

CHURCH NEWS — NOVEMBER 2021

THE SCOTTISH EPISCOPAL CHURCH

A Member of the Anglican Communion

ELIE:

ST. MICHAEL & ALL ANGELS

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SUNDAY SERVICES – HOLY COMMUNION

ST MICHAEL'S - 9.45AM.

ST JOHN'S - 11.30AM

Sunday Worship is also currently live-streamed from St John's -

For details please contact St. John's Secretary or visit
www.eastneuk-episcopal.co.uk

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

Accidental Saints

The end of October brings the change of the clocks. Personally, I never look forward to the nights drawing in, and the thought of the long winter ahead – though I realise others rather like cosying down and wrapping up – Anne is one of them. It's a jolly good job we're not all the same (a sentence we could have at the start of any article or sermon!)

I'm interested in the way that this darkening time coincides with the season of remembering those whom we miss. Absent friends, partners, parents and family we have lost are brought to mind in the annual services of All Saints, All Souls and Remembrance. As the leaves change colour and fall around us, we are confronted again, without any need to think on it consciously, of the ebb and flow of the natural cycles of life, including our own. In our rituals we do what we can to make peace with our losses and our own progress through life. We are both full of longing, and duty bound to bow our heads before God and express our heartfelt thanks for those whom we have loved and by whose lives of inspiration, service and sacrifice we have been blessed.

Saints, as the New Testament teaches us, are not merely stained-glass heroes of the past. They are the people who God has used to express the divine purpose in the world – often in humble and unpublicised service – which is as acceptable to God as the exploits of those whom we regularly revere. We can all think of personal 'saints' who in unassuming ways, have influenced our lives for good.

A few years ago I met an extraordinary woman from Denver, Colorado – the Lutheran pastor of a church called 'House for All Sinners and Saints'. Her 2015 book *Accidental Saints* introduces us to some of the *House for All* parishioners and the services that constitute their life together. Organised around her congregation's practices during the liturgical year, the book moves from cut-out saint cookies for All Saints Day, to the Advent service of remembrance for the children killed in the Sandy Hook school shooting, to the funeral of a young gay man who committed suicide just before Lent. "All the saints I've known have been accidental ones," she says. The quality of sainthood is located not in "our ability to be saintly," she writes, "but rather God's ability to work through sinners." Rather than seeing the Beatitudes, which constitute the Gospel reading for All Saints Day, as a list of conditions for blessedness, we should see them as performative—as the "pronouncement of blessing [that] confers the blessing itself." For the avoidance of doubt, Bolz-Weber's version of faith still constitutes a high bar: "a life bound by ritual and community, by repetition, by work, by giving and receiving, by mandated grace." It's the understanding of saintliness that she wants to broaden, to include even those of us who have little sense of our worth.

It's not hugely surprising that the church high days of All Saints and All Souls have tended to merge together in most people's minds – and probably it's a good thing. Perhaps the only real saints are the accidental ones anyway.

Grace and peace to you in the long winter nights.

Steve

Harvest Supper

The lower Dreel Hall in Anstruther provided a perfect venue for our socially distanced Harvest Supper on October 4th, when twenty-five people from both churches enjoyed a fish supper from the Anstruther Fish Bar, followed by delicious desserts provided by the Events Group. Sitting comfortably full of fish and chips, chocolate and lemon cake, meringues, strawberries and apple cake we were next entertained by various talents from our congregation - Janet Bulloch sang a cappella presenting us with a fine comic song, and Jane Forbes expressed her thoughts about the evening in a delightful poem. Steve's rendition of Will ye go Lassie Go {Wild Mountain Thyme} accompanying himself on guitar led to a room full of song, which switched to laughter and furrowed brows as we tackled Chris Smout's new Quiz and broadened our minds. Plenty of warm conversation and convivial entertainment meant a happy evening for all.

Many thanks to everyone who helped set up, for organising the delivery of Suppers, for baking desserts and serving, and for clearing away at the end – in particular Elizabeth, David, Jane, Graham, Anne-Marie, Janet and Liz.

Liz Rogers *on behalf of the Events Group*

J F S Gordon (1821-1904)

During the first half of the 19th century, St John's Chapel emerged as a highly prestigious and influential place of worship. When the church was built in 1809, Pittenweem was one of only two Episcopalian congregations in Fife, the other being in St Andrews, where a purpose-built church was not erected until the 1860s. Funded by aristocratic families (notably the Lindsays of Balcarres and the Erskines of Kellie / Cambo) and headed up from the Priory by the bishop of Argyle, Ross & Moray and the Isles (David Low), St John's Chapel was for several decades a miniature cathedral church. Because of Bishop Low's diocesan commitments, services were normally conducted by curates and such a prestigious church had little difficulty in attracting dynamic young clergymen to do the job. Among them was a young priest, J F S Gordon, well known to historians for his 4-volume *Ecclesiastical Chronicle of Scotland*.

James Gordon was born at Keith, Banffshire, and graduated from St Andrews in 1840, proceeding to MA two years later. Called to a clerical career, he was quickly drawn into the orbit of Bishop Low in Pittenweem, where he occupied the post of curate for about two years. During that time, he lived in the Great House and enjoyed access to Bishop Low's growing library. He accumulated detailed knowledge of Pittenweem present and past, not just from written documents, but also from long conversations with local people, much of which fed later into the *Ecclesiastical Chronicle*. He developed a strong friendship with the churchwarden, Matthew Forster Conolly (1789-1877), and this looks to have strongly influenced his development as a historian.

Besides being a banker, lawyer and Town Clerk of Anstruther, Conolly was a knowledgeable and readable local historian, remembered particularly for his *Biographical Dictionary* (1866) and *Fifiana* (1869). He lived with his wife and family, after 1829, in Chesterhill, Anstruther Wester (now, very fittingly, the residence of the Smouts). As well as owning property in Anstruther Easter High Street, he also had a place in the country, Gillingshill House near Arncroach, whither the family repaired during the summer months.

After serving his clerical apprenticeship in Pittenweem, Rev. James Gordon moved to the fashionable Episcopal church of St Andrew-by-the-Green in Glasgow in 1844, where he remained until his retirement in 1890.

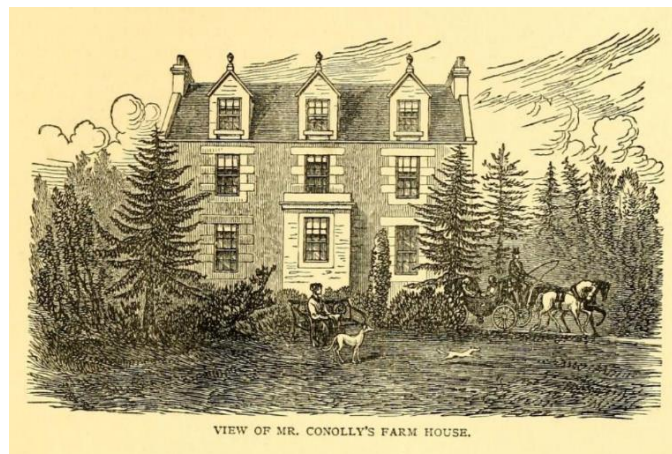


St Andrew-by-the Green, Glasgow

On 21 April 1846 he married Elspeth Murdoch, daughter of the Rev. John Murdoch, incumbent of Trinity Episcopal Church, Keith,¹ whom he had known as a child, and together they settled into parochial life in Glasgow, bringing up four children and campaigning energetically for the improvement of housing for the poor. Gordon became something of a pioneer in the clearance of ruinous tenements and slums, getting actively involved in the movement leading to the Glasgow Improvements Act of 1866.

In February 1862, Elspeth died at the age of 44 of 'phthisis', an infection of the mouth, leaving James Gordon with four children to care for. His thoughts swiftly turned back to the Conollys in Pittenweem and, more particularly, to Matthew's elder daughter Janet, now approaching 40 and unmarried. The wedding took place in St John's Chapel on 26 April 1864, conducted by Rev. James Crabb. Two years later, when Crabb left the rectorship of St John's, Gordon applied for the position. Vestry was split evenly 4-4 into two camps, one supporting Gordon, led by Conolly, and one supporting P H Monypenny, led by Sir Coutts Lindsay of Balcarres. Monypenny won by the chairman's casting vote. Gordon threatened to take Vestry to court on the grounds that the chair had voted improperly, but Monypenny was favoured by the bishop and prevailed. Having the churchwarden's son-in-law as rector was perhaps not a good idea.

Over the next dozen years, until Matthew Conolly's death in 1877, the Gordons paid regular summer visits to Janet's family in Gillingshill, facilitated, no doubt, by the arrival of the railway in Pittenweem and Anstruther in 1863.



«At Gillingshill House, week-day evening services are frequently conducted by clergymen of sundry denominations; and besides the instruction imparted by the preachers to their audiences, the psalmody is accompanied by the performances of Mrs. Gordon, Mr. Conolly's daughter, on the organ, an instrument rarely to be seen in the district.»

Gordon's family association with Matthew Conolly may have fired his interest in antiquarian research. The first volume of his *Ecclesiastical Chronicle* appeared in 1867 and the four-volume set was completed in 1875. Numerous other publications in church history followed, related principally to Glasgow and to Gordon's home area of Moray. The fact that his father-in-law 'held Conservative opinions', as his obituarist wrote, perhaps contributed to Gordon's abandonment of social activism in Glasgow in favour of an almost obsessive preoccupation with ritual and High Church anglicanism. He ran into serious controversy for his ritualism and was seen as something of an eccentric. As he grew older, he was drawn into Masonic activities, becoming, after his retirement in 1890, Chaplain to Lodge St John in Kilwinning (Ayrshire), where he died in 1904. His funeral, 'which was a public one and of a Masonic nature, took place in Baith Cemetery ... and was very largely attended.'

Gordon's second wife, Janet (*née* Conolly), died of pneumonia at 83 Elderslie Street (off Sauchiehall Street), Glasgow in 1895, at the age of 68. She had no children but enjoyed the company of her

¹ *East of Fife Record*, July 3 1846



Matthew Conolly (1789-1877)

younger sister, Margaret, who left Anstruther to live with the Gordons after the death of their father in 1877.

Shortly before her own death in 1914, Margaret donated, in memory of her father, a double panelled stained-glass window in the west wall of St John's church, representing St Margaret and St Adrian.

Anthony Lodge

Green matters

Ring the bell for climate change! Both before and since SEI registered with *Eco-Congregation Scotland* in 2019, there has been an active conversation at Student Chapter about the climate emergency and the role of church, whether as a prayerful body or as an institution with plant and staff and all the related climate impacts that business choices imply. For people in training for ministry, with imminent responsibilities in charges, these issues are challenging. Synod has this year given a clear steer to the SEC about being carbon neutral by 2030, but the toolkit of practical suggestions for change offered by those who have since been working on these matters will land in different and sometimes uncomfortable ways with vestry groups across the church.

These are big issues which the upcoming climate conference, COP26, will push more and more into our consciousness. They are issues of deep faith, formational issues for those in training for ministry, and they challenge the ways in which we think about our world, our Creator, and all of the creatures with which we share our common home. The world-wide Anglican Communion has this prayerful focus, and within it SEI seeks to make its distinctive contribution. Creational issues figure in our curriculum, both academic and formational; for staff at SEI, these are living concerns for both reflection and action; students are actively engaged in both debate and process. Our Mission and Ministry programme this year, in which all students participate, will directly address the 5th mark of mission - *safeguarding the integrity of creation, sustaining and renewing the life of the earth*.

Accordingly, SEI has now sought a *membership* relationship with Eco-Congregation Scotland as we explore together, students and staff, the vocational and formational questions which are posed by the threats to our planet, and work out our response in prayer, worship and action. Through this relationship, we will share ideas, share resources, develop our thinking and help make a difference. They, and we, are excited by the opportunities for working in partnership. Central to this is our prayer life, the way we talk with God, the way liturgical practice expresses and shapes our faith.

Our final morning prayer at Orientation Week followed the new *Season of Creation* liturgy being trialled by the SEC. As an introduction to Morning Prayer the 'climate bell' was rung. The eyes of the World will be on Glasgow in November during COP26. The Glasgow City crest has a bird, a tree, a fish and a bell on it. The ancient rhyme about the crest was recited and then the new version that has been reframed for COP26. The climate bell was rung for alarm, for justice and for praise. Thanks for the gift of the bell go to the Revd David Coleman, Eco Chaplain, *Eco-Congregation Scotland*.

The liturgy included antiphons from the book of Genesis (1:1,31) and the opening from the Gospel of St John (1:1-5). Psalm 8 was said, the conclusion was taken from the book of Job (12:7-10) and this

was followed by the Benedictus antiphons from the Gospel of St John (1:3). Whilst many of us want to know what 'actions' we should take in tackling the climate emergency, we must not lose sight of the spiritual and scriptural aspects of our faith when caring for God's creation.

Here's the tree: it's time to grow

Here's the bird: it's time to fly

Here's the fish: it's time to swim

Here's the bell: it's time to ring.

Pat Ellison and Val Cameron,
(student reps EcoCongregation Scotland)

Article taken (by Janis Irvine) from the October newsletter of the Scottish Episcopal Institute, the body responsible for training ordinands and others for ministry within the Scottish Episcopal Church.

"Do this in remembrance of me." Some thoughts for Remembrance-tide.

"Do this in remembrance of me" stands at the centre of our eucharistic prayer. Remembrance here is not so much the chanting Guy Fawkes' nursery rhyme, although there was treason and plot, but the Hebrew sense of bringing into the present. The bread and wine of the eucharist, the flower of those Flanders' fields, do precisely that. The eucharist is not the final meal of a fallen warrior, the bread a symbol of a broken body, the wine a symbol of spilt blood. The bread and the wine are remembered, brought into the present, as sacraments, icons of the way of the Crucified God now in our world of space and time. The poppy, the names on war memorials, the bread and wine on our altar, all serve as a poignant reminder of the sacrifices made for us

In the two minutes' silence do remember. Amongst my thoughts will be not only the dead, but the also the living. Two of them I never met, one I shared a brief conversation with, one Jane and I got to know in Wester Ross one Easter holiday, and one I have known since he was about 3 years old.

I will think of Ray: a young officer, he was serving in Northern Ireland, a bomb had been planted, he carried the bomb away from people, it went off, he now has no sight, no hands. He did his duty to preserve life; he paid a price that will last him all his days.

I will remember a former Cathedral Chorister. As CIC Far East Sir Philip Christison received the Japanese surrender in what is now called Indonesia. The Japanese General was recognised by Phil. In our ever increasingly small world they had trained together, ironically in the British Army in the 1930s. "No interpreter," Phil ordered. "My shame is so great," the Japanese general said, "that I wish to surrender not my army sword, but my family's Samurai sword." About 30 years ago Phil decided to return the Samurai to the General's family. The Japanese Comrades Association hailed him as a man of great honour. Less well-known is that fact that Phil's only son had been killed in Burma during the Second World War. "I cannot forget, but I do forgive," Phil once said. I like to think that young chorister learned some of the meaning of discipleship and the cost of forgiveness, whilst in the choir stalls. His memory is a hallowed one, his memorial is in St Mary's Cathedral's south aisle.

I will also think of a horribly hot June afternoon when I was privileged to stand on a makeshift parade ground in Camp Bastion with soldiers of many nations and faiths and none, as a vigil service was held for one of their own. His CO spoke movingly about his comrade in arms. Sean was the name of the dead soldier. I will be remembering him and his wife and family.

Within days there would be another Vigil Service at Bastion, this time for that CO who had spoken so powerfully: Rupert was his name. I'll remember him and his wife and family too.

And finally crammed into the stillness of 2 minutes will be John James or JJ. He did not follow his brother or sister into the Cathedral Choir as a chorister, but he was very much part of the Cathedral family. As a member of the RM reserve he served in Helmand, was seriously injured by an IED exploding, some of his anatomy was left behind in Afghanistan. After many, many operations JJ is now well on the road to recovery, including appearing in BBC's "Strictly Come Dancing" last year. JJ dancing is testimony to the surgeon's healing knife and the so many times he had to return to the operating theatre.

Five names whom I will remember. You will know of others to recall.

The Baptist pointed to the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world, who too was a victim of treason and plot. We must do the same. The Lamb of God, as he did at Calvary, is now doing in Afghanistan and in countries which know no peace, in the civil war in Syria, the divisions within the Holy Land, to name but a few, and ever shall do: the Lamb of God holds all of us in his hands, hands that still bear the marks of the nails. To him we pray this Remembrance Day and every day:

O LAMB of GOD, that takest away the sin of the world, grant us thy peace.

Graham Forbes

Remembrance Sunday 14th November 2021

Contributions, long or short, for the next *Church News* (a double-issue to cover December and January) should be sent to ra.lodge@btinternet.com by 15 November. Don't be shy about coming forward. Contributions from friends in Elie would be a great enrichment.