 3 April

3.00pm: Liturgy of the Passion

Holy Saturday 4 April

9.00pm: Great Vigil of Easter

Easter Day 5 April

11.00am: Sung Mass

Sunday 19 April

4.00pm: Choral Evensong

Ascension Day, Thursday 14 May

11.00am: Mass

7.00pm: Sung Mass

Sunday 24 May

3.00pm: Choral Evensong (Perth Festival of the Arts)

4.00pm: Perth Festival of the Arts organ recital

Thursday 4 June

7.00pm: Corpus Christi Sung Mass and Procession

Saturday 6 June

12.00 noon: Profession of the first members of the Community of Nazareth, a new monastic community in the Scottish Episcopal Church



Remembering Departed Loved Ones

The cathedral's Lady Chapel is a place of powerful spirituality where Jesus is present in the Sacrament, where we gather to pray, and where prayers are answered. In it a candle burns day and night to remind us of the loving presence of Jesus. It costs about £20 to keep the flame burning for a month and your donation can be given to the treasurer or Provost or made by bank transfer (subject - Lamp). You are invited to sponsor the flame for a month in memory of your loved ones. You can add their name to the sheet in the Cloister or contact Provost Stephen on provost.perth@gmail.com or Chris our treasurer on treasurer@perthcathedral.co.uk.

In April the flame will burn in memory of **Anne Patterson**.

What's Been Going On?

Happy Birthday!



Congratulations to a happy-looking Annabelle who celebrated a significant birthday with a beautifully decorated cake in the Chapter House on Sunday 1 March. The cake featured references to her French heritage, a paddleboard and her cat...as well as a couple of spelling mistakes in the written French!



Our New Lay Canon

Many congratulations to Lis Burke whose many years of dedicated service to the cathedral, to St John's Princes Street and elsewhere in the diocese, have been recognised in her being made an honorary lay canon of St Ninian's Cathedral. The picture, left, shows Lis with Bishop Ian at the Diocesan Synod on 7 March, and, right, with the flowers with which she was presented.



New Altar Frontal

Many thanks to Canon Lis for sending in this photo of a new altar frontal which features a scene of the Annunciation, flanked by decorative fleurs de lys, a symbol frequently associated with the Virgin Mary. It was used at the Sung Mass to mark the feast of the Annunciation on 25 March.



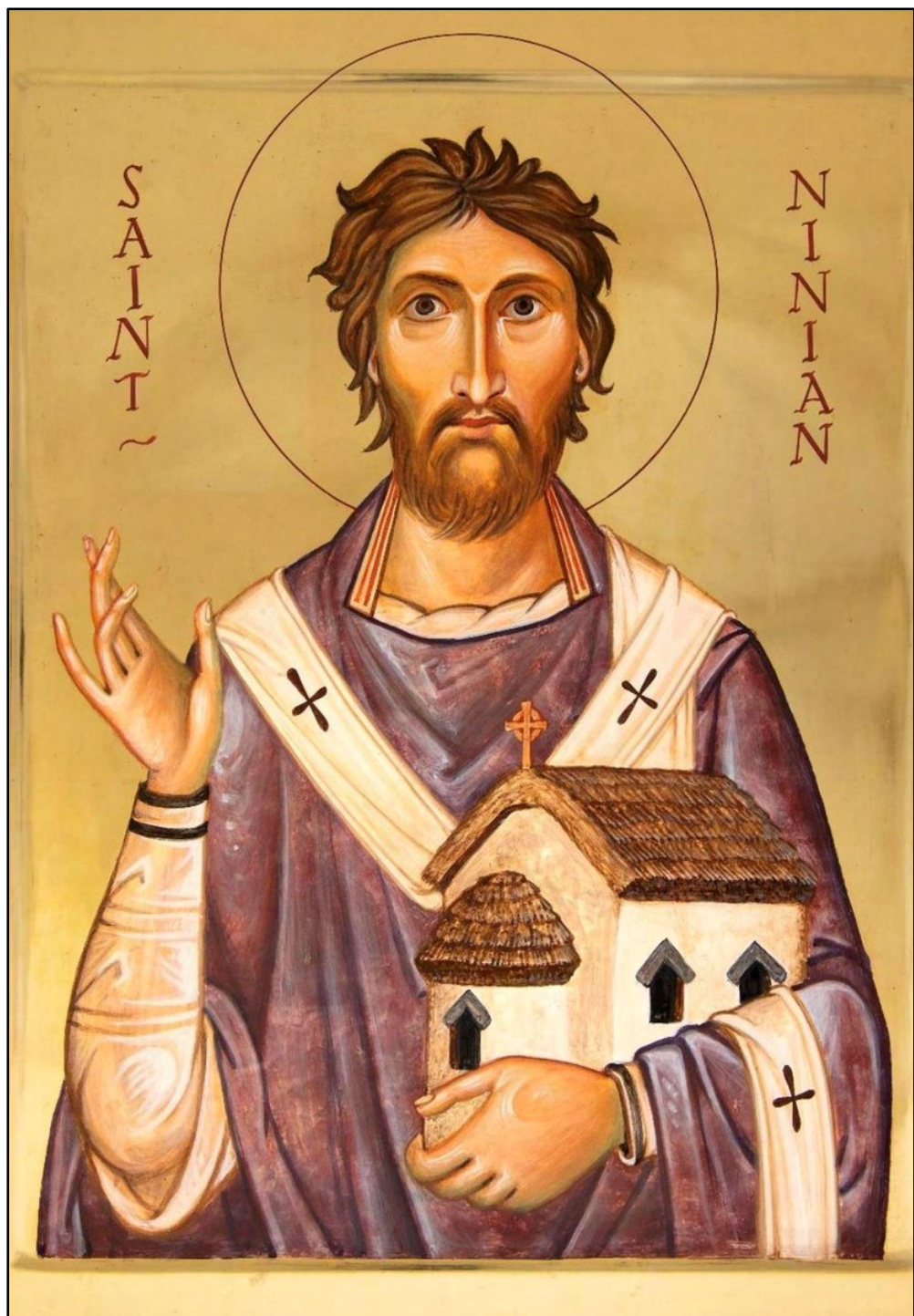
Destratification Fan

The cost of fuel and the state of the cathedral's finances have resulted in some pretty cold Sunday morning services this winter. But help may be at hand. A destratification fan was installed in the Chapter House in March which now pumps the warm air - that naturally rises to the ceiling - back down to people level. Almost immediately there were comments that the room felt warmer...which could also be attributed to the slightly warmer spring weather outside. If the fan is deemed effective then others might be installed in the cathedral itself. The installation necessitated the use of a cherry picker to allow our electrician, Bobby Munro, access to the ceiling.



Cover Photo

The editor snapped the top of this statue while on a recent visit to Malta. The brilliant white of the figure of St Lawrence against the deep blue sky was quite striking. The only way to make this photo vaguely relevant is to point out that we are once again heading for barbeque season and, according to a tradition, St Lawrence was martyred on a gridiron over hot coals. You may rightly think that is a quip in questionable taste but, in defence, St Lawrence is indeed the patron saint of the barbeque!



The Icon of St Ninian



Given in memory of Canon Celia Matthews, by her family, this beautiful work (*pictured on opposite page*) has now been installed near the Lady Chapel and was blessed during Choral Evensong on Sunday 22 March. It was painted by Aidan Hart whose work notably featured in the coronation of King Charles. Special thanks go to Andy Beatson, assisted by Martin Cameron, who skilfully attached what is basically a heavy flat picture (in its oak frame) to a cylindrical pillar. The photo below shows the icon *in situ*.



Address by Provost Stephen at the Blessing of the Icon of St Ninian

We now come to the blessing of our new icon of our patron saint, St Ninian.

This icon was painted by Aidan Hart who has been chosen by King Charles to teach at the King's Foundation School of Traditional Arts. Aidan has done much work for His Majesty, including the anointing screens at his coronation. It is thus appropriate that the King is represented here by his Vice Lord-Lieutenant. The icon was given in memory of Canon Celia Matthews, by her family and we are glad to have Fiona and Patrick, her niece and nephew, here. Celia was a much loved member of the cathedral ministry team who was one of the first women to be ordained priest in the Episcopal Church. It is a celebration of traditional faith and artistry, and an affirmation of new insights, like the ordination of women, that develop within the Christian tradition. Celia was also an accomplished artist and one of her last retreats was on icons, so this is an appropriate memorial. Thank you to Celia's family for enabling us to commemorate her in this appropriate way.

So why St Ninian? A saint is a Christian who is in heaven and shares Christ's love for those of us still on earth. Ninian is our patron saint and although there are many images of him in the cathedral, there is no central shrine to him here. Cathedrals all over this island have been building or rebuilding shrines to their saints in recent decades, to respond to a widespread desire for centres of local holiness, identity and pilgrimage. It is fitting that we have this new shrine here in the city as a quiet centre for prayer – the cathedral is open for all each week and you can come here, pray, light a candle and perhaps leave a prayer request. Many are worried by the situation in the world today and need places like this – do encourage them to visit us. This is a Christian cathedral, but that means we are open to people of all religions or none.

St Ninian is one of Scotland's first saints, a mysterious figure based at Whithorn in Galloway who is said to have converted the Southern Picts who lived in this area. You can find out more about him by reading the booklet available today. Like St John the Baptist, he is our local saint, and was chosen by those who built this cathedral.

If that is St Ninian, what is an icon? Like the little pictures on your phone, an icon is literally an image, but it has a technical meaning in Christianity. An icon is a



The clergy and principal guests gather round the icon for the blessing. They include Patrick and Fiona, Celia's nephew and niece, Canon Hunter, and Xander McDade, Provost of Perth and Kinross Council. Out of shot are Alex Cairncross, Vice Lord Lieutenant of Perth and Kinross, and Murdo Fraser, MSP.

holy image of Christ, Mary or the saints. It shows us the 'communion of saints', a truth which Christians proclaim whenever they say the creed. It means that we all are connected.

Christian icons were not appreciated by another person associated with Perth, John Knox. He specialised in iconoclasm - literally smashing icons. He smashed icons because some parts of the Old Testament warned against religious images. The New Testament, however, tells us that in his love for the world, for us, God became human in Jesus Christ. Jesus is really human, he wasn't faking it. He has a face and a body, and so we can make pictures of him and his friends the saints.

This tells us something really important about Christianity and the world. Matter, the solid things around us, our planet and our neighbours; all these things are loved by God, are part of God's plan. Our icon is made in the traditional way, no AI and no plastics. It is made of the things of the earth - trees, plants, water, animal products like egg yolk and rabbit skin glue, and things from the ground:



Some of the helpers who prepared and served a buffet reception at the back of the cathedral after the service. The useless photographer, aka The Editor, succeeded in snapping Andrew, Maureen and Wendy but managed to miss out Diane, who was standing behind Wendy, and John. Apologies to them!

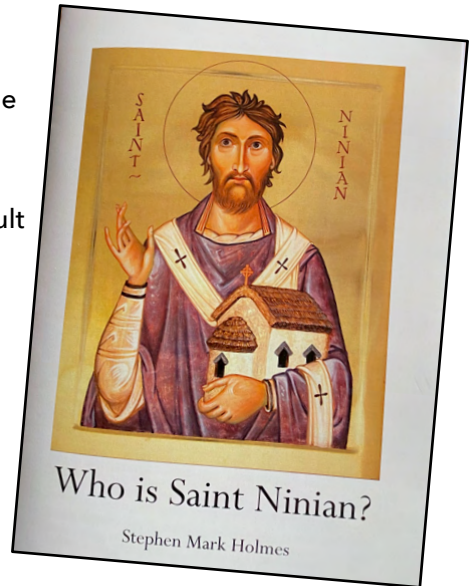
gold, chalk and mineral pigments. As the Bible says, humanity was made from the stuff of the earth and the spirit of God, so the icon is made from the things of the earth and the Holy Spirit, called down by the prayer and fasting of the painter. An icon is a place which brings things together.

Our icon, with its distinctive face, is a place where we see the invisible God mediated through the things of creation. We are brought face to face with the mystery at the heart of things. St Ninian's face is gentle and welcoming but the icon also contains a warning to our culture. If we treat the planet and nature with contempt, if we oppress our fellow human beings, we spit into the face of Jesus and trample on his body. King Charles, who has been shown our icon and was impressed by it, recently produced a documentary called 'Harmony'. It is harmony which this icon brings us: between God and creation, between humans and nature, and that harmony between people which is called peace. By the prayers of St Ninian may this icon, and the cathedral which contains it, be a place where people can find peace.

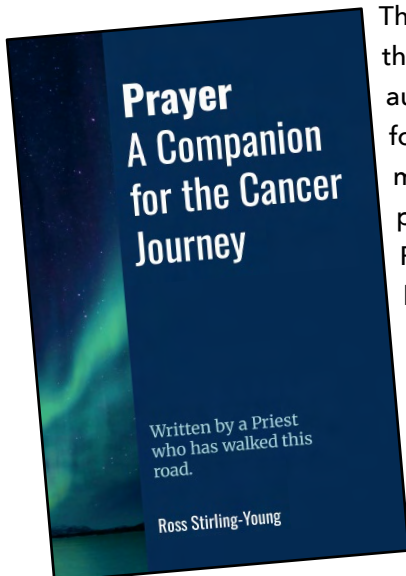
Book Reviews

Who is Saint Ninian?

A booklet on St Ninian has been written by Provost Stephen and published by the cathedral to coincide with the blessing of the new icon. *Who is Saint Ninian?* is a very readable and thought-provoking investigation into the life and subsequent cult of the cathedral's patron saint. The Provost makes a strong argument that the real Ninian was actually Finian who lived not in the fifth century but the sixth and whose historical links with the church in Rome were not as strong as the Venerable Bede would have us believe. Well worth reading and a snip at only £3.00!



Prayer: A Companion for the Cancer Journey



This short prayer book is a modern *Pilgrim's Progress* through the valley of the shadow of cancer. As the author faces each challenge he utters short prayers for faith and courage to endure his fate. It reminds me of *Prayers of Life* by Michel Quoist, a French priest, speaking to God in simple everyday words. Father Ross has revealed the heart-rending prayers he made during his recent illness. The book is about being honest to God. It will be invaluable as a companion through any illness.

Available from the author, Father Ross. The price is £9.95 with proceeds going to the Arunima Children's Hospice in India.

Rev'd Geoffrey Hall

The Community of Nazareth

In the previous edition of the cathedral magazine, Fr Stephen kindly introduced the Community of Nazareth. I am grateful for the opportunity to say a little more about it here.

Together with two of my brother monks, I have founded the Community of Nazareth, a dispersed monastic community within the Scottish Episcopal Church. Our inspiration comes from the hidden life of Jesus at Nazareth, those long years when Christ lived quietly in work, prayer, and ordinary life before his public ministry began. That hidden faithfulness is central to the Community's vision: holiness formed not through prominence or activity, but through steady love of God in the ordinary fabric of life.

As a dispersed community, we do not live together in a monastery, but remain rooted in our parishes, our work, and our daily responsibilities while sharing a common Rule of life and rhythm of prayer.

The Community draws particularly on the Benedictine tradition, with its emphasis on stability, balance, and listening for God in the ordinary rhythms of life. Our prayer is rooted in the Anglican pattern of common prayer, with the Daily Office and Holy Communion shaping the heart of our life together.

For me personally, this journey will reach an important moment on 6 June, when I will make my Simple Profession of Vows in the Community of Nazareth here at St Ninian's Cathedral.

This is a moment I have dreamt of my whole life. From a small child I felt drawn to the monastic life, to a life shaped by prayer and the quiet search for God. The path has not always been straightforward, but the call has remained.

It feels right that my profession will take place here at the cathedral. Since arriving in Perth I have been met with great kindness and generosity from many people in this community, particularly during what has also been a challenging period of illness and treatment.

In a very real sense, the people who pray here week by week have helped to

shape my vocation. You have helped to make me a better monk.

Monastic vows are promises made to God, but they are lived within the life of the Church. To take those vows here, among the people who have accompanied me on this journey, feels both natural and fitting.

Please keep the Community of Nazareth in your prayers, and pray for me as I prepare to make my vows in June. You would be very welcome to join us at the cathedral for the profession.



I would love to see you at St Ninian's Cathedral on Saturday 6 June at midday, as I take my vows and we share together in the celebration of the Holy Communion.

Brother Andrew-Thomas

Engaging with Global Perspectives:

A Time of Listening and Learning

Recently, I had the privilege of travelling to Birmingham to attend a conference at The Queen's Foundation for Ecumenical Theological Education. The gathering, titled 'How to Engage Well with Global Perspectives', brought together participants from across theological institutions to reflect deeply on how we understand, relate to, and learn from the wider global Church.



I was honoured to be selected to represent the Scottish Episcopal Institute, alongside another student from the Diocese of Edinburgh. Over the course of the conference, we explored themes such as positionality, privilege, the importance of global conversations, and a particularly

engaging session on re-storytelling – how we tell and retell stories in ways that honour diverse voices and experiences.

Much of our time was spent in conversation around tables, listening carefully to one another's contexts and lived experiences. I found this especially enriching. Simply listening – truly listening – to others opened up new perspectives and challenged my own assumptions. Many of the discussions resonated deeply with my own experiences of ministry and engagement in the Diocese of Calcutta, reminding me that the Church is both beautifully diverse and profoundly interconnected.



The conference was led by two postdoctoral research fellows from Durham University, whose insight and gentle guidance helped create a space where honest and thoughtful dialogue could flourish.

As your priest and assistant curate, you may not be aware that alongside my ministry at St Columba's and the cathedral, I continue to engage in ongoing theological study. Opportunities like this conference are invaluable – not only for my own formation, but for the life and witness of the Church communities I serve.

Before returning home, I was also able to spend some precious time with a dear friend, the Rev'd Christine (*pictured above with Father Ross*), who serves in the Diocese of Birmingham. We first met while studying together in the Holy Land at St George's College, Jerusalem. As we caught up, we found ourselves reflecting on our time in Palestine and Israel – memories of a place where, at that time, we were able to walk freely and experience something of its deep spiritual richness.

Those memories now feel particularly poignant. Together, we held in prayer the ongoing situation in the region, longing for the day when peace may once again

allow pilgrims and residents alike to walk those sacred paths in safety and hope.

This time away was both humbling and enriching – a reminder that the Church is a global body, called to listen, to learn, and to walk together in love, following Jesus who calls us to be one.

Father Ross

Angels in Lent?

Our small discussion group gathered each Monday morning throughout Lent. Although our chosen topic was 'Angels', our weekly conversations often took unexpected turns, and everybody contributed their own thoughts, ideas and experiences. Thanks are due to Emmanuel in particular, who summarised the Roman Catholic teaching on angels for us.

We started by sharing our thoughts about what we, and others, mean by the word 'angel', thinking of books and films which feature angels. We remembered many stories in the Bible where angels take an active role, and realised that as God's messenger or mouthpiece, the 'angel of the Lord' was a symbol of God's presence and should be treated with reverence. We developed a pattern each week of looking at images, hymns and Bible stories that featured angels, and sharing our ideas about them.

On the last Monday we reflected on doctrine, looking at Emmanuel's summary, the catechism in the Scottish Prayer Book and our weekly liturgy. We understood the advantages of having an authoritative figure to ensure consistency in the church's beliefs. But we noted that in our own tradition there is more emphasis on recognising which issues are central to our faith, and respectfully acknowledging and accepting different understandings of other issues. We concluded that the Bible affirms the presence of angels who act in our world, and that perhaps they are not included in the creeds or other statements of belief because their presence has never been controversial.

Memorable highlights from each week included:

- The east window in the Lady Chapel is a representation of the canticle Te Deum Laudamus, with angels, heavenly powers, cherubim and seraphim all praising God

- A painting above the cathedral doorway (*pictured right*) shows the Virgin Mary being carried up to heaven by cherubim (the Assumption into Heaven)
- There are many ways of praying, and the actions of another person may be the answer to our prayer, which is perhaps why we often refer to good, helpful people as angels'
- The story of Balaam (Numbers 22.7-35) is the story of a non-Israelite who prophesied in God's name, but did not always recognise God's presence. Balaam was more of an ass than his talking donkey, who saw the angel blocking their way



- Peter was freed from prison (Acts 12.6-10) by an angel who reminded us of a soldier and led us to reflect on issues of war and pacifism
- At every Eucharist our worship and praise joins in that of 'angels, archangels and the whole company of heaven' (words from the Eucharistic Prayer).

Canon Lis

'Fit for Funding' Webinar

The Net Zero team were present and involved at this two-hour webinar on 5 March. Allan Ramsay from Faith in Community Scotland gave his expertise on funding and applications and many other things. He intimated that their vision is of Scotland's communities being places of love, welcome, justice and sharing where everyone can live their life to the full. He said that we support local faith

groups. He went on to say that there are three main areas: Planning your Project; Planning your Fundraising; and Successful Applications. He asked us: What would you like to learn about today? I answered: An overall experience of climate change including specifically information on how to access funding and to work together towards Net Zero.



Section 1 of the webinar included Project Planning and Communication. This involved planning checklists, funding terminology, having a good idea, and being able to prove it. About the project itself one should ask: How will you make it happen? What's the plan? What difference will it make? About building the budget: How much will it cost? Is it realistic? Funding terminology included: Organisation: the legal identity of the grant recipient. Project: The specific piece of work you're seeking funding for. Aim to produce a 30-word overall summary of what the project is about. Outcomes: The differences you hope to make. Outputs: The services you aim to deliver. Targets: quality and quantity of outputs.

There were reasons why applications fail and why they succeed. Session 2 introduced ways of raising funds. These included applications to trusts: for example, The Benefact Trust, Grants from other sources can include the council, the NHS, the Scottish Government and the National Lottery. There are various useful websites, such as funding.scot, fundsonline.org.uk, grantsonline.org.uk, and netzerochurch.scot/funding. There are ethical considerations too, such as accepting funds from an organisation whose activities damage the environment. Would you accept funds from an organisation whose activities have had a negative impact on society?

This webinar covered all the things I wanted to know about. I believe that we can all acquire the knowledge to access funding and move towards net zero.

Emmanuel Patterson

The webinar can still be viewed online at this address: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GtUnDIZ6law>

Readings and Collects for April

(continued from page 5)

Third Sunday of Easter - 19 April

Collect: Almighty Father, who in your great mercy gladdened the disciples with the sight of the risen Lord: give us such knowledge of his presence with us, that we may be strengthened and sustained by his risen life and serve you continually in righteousness and truth; through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord, who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever.

Readings: Acts 2.14a, 36-41, Psalm 116.1-3(4-9)10-17, 1 Peter 1.17-23, Luke 24.13-35

Fourth Sunday of Easter - 26 April

Collect: Almighty God, whose Son Jesus Christ is the resurrection and the life: raise us, who trust in him, from the death of sin to the life of righteousness, that we may seek those things which are above, where he reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever.

Readings: Acts 2.42-47, Psalm 23, 1 Peter 2.19-25, John 10.1-10

The Mothers' Union

How it all Began: the Early Years

One hundred and fifty years ago, a meeting took place in Hampshire which brought together a group of like-minded people who had come to hear their Rector's wife talk to them about some ideas she had about supporting families. Those who came were unusual in that they were drawn from across the social spectrum, with ladies arriving in their carriages and the village women walking to the Rectory where the meeting was to be held. They were invited to sit together in the drawing-room to hear about plans for a mothers' meeting. Unfortunately, nerves overcame the Rector's wife and the Rector had to step in, but they were invited back the following week to hear her explain the objects of the new union, and give out simple cards on which were written practical suggestions for the members' lives.

From that inauspicious start the vision that inspired Mary Sumner to found the

Mothers' Union has had far reaching consequences. Mary had grown up in a happy, wealthy household. She was well educated and widely travelled, and it was during a visit to Rome that she met and fell in love with a young man, soon to be ordained. And he with her. Marriage to George Sumner, the



The home of Mary and George Sumner, once the Rectory, now called Old Alresford Place.

youngest son of the Bishop of Winchester soon followed along with the setting up of their new home in a village just outside Winchester where George was to serve his curacy. This was followed by a move to Farnham, the then seat of the Bishop of Winchester as he was appointed chaplain to his father. In 1851 George became Rector of St Mary's Old Alresford and this was to be their home for the next twenty-four years. The rectory was a happy home where Mary brought up their family of two daughters and a son whilst supporting her husband's ministry in a variety of ways.

When the carriage ladies and the cottage women held their first meeting of the Mothers' Union in 1876 Mary was a grandmother approaching her fiftieth birthday. Perhaps it was the birth of her first grandchild that was the impetus she needed to formulate her thoughts and ideas on the enormity and responsibility that marriage and motherhood bring. The great foundational principles were baptism and parental example. It was the united aim of those women to live their married lives in an exemplary fashion, so that their children, a gift from God, would be brought up in the Christian faith and have a good understanding of what marriage and family life in its fullest measure meant.

Certainly, the time was ripe for such a vision. It was an age when the Church was involved with exploration of the Christian message through the social gospel

both at home and abroad. It was beginning to expand into the world of education, publishing and social justice. Organisations such as Barnardo's, the Girls Friendly Society and the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children had recently come into being. Women were starting to be recognised as individuals with power over their own lives and property. Those initial seeds sown by Mary at Old Alresford quickly took root and became established within the parish. Soon others followed their example, and branches began to be

formed elsewhere.



At the meeting of the Church Congress in Portsmouth in 1885 (the equivalent of today's National Synod) Mary was called upon to speak to the assembled women by Bishop Ernest Wilberforce, who was chairman of that session. He felt that she could offer more to those sitting there than he was able to, and reluctantly she agreed. Speaking simply and painting a picture of the low moral standards within the country, she

asked what could be done to improve the national character. It was the women, she said, who held the future in their hands. She spoke about two particular truths, that women should be what they wished their children to be, and that prayer was the unseen power that moved mountains. If women were united in prayer and committed to a Christian life, the nation could be transformed. Such was the overwhelming and positive response from the floor, that the Bishop of Winchester enabled the Mothers' Union to become a diocesan organisation with Mary as its President. It was from this point that the Mothers' Union gathered momentum, moving ever outward through dioceses both at home and overseas.

By this time the Sumners - George having firstly been made Archdeacon and then Suffragan Bishop of Guildford - had moved to live in No 1 The Close, Winchester, which allowed Mary to devote time and energy to developing the structure and furthering the work of the Mothers' Union. Mary was fortunate to be well connected by birth and marriage and had many influential friends whom she was able to encourage to take an interest in the Society and become

involved in its leadership. Within seven years the Mothers' Union was active across the British Isles and had spread abroad. Initially the overseas members were usually expatriates or army wives, but missionaries and Anglican sisterhoods soon began to introduce the Mothers' Union to the indigenous populations, and this helped in the rapidity of its spread. George died soon after celebrating their diamond wedding in 1909. Mary continued to live at No 1, in the shadow of the cathedral, until her death on 9 August 1921, aged 93. By this time the central structure of the Mothers' Union had been developed with its different areas of work being reflected at branch level within parishes, and plans were in hand to build a headquarters in Westminster – now known as Mary Sumner House.

Would Mary feel equally at home with the Mothers' Union of today? Would she recognise her vision and be pleased with what she saw? In a changing world we have had to adapt to a changing society, and certainly there have been many changes due to society and its needs and our member-led leadership has been true to Mary's vision of protecting family life and prayer. We have continued to increase membership across the world with Mary Sumner House still the mother house but with every Province of the Anglican Church being an independent organisation. Our leadership board reflects the diverse pattern of membership, and we welcome the two-way process of membership. We wish for more members, but every member can live out Mary's vision within their own lives – prayer is what binds us together in the end.

Elizabeth Benton

Many thanks to Fiona and Bill Crighton for sending in this article which was first published in March 2026 in the Mothers' Union e-newsletter number 59 for members in the Diocese of St Andrews, Dunkeld and Dunblane, and the Diocese of Brechin. And thanks too to the author for her permission to reprint it.

Piano Recital

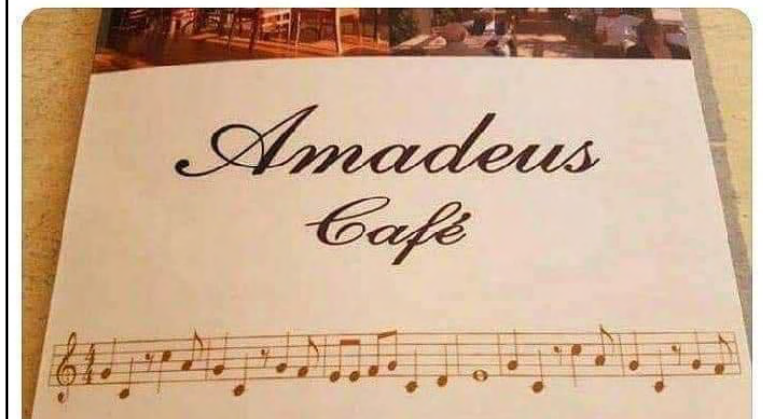
Our very own Emmanuel Patterson will be giving a piano recital in the cathedral on Saturday 2 May at 2.00pm. There will be a collection in aid of the organ fund. Emmanuel is an extremely talented pianist and the concert is sure to be a treat. The editor for one is keeping his fingers crossed for a bit of Chopin!

And Talking of the Piano...

"hey, we should put some music on the front of our menu"

"okay, what should I use?"

"eh, whatever's probably fine"



...here's a little musical joke that was doing the rounds a few years ago. Apparently the Amadeus Cafe on Menorca really did use the Flintstones theme to illustrate their highbrow musical aspirations!

Christian Aid Booksale

The Perth Christian Aid booksale - inspired by the massive event in Edinburgh - will take place in Kinnoull Church on Saturday 9 May. As before, donations of books can be left at the back of the cathedral, for onward transport to Kinnoull. Over £1750 was raised last year and doubtless the organiser, Gerry Watson, will be hoping to break the 2K barrier. Along with the cathedral, other churches in Perth also contribute books and manpower.



The Provost's Contact Details

The best ways to contact me are by email at provost.perth@gmail.com and by phone on 07584 091870. My day off is Monday, plus Friday afternoon.

Warm Space/Coffee and Chat

The winter warm space which has been running in the cathedral on Monday mornings from early November came to an end on the last Monday in March. However, such has been its popularity amongst the users that they have suggested it continue all year round, and the principal organisers, Wendy and Pat, have been given permission from the Provost to



keep it going. The hot breakfasts will no longer be provided, but tea and toast, coffee and biscuits will be available as before. Coffee and Chat will take place in the Chapter House on Monday mornings, between 10.00 and 11.30am, starting on Monday 13 April. The feeling amongst those who have manned the warm space throughout the winter is that the provision of companionship is what draws our users in, though doubtless the prospect of a well-filled bacon and egg roll will have had its attractions too! A huge well done to everyone who turned up before 9.00am on cold winter mornings to keep the warm welcome going over five months, and of course many thanks also go to Perth and Kinross Council for providing the funding to allow the team to do so. The photo shows Carmen, Wendy and Pat holding a blanket knitted by the lovely Barbel Roerig, better known as Perth's famous Scooter Granny. She created the blanket - her own design - during her mornings at our Warm Space.

Summer Opening

No sooner does one cathedral event finish than another one starts! The new summer opening season will hopefully begin in April and, as always, it would be good to have some new folk - as well as the old hands! - in the team to spread the load. The clergy can usually man the cathedral in the mornings, so if you think you could manage an hour or two in the afternoon to welcome our visitors, maybe once a week, please have a word with a member of the vestry.

Christian Aid Week 2026

Since 1957, Christian Aid Week has brought faith and action together to help families survive poverty and violence, and communities rebuild after crisis.

This is all thanks to the amazing support of churches, communities and individuals who choose to walk, run, bake, dance, make, and do whatever it takes to help make lasting change.



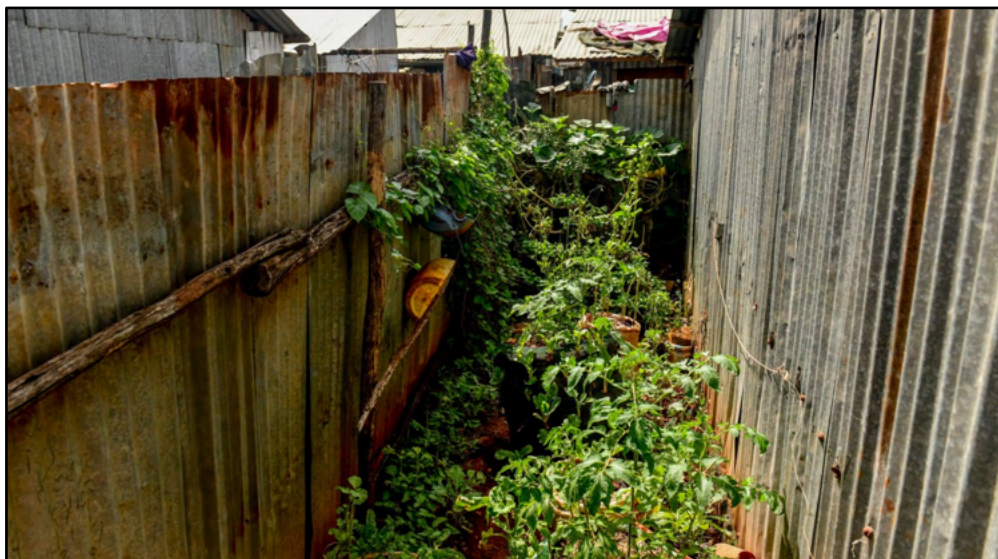
Who will Christian Aid Week support this year?

This Christian Aid Week, your support could help mothers in Nairobi, Kenya, facing the devastating reality of urban poverty and the daily struggle to feed their children. By funding urban farming projects alongside specialist training from our partner Beacon of Hope, we can help parents fight food insecurity, grow fresh vegetables in small city spaces and earn an income to support their families.

This May, we invite you to help mothers like Fridah Moraa and Belinda Kasudi living in crowded informal settlements so they can protect their children from hunger and grow a more hopeful future. In the informal settlement of Dagoretti in Nairobi, many parents wake each morning knowing they must earn money that day. If they do not, their children may not eat that night.

For Fridah Moraa, this pressure is constant. She is a recently widowed grandmother and the sole provider for her family. Rent, school costs, water and food all depend on what she can earn. Fridah lives with her children and grandson in a rented corrugated metal shelter. There is no running water and space is extremely limited. Many families in Dagoretti manage just two meals a day. Some manage only one.

To support her family, Fridah sells vegetables at a market stall. With no refrigeration or storage, she travels long distances to buy produce, six days a week. Some days she earns enough. Some days she does not. 'Sometimes I don't know how I'll buy food. I don't know how I'll feed my family.'



Fridah's situation began to change when she joined Imarisha Kilimo, an urban farming project run by Christian Aid's partner, Beacon of Hope. At first, the idea felt impossible. 'I was wondering, where can someone farm here in Nairobi?', she said. Through training, tools and seeds, Fridah learned how to grow food in small city spaces. She learned how to use cone gardens, make compost and conserve water. 'I discovered I could sow here. Right where I stand.'

At the end of a narrow alley near her home, Fridah now tends her own urban farm. She grows kale, tomatoes and indigenous vegetables. Some feed her family. Some she sells. For Fridah, this means more than food. It means stability and choice. 'Now I can plan. I can buy this; I can buy that. I can help my family.'



Fridah's faith sustains her through difficult days. It strengthens her resolve to keep going and to provide for her children. 'It's hard, but in God I trust, for the strength to keep going every day.' Her urban farm is small, but it carries big hopes. Hopes for education, independence and a future beyond daily uncertainty.

Published on the Christian Aid website on 9 February 2026

From the Farquhar Diaries

4 April 1926. This is Easter Monday. On looking back over Lent & Easter there are both lights and shadows. We had several weekly special Lent services...But we might as well not have had them. The same dozen people, who came all the year round, came but no more. Out of 1100 communicants that cannot be called good. There was no improvement in Holy Week, worth mentioning, except that the Earl and Countess of Moray added themselves to the faithful remnant. The Bishop took the Three Hours, basing it on the history of the Passion, and about 70 were present - but where were the 1100 communicants supposed to be preparing for Easter? Two Services in Holy Week were encouraging, i.e. the 9 a.m. Celebration on Palm Sunday at which there was a palm-bearing procession and the Lantern Service on Good Friday evening. But on Easter Day you would have thought that some physical embankment, which had been damming back the Congregation during Lent & Holy Week, had given way. Six times in the day did one congregation after another flock in and crowd the Cathedral and no less than 700 communicated, being 80 more than on last Easter Day.

19 April. At 4 a.m. this morning N. started in Mrs Pinkerton's motor for Sedburgh [sic] in Yorkshire and at 4.30 p.m. I received a telegram saying they have arrived all right. This - that two ladies all by themselves can leave Perth in the morning and get to Yorkshire by their own exertions for afternoon tea, causes an upheaval in my notions...When I was taking duty in Pittenweem yesterday I was told that there were two members of the Congregation still alive, who can remember Bp Low, who began his clerical life in Perth in 1787. That means that I could go and speak to two people, who remember a man who was ordained and served five years under the Penal Laws!

Mary's Challenge

Little Mary wonders if anyone can find the dog (pictured right) hidden in the walls of the cathedral? Get in touch if you think you know - the answer will be revealed next month!



Eddie the Eagle says...

I did a quick double-take recently when I read that the SEC owns a pub in the north of Scotland. Apparently the church 'inherited' the Crask Inn, near Lairg, in 2017. Wouldn't it be useful if we could persuade other lucrative businesses to bequeath their enterprises to the church. I can see it now. The Chapter House Casino - yes, you may lose the shirt off your back but at least you can pop next door and pray you win it back with the next turn of the card. All our money worries solved, if not yours!



Times of Services etc

A warm welcome to everyone who comes to our services!

Sunday	Said Eucharist 9.30am; Sung Eucharist 11.00am Sunday Club 12.15-ish, after the end of 11.00 service in term time, for primary age children Choral Evensong 4.00pm on the third Sunday of the month
Tuesday	Morning Prayer 9.30; Rosary Group 1.00; Evening Prayer 5.30
Wednesday	Morning Prayer 9.30; Said Eucharist 11.00; Evening Prayer 5.30
Thursday	Morning Prayer 9.30, Evening Prayer 5.30 Sung Compline 6.30 (during Lent only) Toddler Church 10.30-12.00 in term time (for ages 0-5)
Friday	Morning Prayer 9.30 Said Eucharist 11.00am, with anointing and prayers for healing

And finally...

Please pass any contributions for the magazine to the editor, Jeremy Duncan, or email them to cathedralmagazine@gmail.com. The closing date for inclusion in the May magazine is **19 April**. Thank you!

**St Ninian's Cathedral
of the Scottish Episcopal Church in the
Diocese of St Andrews, Dunkeld and Dunblane.**

We are one of the family of Anglican churches throughout the world.

The cathedral is served by a clergy and lay team:

Bishop

The Right Rev'd Ian Paton
Diocesan Office, 28a Balhousie Street, Perth, PH1 5HJ
Tel: 01738 443173

Provost

The Very Rev'd Dr Stephen Holmes
provost.perth@gmail.com

Assisting Clergy

The Rev'd Philip Francis

The Rev'd Ross Stirling-Young

Lay Reader

Lis Burke

Ordinand

Dr Maihri Greenwood

Cathedral Office

Cathedral Office, North Methven Street, Perth, PH1 5PP

Tel: 01738 632053 Email: office@perthcathedral.co.uk

Visit our website at: www.perthcathedral.co.uk

Registered Scottish Charity SC010656