

JANUARY 2021 NEWS FROM SEI

Revd Harriet Johnston is serving her Title at St James the Less, Bishopbriggs; her husband, the Revd Lee Johnston, is likewise a Curate in the Diocese of Glasgow and Galloway, serving at Christ Church, Lanark. Here Harriet describes her ordination to the priesthood in November.



'God's clear call to ordained ministry came to me in March 2014. Six and a half years on, thanks to the processes of discernment, theological education and formation, I was ready to be ordained priest in St James' Church, Bishopbriggs on Advent Sunday.

'My ordination to the priesthood was memorable for all the right reasons. I was encouraged by the kind words of those who brought greetings from family, friends, and colleagues around the world.

'Bishop Kevin preached a memorable sermon that he made personal to me. As you might imagine, the moment of ordination was deeply profound for me too. Only 20 people were permitted to be in the church but that made the service intimate and personal. Due to the travel restrictions, my family watched the ordination on Zoom from their kitchen. It was good to know they were there along with many friends and members of St James' Church.

'Lee (*shown right*) had a big role in the ceremony too. Being my husband, we didn't have to be socially distanced so he could lay on hands and vest me in stole and chasuble. This year's ordinations will be remembered for the strangeness of social distancing and wearing masks - apart from the brief photo-opportunity afterwards when they were removed to smile at the camera and be replaced seconds later. They will also be remembered as a time when the usual congratulatory hugs were replaced with hand-waving from 2 metres away.



'I hope by the time we arrive at the next season for ordinations they will once again be great gatherings of joy. May this will be the one year we remember for all its unusualness and how we learned to make the best of it. I'll always be grateful to God for granting me the privilege of priestly ministry and choosing to work in and through me to bless others.'

Revd Harriet Johnston



Online weekend 3-5 December: ‘Learning to adapt worship to online delivery is quite a skill’ writes the Revd Anne Tomlinson, ‘but it is something SEI students are becoming adept at doing. Throughout the recent December gathering, the community was led by one of the Small Groups of students – Pat, Ross, Lisa and Blayne (shown above from left to right; and Lesley, not shown) - in a series of beautifully thought-through and carefully planned Advent devotions incorporating word, silence, music and symbol. Friday Evening Prayer, for instance, was enriched by the Advent wreath shown below, with the snowy hills round Roy Bridge in the background.

‘Other highlights of the weekend included a lively session with the Revd Libby Talbot, Associate Rector at St Paul’s and St George’s (Diocese of Edinburgh) as part of the series on ‘*Growing Churches*’ for the Level 4 and 5 Mission and Evangelism modules; thoughtful input from the Revd Canon Dr Marion Chatterley on working with the dying and the bereaved; and a challenging session led by Dr Carol Marples entitled ‘*Danger! Art at Work*’ comprising consideration of the power of creative installations to work within liturgy to challenge, disturb, unsettle, amaze and dialogue with belief.

‘As you read this, the community is gearing up for yet another weekend, our fifth such event, in early January. While we long for the time when we can meet face-to-face, nevertheless there is a general feeling that “as we settle into the pattern of online residentials they do become easier and less tiring”, as one respondent wrote in their feedback about the weekend. Or as another put it: “I’m really looking forward to having them ‘in the flesh’ (as I know is everyone). But given the constraints, these weekends are being run really well, with wonderful support from SEI staff.” ‘

Revd Anne Tomlinson



Grateful thanks: Our thanks this month go to the Revd Canon Robin Paisley for his most generous personal donation following another year of diverting consultancy fees to the Training Fund; to St Mary’s Cathedral, Edinburgh, for the offerings gathered at the Michaelmas ordinations of the Revds Peter Woodfield, Russell Duncan and David Todd; and to Anne MacDonald, Deacon in the Church of Scotland, for her very kind donation. Thanks are also given for the most generous anonymous donation of £1000 which was made to the SEI Training Fund in December.

Warm thanks also go to those who have taken out Standing Orders this past year to support the St James Fund, a discretionary fund which supports students’ spiritual and emotional needs, or enables them to go on elective courses and attend supplementary conferences. To all such donors our hearty thanks, as the requests for such support continue to flow in.

Revd Anne Tomlinson



Oban snowmen lead towards the Light: During Advent, the Revd Beki Cansdale, Curate at St John's Cathedral, Oban, worked on a project involving snowmen. She and the Revd Stuart Lawson, Lead Minister at Oban Baptist Church, came up with the idea of doing a trail around town in a Covid-friendly manner. They got the kids of their two congregations involved in designing 'Ruaridh the snowman', spoke to local shopkeepers and designed posters. From Saturday 12th December, ten snowman posters were to be discovered positioned around the town, each poster revealing something of Ruaridh's search for a little light in a time of darkness, as well as telling the story of Christmas. Beki's [story](#) about the snowman discovering Christmas was accessed either through a QR code on the poster or by reading the story in the shops. It was also posted on the diocesan Facebook page for the ten days before Christmas.

Preparing for this 'has been amazing, a proper team effort' says Beki. 'Our hope is that this will give everyone the opportunity to get out in the fresh air, enjoy quality time together, and bless our local businesses this Christmas on the back of what has been a difficult year for many. We pray also that Jesus would bring light into each of our lives, even on the darkest of nights.'

Advent Ordination: The Rev Liz Crumlish was ordained deacon at St Oswald's Maybole by the Rt Rev Kevin Pearson, Bishop of Glasgow and Galloway, on Sunday 13th December. Liz is now serving her Title in that congregation while working for the Church of Scotland as the National Coordinator for Renewal and Pioneering.



Liz brings a wealth of experience in ministry, having been ordained in the Church of Scotland 25 years ago. She has worked as a Health Care Chaplain in Greenock and in parishes in Inverkip and Ayr. Liz also serves on the Board of RevGalBlogPals, an international organisation aimed at bringing together and amplifying the voices of women in ministry. The photograph shows a dalmatic-clad Liz being congratulated by the Rt Revd Kevin Pearson and the Revd Canon Drew Sheridan, Bishop's Chaplain. A video of the service is available [here](#).

Vocations Sunday 2021 The fourth Sunday of Easter is kept as 'Vocations Sunday', offering an opportunity to consider what 'calling' means in the Church, and how the gifts of all God's people 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

PER report published: The report of the Periodic External Review arising from the visit last January of the Ministry Division Team led by Dr Sally Buck (*right*) has now been published on the SEC website; the Durham team (which evaluated the academic side of operations) has yet to report. The overall conclusion of Dr Buck's team was that *'the Scottish Episcopal Institute continues to provide an appropriate environment for ministerial formation and is fit for purpose for preparing candidates for ordained and licensed ministry within the Scottish Episcopal Church. We say this in respect of the SEI's teaching and learning, its worship and spirituality, its staff team and leadership, its community life and its contextual learning opportunities.'*



The team also commended *'the way in which the whole SEI body is permeated by formational and community values and, in particular, the way in which this is made possible by clear leadership and trust in others to inhabit these values in a variety of personally authentic ways.'*

SEI staff are delighted by the Team's appreciation of the ethos of prayerful reflective practice and contextual training which underpins all they aim to do. The Recommendations have challenged them to create a detailed Action Plan for the next five years, spurring them on to creative conversations with the College of Bishops and others as they seek to shape the next generation of missional leaders for the SEC and the URC. SEI staff take this opportunity once again of thanking all who were involved in the evaluative process - Placement Supervisors, Training Incumbents, Mixed Mode Training Supervisor, Diocesan Advisors, Institute Council/Management Committee members, Bishops, ecumenical partners and students past and present – for their hard work and contributions.



Christian Belief and Everyday Habit: Can we Christians align our beliefs and everyday habits in the twenty-first century? Christians have been formulating 'rules of life' at least as far back as the fourth century. The sixth-century Rule of St Benedict is probably the most widely known Christian rule of life, but a lot has changed since then! Is there scope for a Christian rule of life in the twenty-first century? Advances in technology and communication, particularly social media, enrich our present-day lives whilst at the same time driving us to distraction. A cacophony of voices vies for our attention: how do we hear the Gospel above them all?

The Revd Dr Michael Hull, SEI's Director of Studies (*above*), will facilitate an online discussion of issues about belief and habit, faith and practice, with insights from Justin Whitmel Earley's *The Common Rule: Habits of Purpose for an Age of Distraction* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Books, 2019) available at <https://www.thecommonrule.org> The discussion will be held on Wednesday 20 January 2021 from 7pm to 8pm and delivered via Zoom. The link and password will be emailed on the morning of Wednesday 20 January. To register, please visit this [link](#).

Revd Dr Michael Hull