

Dioceesan News

ISSUE 101: DEC 2010–JAN 2011

Message from the Bishop (and a cat)

A COUPLE of years ago the *Today* programme on Radio 4 ran a series of features on one of their reporters, with donkey (five donkeys in the end, actually), trying to retrace the steps of Mary and Joseph from Nazareth to Bethlehem.

The journey took him ten days and, among other hazards such as the laming of donkeys, he had to negotiate no fewer than six military checkpoints. Who knows how long it took Joseph and Mary. Quite possibly less time.

The Christmas stories in Matthew and Luke are really all about journeys, of varying length and by various people. We've touched on Mary and Joseph, and we can also recall Matthew's story of their trips to Egypt and back again when the coast was clear. Then there's the journey of the shepherds from the fields into Bethlehem. And what of the most celebrated of all – the journey of the Magi, to which we devote a season all of its own: Epiphany. Just about the most popular of Christmas hymns sums all of this up by encouraging us every year to undertake a similar journey of faith, wonder and expectation: *O come, all ye faithful.*

All of these journeys, bar the exhortation in the hymn, come from either St Luke's or St Matthew's Gospel. But there is another Gospel which tells of another Christmas journey, a journey indeed which is the very reason for all of those other ones, including yours and mine. That is St John's Gospel and that is the journey of God the Son right into the midst of the poverty, fragility and vulnerability of our human lives. *The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the*

world... He came to what was his own... And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father's only son, full of grace and truth.

If you were to look closely enough at the Christmas Crib at St Ninian's Pollokshields you would see – if they are sticking to the former Rector's custom (!) – a little cat looking in at the nativity, at the journey of God into human life and experience.

Well, I once received my annual Christmas letter from another, real, cat called Conchita Iprgrave – she lived in Leicester with my friends the Iprgraves, though she seemed to think of herself as the very high-powered head of Conchita Self-Promotion plc. Anyhow this is how 'she' ended that memorable letter:

It has come to my attention that around this time of the year many humans are going on about a small member of their species, first sighted approx. 14,056 years ago (cat time), who did not enjoy the benefits of a central heating system, or even a house. It is difficult to imagine how anybody in a situation like that can have much to offer anybody, but they say he brings light, love and peace. But then, like him, they are humans; so they would say that, wouldn't they?

So we would, and so we do and will always do.

Forget that cat, have a very happy and blessed Christmas and know how that blessedness is rooted precisely in how far God has come (or is it really all that far to come to his own) to love you into the fullness of your humanity.

+Gregor

Also in this issue . . .

Ecumenical covenant is signed

Grassroots Bible study in Africa

Fears over axed asylum contract

Meet the new Vice-Provost

Show me the money

A day on fundraising and church publicity; ideal for gaining new ideas and helping raise your local congregation's profile in the community.

**Saturday 12 February, 10am–3pm
Church of the Holy Name, Cumbernauld**

This event is free and includes lunch. To register contact convener of Education Action Revd Gordon B Fyfe: 01475 673143, gordon.fyfe@virginmedia.com.

Alarm at bid to move asylum seekers

CHURCH groups, volunteers and other agencies working with Glasgow's 1,300 asylum seekers are concerned at the UK Border Agency's decision last month to end its 10-year accommodation and welfare contract with the city council.

The move—which threatens to displace hundreds of families as they become the tenants of new landlords—was described as 'horrendous' by Roman Catholic Archbishop Mario Conti.

At Positive Action in Housing, executive director Robina Qureshi said: "This unnecessary removal will devastate communities and cause unnecessary heartache to people seeking asylum, who have painstakingly put down roots after being completely uprooted in their

countries of origin, and the communities they leave behind."

She added: "The UKBA's decision to end the contract with the Council will have a detrimental impact on people who are successful in their asylum claim. Once a person is granted refugee status, UKBA support and accommodation ends after 28 days. To avoid them becoming homeless, the Council turned the accommodation into a temporary furnished flat under homeless legislation which allows for less disruption. The removal of the contract will lead to increased disruption for refugee families if accommodated by another provider and then having to move to new accommodation when presenting homeless."

Archbishop Conti called on the UK Government for a change of heart.

He said: "The human cost of this decision is horrendous, and will involve children being uprooted from schools where they are flourishing, a return to the anguish of the unknown for people already bearing a heavy burden of fear and the wanton destruction of communities which have grown up in recent years as Glasgow has successfully welcomed asylum seekers and refugees.

"There must be a solution to the financial issues behind this decision which does not involve such human suffering."

Scottish Churches Housing Association chief executive Alastair Cameron has also urged UKBSA to reconsider the decision and return to the negotiating table with the city council, which is seeking additional funding for its service.

Call for hardship grant applications

THERE is still a little money in the St Martin-in-the-Fields Vicar's Relief Fund (VRF) for this year, JENNIFER FITZGIBBON, of Glasgow & Galloway's Church in Society Action Network reports.

As receipt of a grant for next year depends on our having spent this year's allocation, please apply by Christmas.

Guidelines and application forms have been sent to clergy.

The VRF makes grants to 'those who are in need or suffering hardship'.

The aim is to help provide the recipient with ordinary necessities many people take for granted, such as beds and bedding, clothing, domestic appliances, equipment for babies and toddlers.

Many recipients have experienced homelessness, or are threatened with homelessness.

Anyone can refer a case, but the application must be filled out by clergy.

We are sure that there is need out there, especially at this time of year, so if no-one in your congregation knows of someone in need, please do contact local agencies, eg Citizen's Advice Bureau, social work, Women's Aid, and ask for referrals.

Even a small amount of help can make a real difference to those in desperate situations.

The fund is administered in the diocese by Church in Society Action Network.

Contact convener Revd Kenneth Macaulay at office@glasgow.anglican.org.

Opportunity for young singers

ST MARY'S Cathedral Choir are looking for boys and girls aged 7-14 to join their successful ranks of young choristers.

Rehearsals are on a Thursday evening, and the trebles (boys and girls) sing one Sunday morning service and one Sunday evening service each month, as well as the occasional special event (concerts, broadcasts and recordings), so membership of the Cathedral Choir does not need to mean that singers can't sing in their own church too.

In the last session, the Cathedral Choir made four radio broadcasts, appeared on three episodes of BBC TV's *Songs of Praise* and are releasing a CD this Advent.

In the forthcoming session they will record another CD, feature on more radio broadcasts, and sing in Tewkesbury Abbey and Gothenburg Cathedral in Sweden.

A tour to the USA is planned for 2012.

Choristers receive an all-round musical, social and spiritual education, and are trained through the RSCM's Voice for Life scheme; so far the choir have achieved a 100% pass rate in these nationally recognised awards, with most candidates gaining merits or distinctions.

There are social events, too, such as ceilidhs and trips, and general fun is had by all.

If you would like to find out more, contact music director Mr Frikki Walker: music@thecathedral.org.uk or 0141 959 4434.

Eco-Congregation Scotland backs coal plant challenge

ECO-CONGREGATION Scotland is encouraging supporters to donate cash for a legal challenge to the proposal for a new coal-fired power station near Largs.

A spokesperson said: "Ayrshire Power is proposing to build a new coal-fired power station at Hunterston in North Ayrshire. If built it will have devastating environmental impacts, including destroying around 30 hectares of vulnerable inter-tidal habitat, important for rare plants and a wide range of bird species, and cause a huge increase in greenhouse gas emissions.

"In fact, this is probably the single biggest threat to

the climate from a development anywhere in the UK right now.

"A legal challenge is being mounted to the development as the only option to try to remove Hunterston's 'national development' status is through a legal challenge in the courts. You can find out more at www.justgiving.com/Hunterston."

The Hunterston campaign is supported by Planning Democracy, RSPB Scotland, WWF Scotland, Friends of the Earth Scotland, Christian Aid, WDM Scotland, Church of Scotland, Scottish Wildlife Trust and Oxfam.

Covenant seals ecumenical partnership

IRVINE's Episcopal congregation has formally signed a covenant creating a new Local Ecumenical Partnership (LEP) with the Church of Scotland, REVD SANDY MONTGOMERIE reports.

THE Episcopal congregation started in the town in 1960 as a mission supervised by the then-rector of St Ninian's, Troon. Services and Sunday School were held regularly at a Guide hut until 1972 when the building was demolished in the New Town Development. For the next 12 months the congregation travelled by private coach to St Ninian's but preserved their separate identity.

Revd David Goldie was appointed as a full-time mission priest and in September 1973 services restarted in Irvine in St Andrew's Parish Church of Scotland at the invitation of its minister, session and board, the timing of services being dovetailed in with those of the kirk congregation.

The ecumenical link at Irvine has been maintained and developed over the years and a significant addition to the church premises was opened in 1981. This extension added a coffee lounge, two kitchens, vestry rooms and toilets, a meeting room and chapel. The building cost of £95,000 was met by the Diocese and Province. The further cost for furnishings of £18,000 was raised locally and jointly.

Both congregations share the use of the premises and there continues to be joint services between the two congregations at various times in the year.

Both the Guild and the Men's Club, organisations within the church, consist of members from both congregations. There is a strong sense of commitment between each denomination and this has led to a desire to be recognised as an LEP.

A joint Communion service and signing ceremony was held on Sunday November with the other congregations of the North Ayrshire Team - Ardrossan and Dalry - and the Church of Scotland congregation.

The signatories were Irvine and Kilmarnock Presbytery moderator Revd Dr Grant Barclay, Rt Revd Dr Idris Jones, St Andrew's Church of Scotland minister Revd Ian Benzie, and myself on behalf of the

Episcopal congregation.

As a Local Ecumenical Partnership, the two denominations affirm the way ahead for future development.

At this stage it is recognised that the partnership celebrates their shared building arrangement and commitment to working together ecumenically wherever possible.

Cathedral set to welcome the new vice-provost

THE Revd Canon Cedric Blakey is to be the new Vice-Provost of St Mary's Cathedral. Bishop Gregor will join the congregation at the 10.30am service on Sunday 5 December to license him to this new ministry.

Cedric moves to Glasgow from the city of Derby where he has been part of the team at Derby Cathedral and an emergency planning officer with Derbyshire County Council.

He said: "My ministry began in the ex-coalmining community of Cotmanhay, and then there were incumbencies in the Derby city suburbs of Blagreaves and Sinfen Moor, the post-industrial market town of Heanor, a spell as Rural Dean, followed by eight years as full-time chaplain/PA to the Bishop of Derby. I have also experience of ecumenical work, international mission partnership (with the Church of North India), training lay people and new clergy, have done a little broadcasting, and was elected as a member of the General Synod of the Church of England for ten years. I became a member of the college of canons of Derby cathedral in 2003, which has been my 'home church' now for five years.

"Working in the bishop's office I found myself getting involved in disaster management (remember the millennium bug?), and when invited to apply for the post as an emergency planning officer in the County Council I took the challenge. I have enjoyed so much about this activity, not least the opportunity to study for a postgraduate degree in 2008. But equally I have appreciated the fabulous opportunities of being a non-stipendiary priest.

"The household includes three very friendly dogs, cat and rabbit, and a touring caravan. I enjoy long-distance walking and bike rides, music (classical and folk), theatre, photography, gardening, baking, brewing and singing."

Grassroots Bible study

Contextual Bible Study Group member Maureen Russell reports on an exciting visit to South Africa...

IT was a lovely surprise to be invited to a conference in Pietermaritzburg, South Africa.

It was organised by Ujamaa, which is the Department for Theology and Religious Studies at the University of KwaZulu Natal.

I was able to represent our Scottish Contextual Bible Study Group which grew out of our contacts with South Africa.

Revd Canon John Riches began a CBS group in Glasgow which was inspired by a partnership between academics and township people's grassroots Bible Studies in South Africa during the apartheid era. We have been endeavouring to foster grassroots readings of the Bible with all kinds of groups in many parts of Scotland for the past 15 years.

The five-day conference in Pietermaritzburg brought together an international group of scholars, writers, practitioners and students who are involved in reading the Bible in ways that address many of the issues we are facing today. The conference also celebrated the 25th anniversary of the influential Kairos Document, signed by many church leaders and supporters, against the dehumanising

system of apartheid. Though those dark days are gone, the struggle for justice goes on, not only in South Africa but many parts of the world. We believe that the Bible has a prophetic voice and something to say against injustice, oppression from slavery and neglect of the poorest and most vulnerable in society. Their voices need to be heard. God is concerned about the victims of violence, rape, poverty; refugees and the homeless and those who suffer from HIV/AIDS.

The Bible, however, needs to be read in a critical and reflective way in order to discern its profound truths and wisdom in ways that can guide us today.

Harrowing

We heard from a Palestinian Christian who spoke about the harrowing situation in his homeland; and a Pakistani bishop (yes, the Anglican Church is present in Lahore) who speaks out about Muslim fundamentalism.

An Indian Bishop talked about the injustice of India's class systems and the oppression of the Dalits (previously known as the Untouchables).

We also heard lectures from a moderate Muslim scholar and a Reformed Jewish scholar from the United States.

Communities in Brazil were represented as well as other African countries.

Most memorable for me was a visit to a rural community to share a Bible passage with around 36 HIV/AIDS sufferers, mostly women, gathered for their weekly meeting. John's Gospel story of Jesus washing his disciples' feet had been chosen but the organiser had forgotten to bring a Bible!

Undeterred, someone remembered the story, another translated it into Zulu and everyone understood it.

It was a moving experience to hear their interpretation of Jesus' act of service. They felt excluded because of HIV/AIDS but felt Jesus' acceptance and healing touch in their lives.

We ended with them singing so beautifully two African hymns and we all hugged one another. I had met some old friends from my previous visits to South Africa and also made new friends.

We hope to form a network that will help us to keep in touch as we read the Bible in our own contexts and also continue to learn how the Bible speaks to those who have different experiences and come from other backgrounds.

Unlikely secret agent

THIS year's Mandela-Tambo lecture will be given on Wednesday 1 December at 6pm in the Chapel of Glasgow University, The Square, University Avenue, Glasgow, followed by a reception at 7.15pm hosted by the University.

The lecture will be given by Ronnie Kasrils, a founder member of the military wing of the African National Congress who became South Africa's Deputy Minister of Defence following the freedom election in 1994. He subsequently served in other government ministerial posts until 2008.

The theme of the lecture is also the title of his new book, *The Unlikely Secret Agent*, about the underground ANC work of his Kilmarnock-born late wife, Eleanor.

John le Carré describes the book as "a wonderful book about a courageous and extraordinary woman who was highly principled, yet endowed by nature with all the clandestine skills."

To book a place at the Glasgow lecture e-mail b.filling@btinternet.com or phone 0141 649 3831.

There is also a chance to hear the lecture on Tuesday 30 November, 7-8pm, in the Dick Institute Kilmarnock. For the Kilmarnock event contact Arthur West on 0780 393 6228 or arthurwest@btconnect.com.

WE BELIEVE...

Tuesday 7 December, 7.30pm

Bishop Court, Holy Trinity & St Barnabas, Paisley

This informative and popular lecture on the Creed was given by Bishop Gregor in the Galloway area in September and is now available to those who live in the northern end of the diocese.

To register, contact the convener of Education Action, Revd Gordon B Fyfe (01475 673143, gordon.fyfe@virginmedia.com).

Diocesan Synod

DIOCESAN Synod will meet in Bishop Court, Holy Trinity & St Barnabas, Paisley, on Saturday 5 March 2011.

Bishop Idris now Spiritual Director for Cursillo UK

BISHOP Idris Jones is the new Spiritual Director for Cursillo in the UK. He joins Mike Coates who is Secretary for the UK and Val McGavin who is Scotland's representative to the UK Council.

From its Roman Catholic origins, the movement (Cursillo, pronounced 'coor-see-yo', is Spanish for 'little course') has spread to other branches of the Church and is now worldwide. Bishop Idris explains what it's about:

"The Cursillo movement began in the aftermath of the Second World War when two American airmen based in Mallorca were shocked at the lethargy of the church around them. They devised a programme (for men and boys in those early days) to call them back to their baptismal promises, show how it was possible to live out life as a disciple of Jesus, and provided them with a support structure to keep the possibility alive.

"The Cursillo method (because it began in Spain we still use some Spanish words to describe parts of the process) is basically now what it always was – a call to baptismal promises; that is, God's as well as our own; examining how to live out discipleship in our particular environments; and a support structure to keep us going.

"Cursillo is one tool among others that can be of

help in keeping the church focused on mission and outreach. It is only ever used at the direction of the diocesan bishop, at whose disposal the members of the movement give prayer and service in local congregation and in diocesan and Provincial life.

New rector for King's Park

THE congregation, neighbours and friends of St Oswald's, Kings Park, will join together to celebrate the licensing of Revd Ulric Gerry by Bishop Gregor on Saturday 18 December at 11.30am.

Ulric graduated from Bristol University in engineering in 1989. During the next decade he gained a BA Theology and Diploma in Ministry from Oxford University and MA Missiology from All Saints Christian College. For three years he was curate at Hemel Hempstead in St Alban's Diocese before going to work in Africa for ten years.

In Africa he was Crosslinks mission partner in a number of roles; teacher at St Mark's Theological College and chaplain to the English Service at the University of Dar Es Salaam. Latterly, for four years, Ulric served with Abuja Ark International Church, Abuja, Nigeria, before he came with his wife and three children to live in Glasgow's Southside.

News and events in brief . . .

YOU are invited to *Taizé for Advent* - an ecumenical service of prayer and praise with the music of Taizé, followed by fellowship with mulled wine and mince pies. This will be held in St Columba's Church hall, Aubery Crescent, Largs, on Sunday 5 December at 4pm.

ST Mary's Cathedral Choir have just released their new CD, *Listen*, reflecting the eclectic repertoire of music in use St Mary's today and including the recently formed treble line of boys and girls. The CD, £10, can be ordered from the Cathedral Office (0141 339 6691 / office@thecathedral.org.uk), or online (www.thecathedral.org.uk). It will also be on sale before and after services.

LIGHT in the Winter Darkness is an Advent quiet morning at Elshieshields, Lochmaben, on Saturday 11 December beginning at 10.30am (coffee from 10 am) and concluding with an act of worship at 12.30pm. Bring a packed lunch and stay on for a shared time of fellowship.

It is led by Stephen Ballard and Rosie Rutherford. Contact Ann Shukman on ann.shukman@virgin.net or call 01387 810280.

ALL are invited to Silent Prayer at Elshieshields (see contact details above) on the first Saturday of the month, 9.30-10.30am (the January meeting will be on Saturday 8th), following the Christian meditation tradition of John Main OSB.

ST Andrew's Church, Ardrossan, will again be holding a Christmas Quiet Day on Wednesday 22 December, from 11am to 4pm. This is an opportunity to escape the commercial pressures of the festive season, to enjoy a peaceful, and relaxing time, and to find the real meaning of Christmas. A warm welcome awaits with quiet music, candles, peace, space.

AN action guide for churches on ethical investment is now available to download from www.neiw.org/church-guide. If you

would like a printed copy contact Adam Ognall at Adam.Ognall@uksif.org or call 0207 749 9951.

REV D Paul Fletcher was instituted at St Mark's East Kilbride on 23 October.

Next issue . . .

ITEMS for the February 2011 issue may be submitted up to **Monday 17 January** as ordinary prose (**not** leaflets, adverts, posters or PDFs, please) to editor Susi Cormack Brown, c/o Diocesan Centre, 5 St Vincent Place, Glasgow G1 2DH, or dns@episcopalglasgow.co.uk. *Diocesan News Service is published 10 times per year by the Scottish Episcopal Church, United Diocese of Glasgow and Galloway (Scottish Charity Number: SC013925). Views expressed are not necessarily those of the editor.*