

JANUARY NEWS FROM SEI

December Residential Weekend: The second residential weekend of the 2019-2020 academic year took place in early December. Students were joined by the Revd Liz O’Ryan (shown far right), Rector of Holy Trinity Haddington (Diocese of Edinburgh), in her capacity as Diocesan Advisor to one of them; by the Revd Steve Butler, Rector of St James, Leith (Diocese of Edinburgh), who led a splendid session on ‘the congregation as choir’; Mrs Jan Whiteside, Convenor of the Clergy Personnel Committee, who discussed the vital work being done in response to the outcomes of the Clergy Wellbeing Survey; and Mrs Diane McWilliam of the Cinnamon Network who led a fascinating session on churches and community engagement as part of Dr Tiplady’s *Developing Ministry and Mission in Context* module.



The student Worship Group led by Dr Lisa Curtice regaled us with beautiful Advent worship throughout the weekend, including setting out a carpet Labyrinth in the Oratory on the Saturday, around which they built a meditative act of worship. Along with the Chaplain, the Revd Canon Graham Taylor, they also guided us skilfully through the 1970 Liturgy on Sunday morning, complete with a responsorial psalm cantored by David Todd, the lighting of the Advent candles of hope and peace, and a thoughtful sermon from second year Lay Reader candidate, Sandra Wright. Earlier that day, second year ordinand Lesley Penny (below) led a superb Bible Study on ‘Genesis 12 and a covenant with Abraham’. All in all, a weekend about inner and outer journeys.

SEI Training Fund: Huge thanks to St David’s Royston Mains (Diocese of Edinburgh) for donating the magnificent offering uplifted at the recent institution of their new Priest-in-Charge, the Revd Andrew Bain, to the Fund. The Diocese of Glasgow and Galloway and Canon Robin Paisley likewise gave a generous donation, for which we thank them warmly. Large consignments of theology books continue to be delivered to the GSO and sold to students at residential weekends, and we thank the donors of these: the Rt Revd Dr Brian Smith, the Rt Revd Dr Idris Jones, the Revd David Dalglish and several anonymous givers.



SEI-SURCC: The SEI community has been enriched since the start of this academic year by the presence in its midst of two candidates from the United Reformed Church, both from the Northern Synod (which comprises seventy congregations in the North East of England). Roberta and Louise divide their time between SEI and the Scottish United Reformed and Congregational College based in Glasgow. In the latter they study alongside a third new URC candidate, Lesley Thomson, who is at the University of Glasgow, and fourth year student, Susan Henderson, currently stationed in Morningside United Church, Edinburgh. The photo shows from left to right: Roberta Ritson, Louise Sanders, Lesley Thomson and Susan Henderson. Louise writes:



‘Before I began my studies in September I had very little knowledge of the SEC having spent the last 35 years living in England. But having been born 46 years earlier in Stirling Royal Infirmary, it has been lovely ‘coming home’ to study at the Scottish United Reformed and Congregational College (SURCC) and the Scottish Episcopal Institute (SEI).

I was slightly daunted when I arrived at Kinnoull Monastery for Orientation Week at the end of August. I had just relocated from Norfolk to Northumberland with my husband (who is a URC minister) and family 10 days earlier, and my life seemed to be an endless stream of new faces and experiences. But everyone was extremely friendly and welcoming, and in no time at all there was no difference between 1st year students, 2nd year students, SEC or URC!

Now, more than 3 months later, the first module is completed (and passed!), the second is submitted for marking and the third well under way! I’ve surprised myself how much I am enjoying the academic side of things, especially since I left school at 15 and have undertaken very little study since then. Being challenged to think and reflect on how or why we do things in ‘the church’ has given me much food for thought, and I look forward to being led further by the Holy Spirit along this journey of discovery.

Being part of two different learning communities is not without its challenges at times, but it is also a very unique way of learning about different denominations, which in many ways are very similar but in others very different. The best thing is we all worship one God, Creator, Redeemer and Friend, and learning different ways to bring the good news to more people is amazing.’

Louise Sanders

Congratulations to Dr Jaime Wright, second year Mixed Mode student, on being awarded the degree of PhD for her thesis entitled ‘Science-Religion-and-Literature: Literary Approaches to the Field of Science-and-Religion with Margaret Atwood’s MaddAddam Trilogy as a Case Study’. Dr Wright hopes to keep a foot in the science-and-religion research scene even as she proceeds towards ordination in the SEC. She is seen here (on the right of the photograph) celebrating after her Viva with one of her supervisors, the Revd Dr Alison Jack, Assistant Principal of New College.



Recently Jaime and another SEI student, Dr Josh Cockayne, participated in this year’s meeting of the American Academy of Religion. She writes: ‘Not only was it beneficial to connect with scholars outwith the European academic scene, but it was also exciting to be able to attend a conference that brought together such a diverse wealth of academic religious scholarship and took place under the warm sun of Southern California!’