

## JULY-AUGUST 2021 NEWS FROM SEI

### *'Tomorrow to fresh woods, and pastures new.'*

Milton's words capture the current mood in SEI perfectly. As students break for the summer vacation, staff are looking forward eagerly to the academic year which begins in late August - as you can clearly see from their expressions at the final Team Meeting of this last, 'unprecedented', year!



In the first place there will be a sizeable intake of new students; it is many years since SEI saw 10 candidates entering at one time. These women and men who are preparing to serve as Lay Readers, Vocational Deacons and Priests will follow many different formational pathways during their three years at SEI; one will study full-time at New College, another will combine training as a Church Army Evangelist with formation at SEI, and others will enter the DipHE or BA trackways, some choosing the 'extended placement' option for the first time. Another new student will join the Mixed Mode programme; as the Revd Dr Richard Tiplady, Director of Mixed Mode Training, says:

*'Students get a very substantial experience of the breadth and diversity of ministry through the Mixed Mode programme. Most of them have preached and led services at least monthly through the 2-3 years of the programme, sometimes more frequently. They have been involved to a considerable extent in pastoral work, community work and mission. Mixed Mode students have fed back to me on numerous occasions the added value they perceive it has provided for their ministry development, and have consistently expressed their appreciation for the way that they are able to integrate theology and ministry practice throughout their training.'*



Nor is it only the student cohort that will be enlarged. As described in the June *Newsletter*, five Associate Tutors have been added into the staff team, enabling some new courses to be taught. Most excitingly, SEI will be able to offer modules in biblical languages for the first time; as the Director of Studies, the Revd Dr Michael Hull, comments: *'SEI is happy to offer introductory and elementary Hebrew and Greek in 2021–22, the first academic year in which we are offering them. This is an amazing opportunity for all our students for authorised ministry to enrich their understanding of God's revelation in the Bible with skilled tutors in Scotland. If preaching is essential for ministry, then there can be no doubt that even a basic knowledge of the biblical languages will greatly enrich not only one's preaching, but one's ministry. On the one hand, knowing Holy Scripture in the original will bring confidence to every minister who seeks to be God's worker and to correctly handle the word of truth (2 Tim. 2.15); on the other hand, studying God's word in the very words God chose to use allows for a labour of love on behalf of those congregations whom ministers will serve, for God will never forget such work and love by which people are helped (Heb. 6.10).'*

And just as excitingly, SEI has recently heard that Durham University's Quality and Standards Committee has approved the inclusion of Level 7 programmes in its Common Awards offering, allowing the Institute to add a Postgraduate Diploma and an MA to its list of awards. Post-graduate programmes of study in theology, ministry and mission, including a master's degree, with the Common Awards scheme present an incredible chance for those in IME 4–6, as well as for clergy and laity interested in lifelong learning, to deepen their knowledge and augment their practice. These programmes of study are for those who have already studied to degree level and seek continuing professional development at post-graduate level. The programmes aim to offer education that is accessible to students with a wide range of professional and personal circumstances, for example mature students, those employed, those in active ministry etc., in a part-time fashion. SEI's post-graduate programmes will be delivered by tutors in Scotland with vast ministerial and academic experience; the modules will be completely online with Zoom and SEI's Moodle. Please be in touch with Dr Hull ([dos@scotland.anglican.org](mailto:dos@scotland.anglican.org)) for more details and to enrol.

**New courses (i):** Vocational Deacons in their early years of ministry are invited to audit a new course to be taught next year, *'Theological Perspectives on Community Development and Organising'*. This explores theologies of community development and community organising, with participants learning what it means to enable communities to develop confidence, capacity and the kind of relationships that shape collective action and challenge imbalances of power. Ecumenical practitioners from across the UK will share their experience of working in these ways, including the Revd Martin Johnstone (*right*), *Glasgow Churches Together's* Ambassador to the UN climate change conference, CoP26, which comes to the city in November.



**New courses (ii):** Similarly, plans are being made to run a new course in 2022-3 on *'Theological Perspectives on Health and Healing'*. This module will be led by Rev Dr Gillian Straine, Director of the Guild of Health and St Raphael, and involve a number of visiting tutors on different aspects of health and healing in Christian ministry. It will look at aspects of physical and mental health, palliative care and living with serious illness, and will include topics like 'what is wellbeing?', 'what do we mean by human flourishing?', 'how do we pray for healing?' and 'what if it doesn't 'work'?'



These new modules are part of SEI's aim to ensure that candidates are given appropriate tools to act in response to God at work in the world today. SEI's membership of *EcoCongregation Scotland* is encouraging us to model good environmental practice as regards use of buildings, resources and transport, both when gathered as a community and in our individual lifestyles. In this coming year SEI will aim to integrate an environmental perspective across the whole curriculum, addressing creation care not just practically but also theologically and liturgically. As Pope Francis wrote in *Laudato Si*, *'It is my hope that our seminaries and houses of formation will provide an education in responsible simplicity of life, in grateful contemplation of God's world, and in concern for the needs of the poor and the protection of the environment.'* As it looks to the next academic year, SEI will indeed endeavour to do just that.

*The last in the series of 'A day in the life of ...', which was begun five months ago, comes from the Revd Canon Ian Barcroft, Provincial Director of Ordinands (PDO). Ian is shown below reading to his granddaughter.*

**A Day in the life of the PDO:** It is a privilege to accompany people on their discernment journeys, and my role begins by receiving a recommendation from a priest who has already developed a good pastoral relationship with the person. The variety of experiences people have had, whether in their twenties, mid-life or in their sixties is the start of exploring their sense of vocation. This calling is surrounded by work, social life, family, church involvement, and their faith encompassing worship, prayer, and beliefs. Never forgetting, of course, personality and character. Articulating a vocation touches upon one's core identity, and the requirement of the Church to share this with others must be handled with pastoral sensitivity, always seeking to affirm the person in their current and future faith journey.

For me, this privilege heightens the responsibility I carry for the SEC, but in order not to feel burdened by this, I offer my daily prayer, and start the day by reminding myself, as I have always done in priestly life, that what I receive comes my way as a gift - even some of those difficult deliveries from the courier of the Holy Spirit left on the doorstep - because the people I relate to through each day are a gift to me, the Church and the world.

Emails take me to the heart of the matter! Here is a sample.

First, I communicate around a new recommendation by a priest, checking a few facts, and then assign the person as an Enquirer to a Vocational Advisor (VA), welcoming them to the process. We have five regions across Scotland with 15 VAs. Of course, I check with the VA that they are available, whether lay or ordained, as they have many other roles and volunteer for the SEC Discernment Team. This first stage has no time limit as the conversation around vocation requires good time to build relationship and conversation. Currently we have 25 people journeying through the process.

Then there are emails, and at least a 'phone call or two, about the current journey for some. Not just on the first Enquirer, or local discernment stage, but also on the more intense second stage, or provincial stage, when the Enquirer becomes a Candidate for a particular recognised or ordained ministry meeting with one of the five Assistant Director of Ordinands. Here I communicate with, support, and encourage those who seek specific guidance around the Criteria of Selection.

These Criteria underpin the process as the discernment journey develops, because when it comes to assessment and recommendation by our Discernment Meeting members and Advisory Selection Panel advisors and decision-making by our bishops, key evidence must be formally provided.

But this is not a tick-box process. For all involved, discernment requires a growing reflexive awareness, held by spiritual attentiveness, around one's own perceptions of what affirms the journey of the individual and the continuing mission and ministry of the Church. Books are written on this part (!) – and I try and spend a disciplined hour a day reading and reflecting more on this. I enjoy, too, the discussions that follow with the Team and the Bishops.





Ian and Heather volunteering at Aberlady Nature Reserve, East Lothian

As you can realise, after a few such emails, and reflexive conversations with at least two who listen (God, and me) I need a walk around the garden; or, depending on the intensity of required reflection and response, a walk round the village where I live in East Lothian. If the discussions develop, often over several weeks, my Sunday walk with my dear wife Heather to St Adrian's, Gullane (there and back 5 miles) clears my head and offers focus especially from the wind whistling across the Forth.

All this, like everything in church life, is surrounded too by the mundane, but as I constantly learn, the extraordinary and the ordinary are intertwined with affirming Grace, and one realises not to expect but to anticipate. Another day passes.....

**Revd Canon Ian Barcroft**

**Save the date:** With the Rt Revd Dr Emma Ineson's translation from Penrith to a new post as Bishop to the Archbishops of Canterbury and York, SEI found itself last month bereft of its advertised 2021 Lecturer. However the Revd Dr Michael Hull, SEI's Director of Studies, has very nobly picked up the baton and will offer the 2021 SEI Lecture. Dr Hull will offer a paper entitled *'To Filioque or Not to Filioque: The Warrant of Holy Scripture'*. This will be held on **Thursday 28<sup>th</sup> October 2021** in the Glasgow University Memorial Chapel, Gilmorehill Campus, West Quadrangle, Glasgow G12 8QQ. The Lecture will commence at 17.00, and be followed by a reception 18.00—19.00. Registration details via Eventbrite in September's Newsletter. The Lecture will be livestreamed as before, and published in the SEI [Journal](#).

**Money matters (i):** The Scottish Episcopal Institute continues to value its link, formed after the last Anglican Consultative Council in Hong Kong, ACC 17, with its sister Theological Education Institute, the Centro de Estudos Anglicanos in Porto Alegre, Brazil. SEI looks forward to developing that link during the coming academic year by means of shared seminars, learning with and from the faculty there. Students have just sent £656 to CEA, this being the sum of offerings collected through the past year. Like last year's donation, this will be used by the students at CEA for their work with marginalized communities across Brazil.

**Money matters (ii):** Our thanks this month go to the congregation of St John the Evangelist Greenock (*right*) and to the Revd Sally Gorton for the kind donation of the latter's deputising fees to the SEI Training Fund following a recent Sunday service in that charge. With new students coming on board in August on the fulltime track - via both the Mixed Mode and the New College pathways - we are extremely grateful for all such gifts. All money received in this way goes directly to support such candidates during their three years at SEI.



**Christians, the Bible and sustainability:** The Revd Canon Rachel Mash (*right*), who served some years ago in the Diocese of Edinburgh, is the environmental Co-ordinator of the Anglican Church of Southern Africa and the Secretary to the Anglican Communion Environmental Network. She is the author of the soon-to-be published [Grove Book on Discipleship and the Environment](#) (which will be available to buy in July). As part of this work she also helps to organise an international network of preachers who prepare notes for each Sunday based on the Revised Common Lectionary (RCL), helping congregations make deliberate connections between the biblical principles of sustainability and daily life today.



The Revd Dr Richard Tiplady was recently invited to contribute notes for Sunday 4 July (Week of Proper 14; Pentecost 6) and these can be found on the Sustainable Preaching [web site](#). In a piece entitled ‘*Take nothing but photos; leave nothing but footprints*’ which draws deeply upon his love of mountaineering, Richard reflects upon Mark 6:1-13, Jesus’ instruction to the Twelve to travel lightly and live frugally in their work of mission. In a probing reflection, he challenges us to examine the over-consumption in our lives and to focus upon *reducing*, not simply re-using and re-cycling.

*‘Mountains are places where one must travel light. Those who are attracted to mountaineering tend to be self-confident and assertive, no-nonsense people of action. And yet mystical and self-transcendent experiences are reported at high altitude by those not normally so inclined. Spiritual experiences are not unusual on mountains. Moses first met with God on a mountain (Exodus 3. 1–6); Jesus delivered his famous sermon on a mountain (Matthew 5–7), and the disciples experienced his Transfiguration on one (Mark 9. 2–8).*



Revd Dr Tiplady on the Aonach Eagach in 2019

*‘But mountains are not merely places where one might encounter God. They are also places to encounter absence. They are places of denial, of the via negativa. Austere and unaccommodating mountain landscapes point us to the smallness of ourselves. The renunciation or denial of the centrality of oneself points us to something beyond and to something absent. In the traditions of the Desert Fathers, God is met in emptiness and revealed in what others may disregard as a barren nothingness. The Mercy Seat on the Ark of the Covenant was a vacant space. Christ’s victory over sin and death is proclaimed most eloquently by an empty tomb. An indifferent landscape reflects an unfathomable God, one who is far above and indifferent to the petty needs and rivalries that consume us. “One of the scourges of our age is that all our deities are housebroken and eminently companionable”. (Belden Lane, 1998, 53). Our cultural theologies are devoted to self-realization and the fulfilment of our self-potential, and the gods ask only how they can enhance the lives of those they serve. But what mountain wilderness teaches best is abandonment. Its capacity to ignore is immense. Its central spiritual lesson is that it doesn’t care. And yet, in that indifference, one discovers an enormous freedom.’*

Richard concludes: *‘The words of Jesus. The needs of our world today. The mountains. All three enjoin us to leave no trace, except perhaps in the lives of others.’*

**Training the trainers (i):** Associate Tutors and core SEI staff gathered on Zoom on 23 June for an hour's seminar led by the Revd Dr Richard Tiplady on 'Assessment options within Common Awards'. Common Awards offers a very full range of assessment types: assessed conversations (both one-to-one and in groups), book reviews, essays and other written assignments (including Independent Learning



Projects), group projects, literature reviews, oral presentations, placement and visit reports, portfolios, practical skills, projects, reflective learning journals, resources for others, short tests, written examinations, and written theological reflections. Common Awards staff urge Theological Education Institutes (TEIs) to be creative in their development and application of these types.

All too often a tutor's default position in setting assignments is to turn to the time-honoured method of 'the essay', but it is important that all keep in mind that SEI is training people for Christian ministry, not academia; as Richard said, *'the ability to write a coherent and well-argued 5000-word essay is not always the most significant capability needed in our context.'*

Richard demonstrated the types of assessment he has used in the past year, including that of students each teaching a class session and subsequently offering a written reflection upon it. Another imaginative methodology involved the setting up of a 'Moodle Discussion Forum' with students being required to write and respond to posts based on the module content and its application, this being assessed using the 'Reflective Journals and Written Theological Reflection' assessment criteria. Other tutors have set book reviews as assignments, or the creation of congregational materials under the 'Resources for Others' assessment criteria. All of these methods not only allow staff to assess different skills and abilities in the students, but they help the latter to acquire and use these ministerial skills in creative ways.

2021-2022 SEI community			
Category of candidate	F	M	Sponsoring Diocese
Stipendiary Ordinands	4	3	Aberdeen and Orkney (1), Edinburgh (4), Moray, Ross and Caithness (1), St Andrews, Dunkeld and Dunblane (1).
Assistant Priests	2	4	Aberdeen and Orkney (2), Argyll and The Isles (1), Moray, Ross and Caithness (2), St Andrews, Dunkeld and Dunblane (1).
Vocational Deacons	2		Edinburgh (1), Glasgow and Galloway (1).
Lay Reader candidates	2		Edinburgh (1), Moray, Ross and Caithness (1).
URC candidates	2		Northern Synod of the United Reformed Church.
Church Army Evangelist		1	Church Army/Diocese of Edinburgh.

**Training the trainers (ii):** On 28 June the Principal led a day's session for new Diocesan Advisors. With an intake of 10 new candidates in August, it has been necessary, with the guidance of diocesan bishops, to recruit several Diocesan Advisors across the Province. DAs are the local companions of a student through the latter's three years at SEI, acting as 'critical friends', mentors and role models, and people with whom to laugh, cry and drink coffee companionably. They help the student reflect upon their entire formational package in an integrated way, compiling an evidence-based developmental report upon them at the end of each year which is discussed at the student's Appraisal Conference. A report of the training day will be offered in the next SEI *Newsletter* which comes out on 29 August at the start of Orientation Week. Meanwhile, have an enjoyable summer!