



MARCH 2022 NEWS FROM SEI

This edition focusses upon some of the ways in which the Scottish Episcopal Institute is weaving creation care into its formational programme, both the explicit and the hidden curricula.

The first four articles are contributed by students who are leading the community in this endeavour: two from Pat Ellison (below), second year Lay Reader candidate (Moray, Ross and Caithness) who was elected by her peers to serve as this year's Chapter Eco Congregation Scotland representative; and one each from Helen Randall, first year ordinand (Aberdeen and Orkney) and Val Cameron, third year Diaconal ordinand (Edinburgh), eco reps for their respective Year Groups. Staff then contribute further articles on the same theme, demonstrating their passion for and commitment to the integration of an environmental perspective across the curriculum.

SEI and Eco Congregation Scotland: In mid-January, a meeting took place between staff and students at SEI and *Eco Congregation Scotland* to explore ways in which the two organisations might work together. It reflected the call of the Revd Dr Rachel Mash in her recently published Grove pamphlet *Renewing the Life of the Earth* to 'Find your tribe' and to 'Develop partnerships'. There is of course considerable congruence between the two organisations and there has been much dialogue since Val Cameron registered SEI with ECS three years ago.



But this is a different moment, one where deeper understanding and alignment could, we hope can, have wider resonance. SEI prepares people for ministry. It concerns itself with formational issues and for sure, our care for our common home is deep in the heart of this. ECS works with churches across Scotland to help congregations understand and collectively address the climate emergency. It has over ten years' experience of this and has a wide reach and influence. The touch points are obvious, together with opportunities for mutual feedback and learning. Partnership between these two organisations should really help in supporting existing and new ministers in this, literally, life-saving endeavour.



Partnerships take time to build; they depend, at least in part, on mutual understanding amongst individuals – and where there is distance and time involved, the commitment to keep relationships growing, sharing a mutual goal. That was the significance of the January meeting.

One outcome already is a research proposal in respect of continuing to 'green the curriculum' for initial ministerial education. This has relevance not just for SEI, but for the ecumenical partnerships represented by ECS across Scotland, and maybe wider through the forum of Common Awards.

Whilst the daily focus for many of us is on immediate action – 'What can I do about this right now?' – let's also take time to nurture and support this effort which looks to the future in shared hope, accepting the challenge of the Fifth mark of mission.

Pat Ellison

Shopping ... can still be a pleasure; this local store, the Phoenix in Findhorn, owned by a community partnership, has been in existence for over 25 years, selling a range of goods into the local community.



Here you can find locally baked bread, cheeses, fresh vegetables and fruit, wholefoods, refillables of various kinds - as you can see illustrated. Efforts are made to source produce locally wherever possible and there is a wide range of Suma and Highland Wholefoods products. There are paper bags for you to fill with grains, nuts and seeds and if you want to buy one carrot, that's just fine. There's also an apothecary if you want to try the local flower essences and an off-licence section.

I appreciate that enterprises like this are rare and of course, it is not always the cheapest option. But it illustrates what can be done where there is a collective willingness to take an alternative option, and it is a joy to be in an environment where you can find what you want on the shelves without branding in your face. Its longevity should give heart to anyone thinking that this kind of shopping is a flash in the pan and is not commercially robust. Needless to say, customers and partners are fiercely loyal. That's me too.

Pat Ellison, Forres

Green Placement: My first-year placement is with a church-based group bringing people together with friendship and food. The *Food for the Way* project works alongside the Methodist Church and other churches in Shetland to provide pastoral care and practical support through regular lunch clubs and a food bank. The project also works in partnership with the local authority, and with non-governmental organisations, who often refer people to '*Food for the Way*' for support. A diverse group of 'friends' come along each week, with differing needs and issues. They value conversation, being listened to and sometimes much needed space to 'be', as well as enjoying a delicious hot cooked meal, prepared and served by the multi-skilled volunteers.



A new initiative, *Fresh Start Community Gardening*, developed during lockdown, provides an ideal opportunity for members to meet safely during the pandemic. A volunteer group of gardeners and advisors helped set up the initiative. The gardening project is supported by Shetland Islands Council who own the land, and it has recently had planning permission extended for a further five years, together with additional funding. This is both encouraging and exciting!



Fresh Start Community Gardening – group in action

I have heard many stories of how the gardening has helped people’s mental health, and witnessed the delight on people’s faces when they are served up vegetables which they carefully tended in the garden. There are exciting plans for developing another area of land, inside an existing walled garden, to grow fruit and vegetables and flowers to attract wildlife. Meanwhile, the friends of the linked projects will continue to be welcomed and nurtured through good food, fellowship and gardening.

Helen Randall, Gott, Shetland

From field

Beans growing



Beans gathered



..... to fork

Meal prepared at Food for the Way, ready to serve



Growing the Kingdom through Community Gardens:

I have been involved in Gorebridge Community Garden for the last two years. The garden is a place where people meet together and socialise, enjoy the outdoors and get some exercise. Growing fruit and vegetables and sharing the produce with others is very enjoyable, and provides opportunities for Christian witness. There is nothing better than sharing an *al fresco* meal with the gardeners or donating any surplus to the local food bank.

The benefits of gardening are huge and widely recognised as helping to improve both physical and mental health, general wellbeing and deepening spirituality. Community gardens are a great resource, especially for those who don't have a garden at home. For me, being outside in nature has direct links with our Christian calling to care for God's creation and it's a place that I feel close to God.



As part of the activities of the Gorebridge Community Development Trust, we developed our community garden project. It started with a few volunteers tidying and planting the land surrounding the Beacon Community Centre, which opened in 2019. The Trust's projects have 'asset-based community development' at their heart, making sure local people can use and develop their skills, improve their health and wellbeing; and the Trust is also involved in social prescribing. The local community is empowered to start new projects, to join in, get involved and take part.

During the time of lockdown, the community garden provided the opportunity for people to socially distance in the open air, have their daily exercise and do something fruitful. One of our leading members told me: *'I live on my own and when the pandemic hit, I didn't see anyone for days on end. If it hadn't been for the Community Garden, I don't know how I would have coped. Although we kept our distance, the odd word, smile or wave from the other gardeners kept my spirits up'*.

As a Christian and a Trustee, I am enabled to listen to people, to work alongside them and build relationships. The number of garden volunteers has grown, and together we sow seeds, plant and grow a whole range of foods: from potatoes, carrots, apples and pears, strawberries, peas, beans, salad leaves, onions and chard to a whole variety of herbs and flowers. The Bible is full of rich garden imagery, so I find it easy to share the good news whenever I can.

During the winter, the group got involved in crafts and had a stall at the Christmas Craft Fair. The profit has been used for the installation of a bench and pergola in the sensory/memory garden area, and to buy toys for the 'Growgetters' children's garden. In partnership with Midlothian Council, the community gardeners have taken over the flowers beds and borders at Hunter Square in Gorebridge and we are looking at partnering with the users of a local drugs recovery programme.

Many of the SEC's churches have land that could be used for planting, and local authorities have pieces of land that can be 'adopted' by local groups. Whether it's a growing project to support your registration as an Eco Congregation, planting fruit trees to contribute to your church's carbon-neutral programme or planting vegetables for the local food bank, I would encourage everyone to have a go and see what grows!

Val Cameron, Gorebridge

Trees for Life: SEI has ‘planted’ a grove which can be viewed [here](#). It is situated at the *Trees for Life* hillside estate at Dundreggan near Loch Ness, a forest which includes pinewoods, birch and juniper woodlands, wetlands and wildflower meadows.

Trees for Life bought the Dundreggan Estate in Glenmoriston 2008 with the aim of restoring the Caledonian Forest. Once covering much of Scotland, this ancient habitat is now reduced to a few tiny fragments; less than 1% of the land area of Scotland is native pinewood.

Around half a million trees have since been planted at the site, creating a rich habitat for returning wildlife, plants and insects. Dundreggan is home to golden eagles, pine martens, red squirrels and rarely-seen invertebrates such as the strawberry spider, azure hawker dragonfly, juniper shield bug and blood-red slave-making ants.



This is a practical demonstration of SEI’s creation care. Staff and students alike are invited to contribute a tree every time they opt to travel by car instead of using public transport when attending SEI meetings or residential weekends. The trees so planted will grow for their natural lifespan, storing carbon away year on year as mitigation for carbon dioxide emitted during travel.

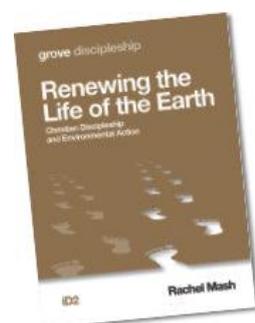
Trees for Life

SEI is well aware that this may be seen by some to be mere ‘virtue signalling’ or an attempt to salve our consciences, ‘a quick fix that allows us to continue as normal but with a green twist, rather than making real changes to behaviours and patterns of consumption’. The paper by the Revd Dr James Currall (from which that quote is taken), published in the autumn 2021 edition of the SEI [Journal](#), shows very powerfully how carbon offsetting is *not* the answer to climate justice.

But this tree-planting scheme is rather about *mitigation*, a response which states: “I’m going to make an impact whether I like it or not, and although I’ll try to reduce it, I’ll still leave a footprint somehow. So can I do something about that as well?” As the Revd Dr Rachel Mash urged us at our last Residential Weekend, each of us needs to think closely about the environmental impact of the actions we take each day – and this scheme helps us to do just that every time we travel to an SEI event. And is just one of a series of actions the community is making, as the Revd Dr Richard Tiplady’s article below makes clear.

Anne Tomlinson

“Find your heartbreak”: As Pat Ellison noted above, this is Rachel Mash’s advice in her Grove Book [Renewing the Life of the Earth: Christian Discipleship and Environmental Action](#), and it was one that she repeated to the SEI students when she spoke to them (by Zoom from South Africa) during the January Residential Weekend. It’s helpful advice, because the plethora of interconnecting issues around the environment – from fossil fuel extraction and burning to air and water quality to plastic pollution to biodiversity and species extinction to fast fashion and conspicuous consumption – is just overwhelming. We can’t do everything. But we can do something.





Richard and his wife close to the north face of Ben Nevis, February

And doing something is what the SEI students are now working on. Through the *Foundations for Ministry and Mission in Context* module, SEI students are working on how they will engage with these issues in their own lives and churches. At the March Residential Weekend, we will be joined by the Revd Elaine Garman, Rector of St John the Evangelist, Forfar and Acting Convenor of the Church in Society Committee, and Cathy Johnston, a member of the new Provincial Environment Group. They will look at the General Synod's 2021 Climate Action Plan, including the commitment to net-zero

carbon emissions by 2030, and the implications for local churches, which in a few short years many of our students will be leading and helping churches to adapt to.

Looking further ahead, in Spring 2023 the SEI will be offering modules at BA and MA level on the Christian faith and the environment. These modules will be offered primarily to those already in ministry (since those are the majority on our BA and MA courses) and can be taken on a one-off basis (that is, you don't need to be registered on one of our programmes to take them, although maybe this might encourage you to think about signing up for one of our new MA programmes). These modules will be taught through a series of immersive experiences in rural, coastal and urban locations across Scotland. For more information, or to register an interest in these courses, contact me at DMM@scotland.anglican.org.

It won't surprise those who know me that my own 'heartbreak' includes, among other things, the mountain environment of Scotland. From John Muir onwards, there is a long pedigree of conservation and environmental activism coming from the mountain and wilderness communities. It's early days for my own engagement with this, from a talk I gave in November at the Kendal Mountain Festival to a recent learning visit to the Fort William Mountain Festival. The [Outsider's Chaplain's Network](#) is a nascent group that brings together those interested in or actively pursuing a chaplaincy to the Outdoor Adventure Activities community. In September I will be running an outdoor and mountain retreat in the Lake District for [The Guild of Health and St Raphael](#) (again, to register an interest or ask a question, email me). And finally, I have been invited to give the annual [Denis Duncan Lecture](#) (which is run in partnership between the Guild of Health and St Raphael and The Church of Scotland) in November on the topic of wilderness, spirituality and healing. For further information on both the September retreat and the November lecture, watch this space.

The Revd Dr Richard Tiplady

MA in Contemporary Christian Leadership: Having launched the [MA in Theology, Ministry and Mission](#) this year, SEI has now been approved by Common Awards to offer the [MA in Contemporary Christian Leadership](#) from September. This is a specialised MA pathway that allows for rigorous and research-based engagement with the study and practice of leadership from a Christian perspective, oriented towards the contemporary realities of church and society. Students on both pathways can take some shared modules (including the above-mentioned module on the Christian faith and the environment), and this pathway includes specialist modules on leadership, the shape and future of the church, conflict resolution in churches, and reflective practice and collaboration. For more information, contact the Revd Dr Richard Tiplady at DMM@scotland.anglican.org. To apply to join this programme, contact the Revd Dr Michael Hull at DoS@scotland.anglican.org.

Other news

SEI student selected for 2022 Holy Land pilgrimage

St George's College, Jerusalem, is the Anglican study pilgrimage centre in Jerusalem, an institution of the Episcopal Diocese of Jerusalem. Over the past ten years, the British Regional Committee of St George's College has supported a number of British ordinands to attend summer courses at the College. Ross Stirling-Young, a first year ordinand from the Diocese of St Andrews, Dunkeld and Dunblane, has been selected for this year's course, 21 July - 3 August 2022.



During the previous Residential Weekend in January, SEI students were alerted to a document detailing the St George's College Jerusalem Ordinands' Course and application form. I felt intrigued and later read the course descriptor, itinerary and checked the college website that same night. Instantly, I knew that I had to apply!

Although I answered all the application questions to the best of my ability, I never really thought that I would be fortunate enough to be selected.

So, it came as a great surprise when I received an email a month later to say I'd been given a place, joining another 24 ordinands from throughout the UK.

However, giving credit where credit is due in my view is essential. That is why I have so much gratitude to our Principal, Canon Anne Tomlinson, for providing me with such an encouraging and supportive letter of commendation. Furthermore, I'm so appreciative of The St James Fund Committee members for accepting my grant application and assisting with additional costs involved. I consider this to be a once in a lifetime opportunity. I look forward to making life-long friends, representing the SEI within the wider Anglican Communion, and sharing my experience with my fellow students and peers upon my return.

And, of course, writing about the trip for this *Newsletter*!

Ross Stirling-Young

Supporting the students: Ross makes reference to how the St James Fund Committee has been involved in expediting his study pilgrimage to the Holy Land. Along with the equivalent fund for Lay Readers, the St James Fund gives discretionary grants to those studying for ordained ministry in the SEC (or those in their first year of ministry) in order that they may access formational experiences they could not otherwise afford. Money from the two funds can be used for educational needs (including, but not limited to, study overseas and the purchase of study materials); spiritual needs (including, but not limited to, attendance at retreats and similar events); and emotional needs (including, but not limited to, situations of hardship). Applications are scrutinised by a sub-group of the Institute Council.

The Funds are dependent on generous donations by individuals; some give by monthly Standing Order, others simply on occasion. If *you* feel moved to help students enhance their time at SEI in this way, then please do contact either the Principal (Principal@scotland.anglican.org) or the SEC Treasurer, Mr Malcolm Bett (treasurer@scotland.anglican.org) who can direct you to ways of donating.

Episcopalians and Their Ethics: A six-part series in Lent 2022

Episcopalians, like all Christians, desire to lead lives worthy of their calling in the Lord Jesus Christ. How do we lead such lives?

'*Episcopalians and Their Ethics*' is an overview of Christian Ethics from an Episcopal/Anglican perspective. It aims to develop a well-informed understanding of Christian deliberation on behaviour, and of the ways in which Anglicanism both informs and shapes the morality of individuals and communities, with case studies relating to contemporary ethical issues.

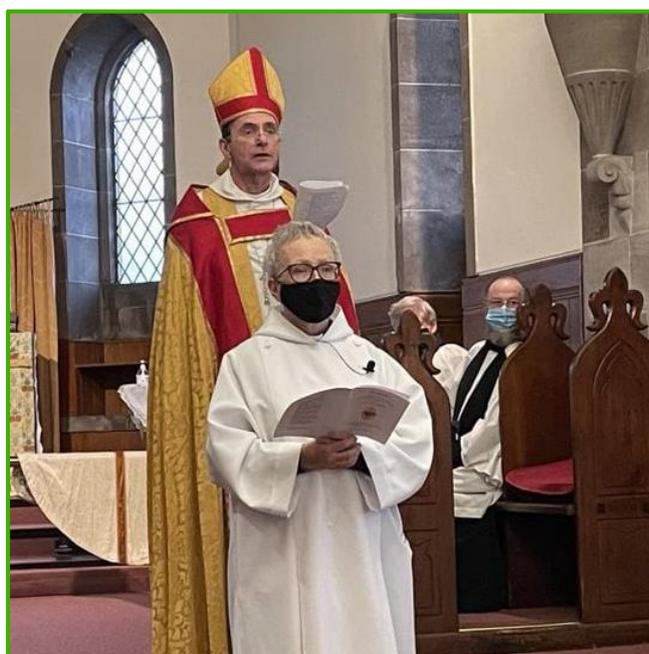


The series is offered on the six Mondays of Lent in 30-minute webinars, each of which will be recorded and available thereafter on YouTube. The series serves as a resource for Episcopalians to use creatively during the Season of Lent, for example as a refresher course for individuals or a discussion starter for a church group. The presenter is the Revd Dr Michael Hull. Time: 19.00 -19.30 on Monday evenings in Lent 2022 via Zoom. Registration is free. All are welcome. Register [here](#).

Monday 7 March:	What is Christian ethics?
Monday 14 March:	Why should I choose good over evil?
Monday 21 March:	How do I tell good from evil?
Monday 28 March:	What is conscience?
Monday 4 April:	Why follow conscience?
Monday 11 April:	Where do I go with Christian ethics?

SEI Training Fund: This month we thank the congregations of St James Stonehaven and St Ternan's Muchalls, Diocese of Brechin, for donating the offerings received at the two services of licensing on 22 January of the Revd Mary Jepp (*shown right with the Rt Revd Andrew Swift, Bishop of Brechin*) as their priest and transitional minister.

This appointment is part of the continuing progress of the Scottish Episcopal Church in the field of 'Transitional Ministry'. The role of such a leader is to effect change and enable the shape of ministry across an area to move to a more sustainable future for the twenty-first century by asking the questions that make room for creative discernment of the future into which God is calling that congregation.



Such leaders help congregations discover the hidden treasures found in shared stories, celebrate the gifts with which a community has been endowed, explore new ways of being, and discern what's needed to lead the community in the next stage of its journey in mission and ministry. A second cohort of those training for such ministries in the SEC is currently running; the first course ran in June 2021.

Warm thanks are also paid to the Revd Anne Macdonald, DCS, for yet another generous donation.