

THE SCOTTISH EPISCOPAL CHURCH

A Member of the Anglican Communion

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SUNDAY WORSHIP AT ST JOHN'S RESUMES AT 11.30AM ON
28 MARCH, PALM SUNDAY, WITH LIVE-STREAMING ON YOUTUBE.

(REMEMBER TO PUT YOUR CLOCKS FORWARD)

For details please contact St. John's Secretary.

ST MICHAEL'S WILL REOPEN FOR WORSHIP ON
4 APRIL, EASTER SUNDAY, AT 9.45AM.

SEC EUCHARIST is available each Sunday at 11am
www.scotland.anglican.org/broadcast-sunday-worship

The truth will set you free

This week I've been working on a recording of a song by John Bell, which meditates on a statement which Jesus addresses to a group of Jews who believed in him: 'If you continue in my word, you are truly my disciples; and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free.' (John 8:32)

In the public sphere, much of what is discussed and hotly debated revolves around truth and lies. Personally, I now find it almost impossible not to question the 'real' motives behind any political pronouncement or critique. With a parliamentary election looming, credibility is stretched to breaking point, in the face of the seismic pressures upon ambitious politicians to prove their effectiveness in wounding the opposition, even if it means that lies are carefully and professionally cloaked in virtue. The Trumpian era has laid bare the dreadful reality that wielding power with an arsenal of 'alternative facts' is no longer the laughing matter it once was. The reality is that in an increasing number of countries, including our own, political life often seems to treat truth as an inconvenient optional extra. Some politicians survive – even glory in – blatant lies which once would have condemned them to disgrace and oblivion. We're not naïve enough to suppose that politics was ever totally 'clean' but these days lies seem to be considered an acceptable practice.

Inevitably we are all contaminated by this, because as our trust and our faith is betrayed, so we can become disillusioned, suspicious and cynical... or at least I know I do. There's a challenge for us here, as people who long to walk in the light of Christ – who, among other things, called himself *the truth*.

Truth is an important word for the Gospel of John: it appears frequently in Jesus' *Farewell Discourses* – which we could describe as offering his hopes and aspirations for his followers. We are taken aback when Pilate asks Jesus a poignant question in John 18:38. 'What is truth?'. It is as though he understands that truth itself is under threat in the condemnation of he who somehow embodies it.

The emblem of the Anglican Communion is the Compass Rose, symbolising the four corners of the earth, encircled with the words, written in Greek, 'The truth will set you free'. If this rightly makes us proud to be Anglican, our pride might be tempered by the fact that the phrase is also carved in stone in the Original Headquarters Building of the CIA – but maybe that's being too cynical..

Truth, of course, means as much or as little as we want it to. Definitions of truth are slippery and wide-ranging. With the great festival of life that is Easter upon us again, I've been thinking of it as a beacon of truth - the ultimate 'ground' of what we can depend on – the annual reminder that whatever else happens, the immutable love of Christ remains true, and there is a blessed freedom in that.

Grace and peace to you

Steve

Teaching - and Learning - in Jordan

Margaret Hustler recalls her experience of living and working in the desert

In September 2007, I set off with my youngest son to take up a contract to work as a Director of a large International School in Amman in Jordan. For the next three years I was to live just over thirty miles from places that I had wanted to visit since being a teenager, Jerusalem and Bethlehem, but during those three years, I never did make that final part of that journey. It proved to be an example of the truism of the journey being far more important than the destination.

Prior to 2007, I had been a Headmistress of two different boarding schools over a period of eighteen years, so that part of the job did not seem to be daunting; it was just the location that would be new and challenging. I had spent a week in August 2007 "training" in the Lebanon to understand the unique system that was used in each of the company's schools across the Middle East. Here, my journey of learning began. 2007 was the summer after Israel had fired rockets into Beirut and taking the coast road to Sidon the road bridges were still in ruins. The local academics needed very little excuse to depart from the training session to make quite plain what should happen to their aggressors. The detail was so graphic that I did stand

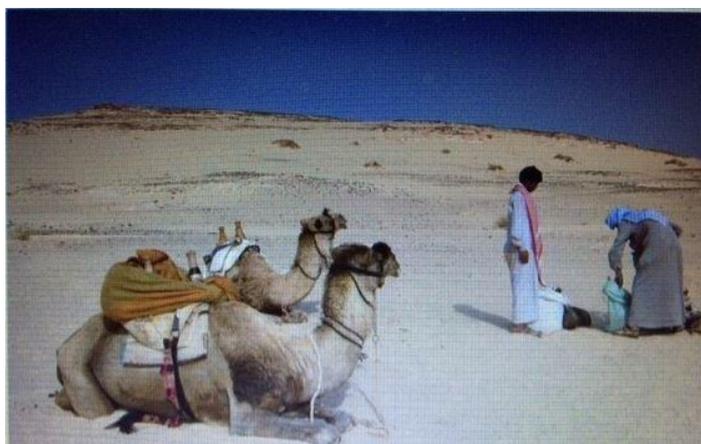
up to be counted after the session, attempting to take them to task. In return, I was given many angry looks of puzzlement at my misunderstanding.

Arriving in Amman, the phrase I heard most often in reply to what were probably naive questions was "Dr Hustler, you don't understand - let me explain". Many of my staff were displaced Palestinians. A supervisor who still had the keys to his former garage business hanging up in his office, the office manager who had family in Gaza and described it as a pressure cooker, the lawyer who could only point out the lights of his true home in Jericho and the teacher who still had relatives in those Lebanese Camps.

At a different level, I had to adapt my ways of working: from a Head's Office where entry would be by at least a knock on the door or through an appointment prebooked with my Secretary, to the Jordanian way which was always to have the door open and petitioners just came in, speaking mid flow of their grievance, and even if there were three petitioners in front of them they would just up their voice level to get a hearing. Bit by bit, I got them around to my English oddness and whilst the door was left open, I only allowed one complainant at a time.

The end of the first term, when reports had been issued, gave vent to incipient hysteria though. The day following the pupil report cards kept me on my toes, as parent after parent made contact, either in person or over the telephone, to encourage me to just "push" their child's marks up a little. Flowers and chocolates and other local delicacies were produced to aid me in my decision as well as the offer of the use of a fully staffed villa in Sharm El-Sheikh for the private use of me and my son; the offer was not repeated after that first term. Many parents assured me that they had had *such* a useful relationship with my predecessor.

Over the three years, I came to love both the country and the people; and I did journey all over the Kingdom. But I only gazed across the Dead Sea and the Sea of Galilee to the Holy Land itself, feeling unable to travel to where so many of my colleagues were unable to go. The journey of learning was more significant than a mere tourist trip over the mountains. The journey alone taught me tolerance and the precious gift of living in another person's culture and really "seeing" from another's point of view, as well as just how supportive friendship across former divides can be. I still miss my desert home.



Who were the British slave owners?

By Chris Smout

In 1833, British colonial slavery was abolished – a remarkable triumph for the anti-slavery movement, and in many ways a turning point in the emergence of a modern ideal of racial and human equality. But in order for this to happen, it was agreed by Parliament to compensate the owners for loss of 800,000 slaves, and the Government borrowed £20 million to pay them off. Many thought that ownership of people was so morally disgusting that nothing should have been paid, but more (or at least more MPs)

considered that confiscation of property in any form was also totally unacceptable, and a majority would only vote for abolition if compensation was part of the package. When in 1946 the mines were nationalised, the coal owners were compensated – it was the same principle.

The sum involved in 1833 was huge by the standards of the day: it is difficult to find exact modern equivalence, but on price inflation alone it would amount to about £2bn today: as a proportion of the British economy it would be closer to £20bn. It was an unprecedented challenge to the government to borrow so much, and a triumph of the civil service to deliver the money to those compensated, speedily and without serious disagreement. The money was provided, after competitive negotiations, by a syndicate led by Rothschilds, the merchant bank. The process left a very large body of information, from which historians at University College London have constructed a data base and about which Nicholas Draper has written a fascinating book.¹

Almost half the larger slave owners (those who got more than £500) were absentees living in Britain, leaving the sordid business of running their West Indian plantations to local overseers. Some of them were already rich men who now found themselves even richer. The largest single award was made to James Blair, MP for Wigtownshire and owner of Penninghame estate, who received £83,000 for 1,598 slaves. Very large awards were also made, for example, to John Gladstone, father of William Gladstone the great Victorian prime minister, and to Neill Malcolm, who used the proceeds to build himself an enormous house (now ruined) in Argyll and was notorious as a clearing landlord of his crofting tenants.

About 40 peers and about 70 baronets appear in the compensation records, as do about 50 Members of Parliament (or their close families) sitting in the Parliament that approved the measure.

But not everyone was wealthy. Thousands of small owners lived in the West Indies where resident whites had slaves as servants, but several hundred small owners lived in Britain. Among these, Scots were disproportionately represented, and some were quite poor. One woman who lived in Inverness wrote to explain that she had been dependent on the charity of friends since the death of her father in British Guiana, and she claimed compensation for a single slave whom she had bought there as an investment with 'the only money I possessed'. Two ladies in Perthshire shared a single slave whom they had inherited. Edinburgh had about 50 slave-owners, many of them categorised as 'widows and orphans', who had inherited a few slaves whom they rented out to provide an income. One of the results of the decision to award compensation was to bring forward as claimants many who had previously kept the source of their income rather quiet, as the growing anti-slavery movement made ownership socially disreputable.

A large number of Anglican clergy, 108 in all (about one per cent of the total body of parsons), were involved either as claimants on their own account as absentee slave owners, or sometimes as executors for relations who had been left slaves in a planter's will. One such executor was the Bishop of Exeter. The involvement of the Church of England was not surprising, as many clergy were younger sons of the landed gentry, who had either invested in plantations or were themselves erstwhile merchants who had bought land. By contrast only a handful of clergy in Scotland were involved, including the 'minister and elders' of Kilmarnock, who claimed a share of the compensation for 52 slaves left under the will of Thomas Paterson. The Scottish Episcopalian Bishop of Aberdeen was involved as an executor for William Lambie, who left 160 slaves in his estate.

It is not an edifying story, but it is important that it should be told.

¹*The Price of Emancipation: Slave-Ownership, Compensation and British Society at the End of Slavery.* ISBN 9781107696563

Rambling again on the Coastal Path from Pittenweem to St Monans

Richard Ely notices wayside signs of the change in season

The countryside is moving from winter into spring. The stems of earlier growth have broken in the strong winds or withered to brown, but the display of yellow flowers is like sun shining through.

The gorse is the most colourful feature of the walk in late March. The yellow flowers in contrast to the very tired, khaki foliage will soon be replaced by a cleaner hue. Planted daffodils cheer up the beige of last year's growth with the buds promising more displays.



The yellow flowers of the lesser celandines are poking through in small colourful rafts but they are struggling to stretch above the debris of last year in many places. Their petals have an almost glass like quality making their appearance glint as you walk by. Colt's foot is opening up to reveal a similar strong yellow to the celandines but less

brash, with a russet/red shade on the outer petals. Although the plants are small the flowers stems are held triumphantly above the rosette of leaves similar to a fountain. All this yellow blossom will attract the bumble bees now darting about.

Colt's foot



Lesser celandines



Finally, a plant conundrum: I think the green rounded leaves belong to common scurvygrass and although the picture shows buds but on inaccessible parts of the cliff below the path it is in bloom and my book says that should happen in May. Any corrections welcome!



Season of Pilgrimage 2021

Whanne that April with his shoures sote
The droughte of March hath perced to the rote.
And smale foules maken melodie,
That slepen alle night with open eye,
So priketh hem nature in her corages;
Than longen folk to gon on pilgrimages.²

The dates – COVID permitting - of the St Andrews Diocesan Pilgrimage this year are 5 – 10 September and it will once again be a staged walk along the Fife Pilgrim Way from Culross to St Andrews. Should you prefer the assistance of wheels, a guided pilgrimage by car and bike is planned from 6 – 10 September along the Three Saints Way from Killin to St Andrews. Further details of both will be advertised on the church website.

² *Lines from the Prologue in Geoffrey Chaucer's Canterbury Tales*

Notes from St John's Vestry

The Vestry feels that it would be helpful to include in the newsletter any main points that have been discussed during the year rather than waiting for the annual meeting, so we will include this item from time to time. Much of the business of the Vestry is fairly routine, looking at finance, worship and the building but the following are recent items.

- The church's constitution dates back to 1985 and needs revising. An amended version based on the diocesan model constitution will be brought to a congregational meeting after Easter.
- The Great House is now vacant and should be able to replace our temporary rectory in the next few months.
- For those who want more information, approved minutes will be on the internal church notice board in future after adoption.

From the editor.

Thank you to all our contributors. News and views for the next issue should once again be sent to me: janet.bulloch@btinternet.com and these are invited for 16 April.