

JANUARY 2022 NEWS FROM SEI

The value of gathering: Anne Tomlinson writes: 'In early December SEI held its second residential weekend of the academic year in St Mary's Kinnoull. Afterwards some asked me, "So what difference does meeting in person once again have as compared to meeting on-line?" At the time I offered a quick answer, but here is a more considered – and illustrated - response.

'Firstly meeting in person enables conversation to happen in a more natural way: over coffee, while walking in the grounds, over meals, or on the stairs as here. Yes, even when all are masked and socially distanced. Such incidental juxtapositions, these 'frail travelling coincidences' as Larkin puts it, are the occasion for much growth in understanding and depth of friendship. These opportunities for chance chats were one casualty of our 18 months of online existence as a learning community, and I rejoice to have them back.



Above: the Small Group rostered to lead this weekend used 'Cloth for the cradle', a Wild Goose Worship liturgy, for our Saturday Midday worship.

'Secondly being in St Mary's allows the Small Groups responsible for our shared worship to bring all the senses into play, as demonstrated in our Advent worship this last weekend. And more than that, it enables that crucial aspect of worship – *movement*. That was something that got lost during our lockdown acts of worship at SEI, as we sat fixedly in front of our screens, trying to keep our heads still so as not to distract others. Being led along the corridors of St Mary's by the Small Group responsible for the weekend's worship, being enjoined to kneel at the manger and weave a blanket for the Babe (*left*), all this and much more reminded me of how crucial is the embodied nature of worship.

On the right: the photo shows, from the left, Ferdinand, Janet, Blayne and Helen leading our procession into the Oratory while playing the song 'Cloth for the cradle'.





'Thirdly meeting in person allows a huge amount of fun to happen: for birthdays to be celebrated (as here for Ross Jesmont) in song over breakfast and with cake, candles and chocolate in the evening.

'Being back in Kinnoull also alerts us to our surroundings in a renewed way; whether it be the sunset we marvelled at on Saturday afternoon (*below left*), or the lights of Perth as viewed from the top of Kinnoull Hill by the more intrepid among us, navigating by the light of a head-torch (*below right*). Or seeing the dawn breaking on Sunday morning while praying:

'God most holy, we give you thanks for bringing us out of the shadow of night into the light of morning; and we ask you for the joy of spending this day in your service, so that when evening comes, we may once more give you thanks; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen'.



'My thanks to Laura Symon, Maureen Farquhar, Ross Stirling-Young and Ferdinand von Prondzynski for kindly supplying this photographic account of a most memorable weekend. It was indeed 'good for us to be here'. Being residential, gathering in person, makes *such* a difference.'

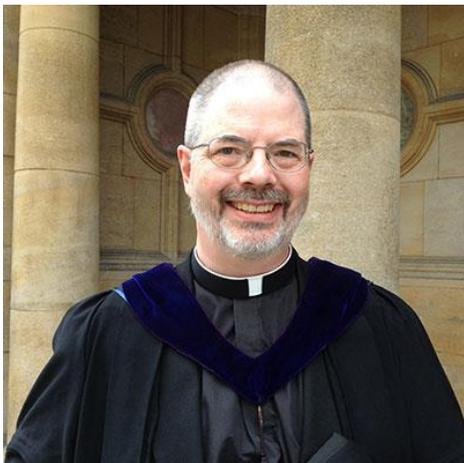
Anne Tomlinson

Continuing the theme of the value of students gathering in person, SEI's Director of Studies, the Revd Dr Michael Hull, looks forward to an opportunity for the staff to do likewise.

Gathering the staff: SEI offers an annual overnight staff-training residential for its Tutors. The gathering itself is an intimate event wherein all the members of the teaching staff, who may not see each other regularly during the academic year, have an opportunity to congregate face-to-face as a learning community devoted to the training of future lay and ordained ministers in the Scottish Episcopal and United Reformed Churches.



On Tuesday 15 and Wednesday 16 March 2022, we will come together at the [Conforti Centre](#) at Coatbridge (above), the usual haunt for our overnight residential. Unfortunately, the pandemic necessitated that our 2020 and 2021 staff training was held online, yet we do hope to meet onsite this year, God willing.



What will happen at our staff training in addition to common prayer, camaraderie and the sharing of our experience? Well, we ordinarily invite two specialists to share their expertise with us. One from a more theoretical perspective, and one from a more practical perspective. As to theory, our presenter is the Revd Dr [Andrew Adam](#), (left) who spent many years as a Lecturer at the University of Glasgow and an Assistant Priest at St Mary's Cathedral (Glasgow) before moving south to take up his present post of Tutor in New Testament and Greek at St Stephen's House (Oxford). The title of his address is 'Desire in Biblical Interpretation'.

As to practice, our presenter is the Revd Dr [Tripp Fuller](#), (right) who is a Postdoctoral Research Fellow at New College (the School of Divinity of the University of Edinburgh). Tripp is going to help us to consider how we may use podcasting in terms of faith formation in a digital age; his title is 'Podcasting for Theological Education'.



But there's more! There is input from SEI's own Tutors. Anne Tomlinson and Richard Tiplady will present jointly under the title '*Strategies for Greening our Curriculum*' in an effort to examine different strategies of noting the importance of God's creation and creation-care in our curriculum, as well as key theological questions that arise in environmental justice. Michael Hull will present under the title '*Strategies for Diversity and Inclusion in our Curriculum*'. He will address a theological-training process that recognises the gifts of all students and staff, whilst celebrating the diversity of God's people both within and without the classroom, so that students may feel as though they are not only included but that they truly belong within a theological education institute.

The hope is that the prayer, learning, fellowship and cross-fertilisation of experience will enrich and enliven the teaching staff to serve ever more faithfully our students and the whole people of God.

Revd Dr Michael Hull

But online gatherings are still important, and growing

Gathering online: The Revd Dr Michael Hull's Advent course, kindly advertised through SEC social media, attracted 277 sign-ups on Eventbrite, a most welcome, but somewhat unexpected, response. Dr Hull comments: *In preparation for 'Reading the Bible like an Episcopalian', I envisaged a group of 20 or so, and some discussion online, but the numbers quickly rose, and in the first two weeks I had about 150 people online each night from all around the world. I was delighted with the interest and enthusiasm for the topic! The large numbers lent themselves to a webinar/lecture style of presentation, which I was happy to do, and I look forward to more lay-learning initiatives in future around the topic of Holy Scripture.*



Having to run the sessions as a webinar rather than as a shared Zoom call with discussion has had an added benefit; it has meant the material being offered in a way that congregations can use creatively for their own purposes in their own context as the Revd Canon Sarah Shaw describes she and her husband, the Revd Willie Shaw, doing in their respective charges of St Mary's Grangemouth, St Catharine's Bo'ness and Christ Church Falkirk (Diocese of Edinburgh):



'Usually Willie and I run joint Advent and Lent study groups, but this year we have both been plagued by the dreaded Covid and thought that, rather than create something new, we would join in the SEI talks as something different from what we would be able to do ourselves. After the first Monday's talk it occurred to us that our folk who had joined in might really enjoy having a discussion afterwards, about anything that emerged for them out of each talk. We're planning to do that each Monday, on a separate Zoom call. I feel it's important not to have an agenda directed by us, but rather let those on the call comment on what sparked their interest in the talk and what was new for them.'

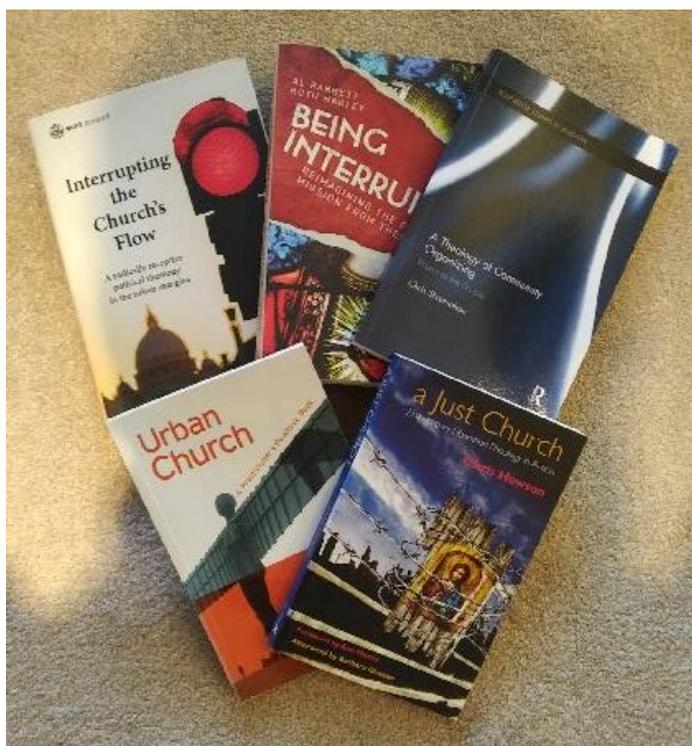
Gathering gifts: Thanks go this month to the congregation of St Finnbar Dornoch for the kind donation to the SEI Training Fund of the offering gathered at the licencing of the Revd Simon Scott as Priest in Charge (shown centre, with the Revd Lizzie Campbell and the Primus). Thanks also go to the Revd Anne Macdonald DCS for her continued support of the Fund through regular donations. Likewise to the Revd Canon Alison Peden, Priest in Charge at St Modoc's Doune, for her kind donation of theology books, the sale of which raised £48.10 for our sister Institute in Brazil.



Gathering books: SEI was thrilled to learn before Christmas that it had been awarded a generous grant from the Rebecca Hussey Book Charity. The object of this charitable foundation is *'to provide religious and useful books to institutions in the United Kingdom'*. The Charity's Trustees have made it their policy to support institutions that have little funding for a library, awarding these grants both to existing libraries and to those in the course of being established.



The eponymous founder of the charity was known as 'Saintly Rebecca' (right). On her memorial in St Wilfrid's Church, Honington it states that she died *'after a life principally employed in devotion and acts of charity'*. From her will it is clear that she showed real compassion for marginalised; she left a thousand pounds to pay for 'the redemption of slaves' and a further thousand for *'prisoners that are confined for small debts for themselves or have unhappily been bound for other folks.'* She left a further two thousand pounds for *'a fund for publishing and propagating spiritual and religious books'*.. and it is from the latter legacy that SEI has benefitted.



As the Institute has just introduced a new module on community engagement, we submitted a bid based on the development of this section of the library, listing titles we wished to include, amounting to over £350. We were delighted to be granted the entire sum, and thank both the Charity's Trustees and Church House Bookshop (who administered the consignment) most warmly for their kindness and help.

Here (left) are just some of the books, prior to their being catalogued by Sharon Smith, shelved in Room 5 of the GSO, and read by those students who are about to study the new Level 5 module on *Theological Perspectives on Community Development and Organising*.

This will be being taught between January and March, and will include seminars by practitioners of the two approaches from across the UK. Most excitingly, seven Deacons from across the Province will also be accessing these weekly sessions as part of their personal Continuing Ministerial Development.

Gathering team members: We welcome the following academics into the SEI staff teaching fold as new Associate Tutors in the field of Biblical Studies: Ellen Howard and Bertalan Józsa. Both have recently undertaken post-graduate studies at New College, University of Edinburgh, supervised respectively by the Revd Professor Paul Foster and Professor Helen Bond. Likewise we welcome the Revd Canon Dr Alasdair Coles, Rector of All Saints, St Andrews, to the Christian doctrine team, and also the Revd Dr Anna-Claar Thomasson, recently moved to Troon. Dr Thomasson has a PhD in Pneumatology and has taught at the Southern Theological Education and Training Scheme (STETS) and subsequently at [Sarum](#).



Gathering again, but this time on Zoom. Sadly our third Residential Weekend which takes place from Friday 14 till Sunday 16 January will be a virtual one once again. Nevertheless we will be welcoming two guests. On Friday evening the Revd Canon Dr Rachel Mash (*left*) will be interviewed by Dr Tiplady on the topic of 'Christian Discipleship and Environmental Action' as part of the Module *Foundations for Ministry and Mission in Context*. Rachel is the environmental Coordinator of the Anglican Church of Southern Africa. She works with the Green Anglicans Youth Movement and is also the secretary to the Anglican Communion Environmental Network.

The celebrant at our URC Communion on Sunday will be Revd Dr John McNeil Scott, (*right*), Principal of The Scottish College. John has served in church ministry for over 25 years, with experience of both congregational life and higher education chaplaincy, and has also worked in university teaching and legal practice. John's academic interests are in theologies of politics and culture across a number of contexts including Ireland, Taiwan and Scotland and in homiletics. Other academic concerns include the application of technology to learning in ministerial formation and leadership development, in systems approaches to congregational studies and in pastoral supervision. Dr Scott is a great friend to SEI, sitting as he does on the Management Committee and offering wisdom, expertise and support from his experienced perspective.



Continuing our URC-themed weekend, third year URC ordinand Roberta Ritson will be leading our Bible Study on the parable of the Prodigal Son, and fellow third year URC ordinand Louise Sanders (*above*) will be our preacher at Sunday lunchtime's culminating act of worship. Louise will also lead the Small Group responsible for the weekend's worship, known as *The Sojourners*.