



## DECEMBER 2020 NEWS FROM SEI

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*This edition of the Newsletter focuses upon the theme of 'Pastoral Care and Governance in a time of Covid.' Members of Institute Council (SEI's governing body), staff and current students contribute articles on the ways in which the life of the SEI community has been guided and nurtured during this 'virtual' term, and of the ways in which oversight and pastoral care will continue to be offered as long as these unusual conditions prevail.*

*First 'Governance'. Bishop Andrew, the new College of Bishops representative on the Council, reflects upon attending November's Council meeting, and then the Revd Elaine Garman, a member of Council, reports on the business of that Zoom gathering.*



**Joining the SEI Council:** 'The College of Bishops appointed me to SEI Council as their representative and I attended my first SEI Council meeting in early November 2020,' writes Bishop Andrew. 'I approached this meeting with many questions about the governance role of the Council and also how best to act as a College of Bishops representative. Formation and training for ordinands and candidates for lay readership are vital activities for the ongoing health and development of the Scottish Episcopal Church: how do we form and grow the leaders of church communities in the years ahead of us? The Bishops discuss this frequently in our College meetings, so I was more than happy to assist, as I am able, on the Council. I have no formal background in education, but hopefully bring a range of perspectives on formation, training and strategic planning.'

'The Council meeting was an energetic and engaged meeting using 'Zoom' as so much of our life has become as the pandemic restrictions continue to change the way the SEC operates. SEI is unusual in SEC 'board' level structures in not requiring diocesan representation. The Council is made up of individuals in the SEC with experience and/or knowledge that can be helpful in guiding SEI. The membership of SEI can change as the needs of the Institute develop. All of the staff of SEI attend the meetings, and their expertise was evident in their reports and firm grasp of the day-to-day life and development of the Institute.'

'I was particularly struck by the maturity and depth of the Council discussions. In the five years since SEI was formed to deliver theological education for the SEC and URC, the self-confidence of the institute has clearly grown. Any organisation takes time to settle and become confident in its own identity and I would suggest that SEI has successfully gone through just such a process. I am looking forward to the next few years of working on the Council to help set the strategic direction for formation and training for our future leaders and also in wider discipleship in our church communities. Even as we continue through the pandemic, this is an exciting time to be exploring the future of education and formation for the Scottish Episcopal Church.'

**Rt Revd Andrew Swift**

**Institute Council summary of business:** ‘The November meeting of the Institute Council was one of healthy tensions’, writes the *Revd Elaine Garman*. ‘We started with continuity and change: with Bishop Kevin stepping down as Convener, we welcomed Bishop Anne to the chair, subject to General Synod’s agreement in December, providing us with continuity whilst Bishop Andrew joined the meeting for the first time bringing his different perspective on discussions.



‘The first part of the Report from the Common Awards Periodic External Review, drawing on the recommendations from the Ministry Division of the Archbishops’ Council, was discussed. Sometimes it takes that independent voice to remind us of the tension we have in the intertwined relationship between the SEC and the SEI. Unlike theological training organisations in England the SEI reports into our church structures, so we have the benefit and disadvantage of closeness. It is a timely reminder that we ought to make the best of this relationship and should not be constrained by unhelpful assumptions or dynamics that might confuse. Such proximity between the two bodies allows us to quickly adapt to the changing needs of ministry and mission across our different contexts of urban and remote and rural church life.

‘There was a moment of taking stock as to how far we have travelled in the year since implementing our new process of discernment of vocation and selecting for training for authorised and ordained ministries. Instead of the process being vested in just a few individuals there are now over 40 people involved across the Dioceses and the Province. This helps not only embed discernment into the life of our church for those thinking of embarking on new roles, but also for us all to be reminded of that healthy tension of listening and responding to God, that discernment never stops no matter where we are on our spiritual paths.’

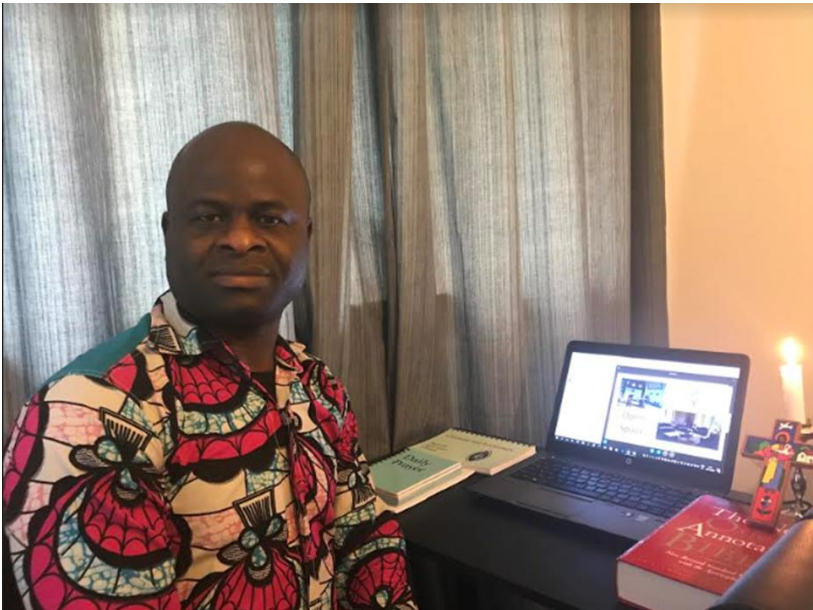
**Revd Elaine Garman**



**Council membership:** As Bishop Andrew noted, the Institute Council is made up of individuals chosen for their particular knowledge and experience. As well as those with expertise in the areas of finance, governance, HR, discernment and the ecumenical church, representation from the world of academia is essential. Two SEC priests who work in the Divinity Schools of Scottish universities have duly served on the Council since its inception: the Revd Professor Paul Foster, University of Edinburgh, and Professor Emeritus David Jasper, University of Glasgow. Professor Jasper (*left*) recently stepped down from the Council, and so we thank him for his enormous contribution over the past five years: for his wisdom, wit and erudition. Thank you, David.

**Revd Anne Tomlinson**

In this next section, that on '**Pastoral Care**', two students speak about those aspects of SEI life that continue to sustain the community: Godwin Chimara, first year ordinand from the Diocese of Aberdeen and Orkney, and Louise Sanders, second year URC ordinand from the Northern Synod.



'One thing I have come to love since joining the SEI is our commitment to prayer – for ourselves, for the Church, and for our world. The disciplined practice of prayer (in its various forms) is at the heart of our lives and a key part of our ministerial formation. A family that prays together stays together. It is in this light that all of us at SEI (IME 1-6 students and staff) voluntarily meet online on Wednesday nights for Compline.

'You can easily feel a sense of a true community and family when we gather for Compline. It has become a very helpful routine for mutual encouragement and support especially in this troubling time of Covid-19 pandemic, and I feel it when we pray together the Antiphon – *"Preserve us, O Lord, while waking, and guard us while sleeping, that awake we may watch with Christ, and asleep we may rest in peace"*.'

**Godwin Chimara**

'Hi – I'm Louise and anyone who knows me well knows that I like to have fun and, where possible, make people smile, I think 'class clown' was probably a fair assessment by a teacher many years ago! So when asked if I would be willing to take on arranging some 'fun' at the RW2 in December I was delighted! Having 'fun' on Zoom can be challenging, especially with the limit of one person speaking at a time, but we managed it in August at our virtual Ceilidh, and I have high hopes we can achieve the same (or even better) this time!



'We are planning to have a 'Guess The Baby' photo competition, and it has been an absolute delight receiving all the cute baby photos from the students and staff. I think there will be many laughs at some of the somewhat outdated haircuts and clothing!

## **Nigmassht**

'Plans are also underway for a round of Christmas 'Dingbats' to be sent to people at the start of the weekend, and I have included a sample for you to ponder! A festive quiz will probably also feature along with festive 'turns' by some of the students and staff. My love of festive 'crooners' is sure to be included, and I hope I can at least give us the warm and cosy feeling of meeting together in the virtual realm while we are unable to meet physically.'

**Louise Sanders**



*A vital level of care is provided by Diocesan Advisors. These members of the wider staff of SEI, lay and ordained, have been adjusting their practice to suit the needs of 'virtual existence', each one continuing to meet with his or her appointed student on a regular basis for conversation, guidance and prayer. Here Megan Cambridge, Lay Reader in the Diocese of Moray, Ross and Caithness - shown below (left) with the Warden of Lay Readers in that diocese, Patsy Thomson (who served as Megan's Diocesan Advisor) reflects upon that ministry of accompaniment and care.*

**The journey of a Diocesan Advisor:** 'The IME 1-3 Handbook says "Every student is accompanied by a Diocesan Advisor, who monitors and supports a student's formation, remaining with the same student throughout the course. .... Diocesan Advisors are selected by the Principal in consultation with a student's Bishop."



'It strikes me, from my own experience, that there is something of the inspiration of the Holy Spirit involved in this process too. As student myself not that long ago (I finished in 2018) my Diocesan Advisor was, and still is, an amazing person: a Gaelic speaking eco-warrior with a keen sense of justice. She was there for me in just the right amounts, at just the right time, and weathered the storms alongside me. She walked, clambered, scrambled and, yes, sometimes skipped alongside me until we reached our destination and I was licenced on October 2018 on St Simon and St Jude's day; St Jude, patron saint of desperate cases and lost causes!

'Now I find myself on another journey, not as a student this time, but as a Diocesan Advisor, which still amazes me. Our mode of transport is more virtual than physical, but it is such a privilege to be part of her journey. Whilst it is early days for both of us, my student seems to be coping well with her Rookie companion. I have an excellent role model to reflect on, but what different times this is taking place in. We no longer have the luxury of quiet time together in one place which was something I had valued so much. Ministry and Church is happening in such a different way which has provided challenges and opportunities and, as luck would have it, also a placement opportunity. We recently had our placement meeting and are excited that this will encompass the new way of Church in Covid-19 times, with lots of Zoom as well as good old-fashioned booklets for those who choose that alternative; flexibility and reaching out in whatever way we can.

'Of course, there are other journeys going on elsewhere in our lives with different people and to different places, but as we journey together on this one, we do so under the watchful eye of the SEI and the God who called us; who can fail?'

**Megan Cambridge**



*The students and staff are greatly helped by having the Revd Canon Graham Taylor, Rector of St John the Baptist, Perth, (Diocese of St Andrews, Dunkeld and Dunblane) serve as SEI's Chaplain. Here Graham writes to the community:* 'I love my role as the SEI Chaplain; it has become something that means a great deal to me. Getting to know you all and walking alongside you through your formation is such a blessing and has become a special part of my ministry. Before lockdown came, I so much looked forward to spending Saturday afternoon/evening with you all up in Kinnoull, sharing in a time of learning, praying, and having a meal together. Then, of course, came the highlight: Compline in the Small Groups before I left the monastery that evening. This was always special and sent me on my way at peace with myself and the world as I headed off home.



'Oh! how these days have changed as we meet and communicate now on Zoom; a time when we've all had to reach out in new ways of ministry and mission as we serve each other and the community. Nevertheless nothing has been lost. I still want to be there for you and walk alongside you in your formation for the ministries that God has called you to. I still want to be available for you to share with me and to pray together. Like all of you, I long for the day when we can be together face-to-face once more and be there for each other. But until that day, my love and prayers are for you all, staff and students alike, and please know that I am always here if you fancy a chat; all you have to do is get in touch!'

**Revd Canon Graham Taylor**



**'Virtual Parlour' meetings and pastoral letters:**

'When Residential Weekends became virtual events, I felt the loss of the one-to-one meetings I used to have with each student when at St Mary's, Kinnoull', writes Principal Anne Tomlinson. 'These meetings would take place in a room by the front door of the monastery, aptly named 'The Parlour', a safe space for exactly that: 'conversation' about the well-being of each member of the community.

'The 'Virtual Parlour' was thus conceived, regular Zoom meetings with students on a one-to-one basis, with no agenda other than to check on how they are coping in these strange times. The first tranche of these meetings was appreciated by both parties, and so it has been agreed that they be scheduled regularly as long as current restrictions prevail.

'Training is a time of instability for many candidates; so much has to be laid down, is in transition and is challenged. In a time when the world has been turned upside down by a global pandemic, this sense of dislocation is naturally even more acutely felt. The sending of a monthly 'Pastoral letter from the Principal' is another recently instituted way in which SEI staff are seeking to ensure that all students feel part of a community not just of learning but also of mutual care and concern.

‘These letters are sent on the first day of each month. In December’s I ponder one of the questions set by Dr Jane Williams in her book of reflections: *The Art of Advent: a painting a day from Advent to Epiphany* “What can you do this Advent to make your circle more welcoming?” In so doing, I was able to thank those who have worked so hard this past term to think about issues of welcome, inclusion and diversity in the SEI community: from ensuring equal access to learning opportunities to creating safe spaces for honest dialogue at community weekends. As the Periodic Review Team noted in their Report – and we hope to be permitted to publish that very shortly – “students at SEI are pastorally aware of one another and seek ways in which the whole body could benefit from individual gifts.” So very true.



‘But students not only care for each other but also look *outwards*. As part of our linkage with the Centro de Estudos Anglicanos, the Anglican seminary in Brazil, we are supporting the outreach work CEA’s students do in the favelas, particularly necessary given the current levels of Covid-19 there.

We are very grateful to Malcolm Bett, SEC Treasurer, for setting up an on-line giving scheme for this academic year, and to Linda Harrison for organising advertising of the same on Moodle. One of the links can be used to make one-off donations and the other for monthly donations, and we look forward to being able to send a sizeable sum to Brazil at the end of this academic year.

‘As we close for our Christmas break I look back on a term of struggles, yes, but with a thankful heart for the way the entire community has worked together through it all. If SEI’s vision is to “help students become ever more proficient in the art of making connections between contingent reality and the varieties and breadth of Christian tradition, and ever more adept at integrating knowing, being and doing”, then this has indeed been a period of notable formation for staff and students alike.’

**Revd Anne Tomlinson**

**Scottish Episcopal Institute Training Fund** Thanks to St. Paul’s Cathedral, Dundee for the generous donation of the offering gathered on the occasion of the Ordination of the Revd Gary Clink.

**Vocations Sunday 2021** The fourth Sunday of Easter, ‘Good Shepherd Sunday’, is kept as ‘Vocations Sunday’, offering an opportunity to consider what ‘calling’ means in the Church, and how gifts may be best used in God’s service. Next year it falls on Sunday 25 April. It may be that, as in 2020, sermons will have to be delivered virtually, but nevertheless several students are willing to offer their services that day. If you would like to invite a student to preach, please contact

[institute@scotland.anglican.org](mailto:institute@scotland.anglican.org)

