

The Society of Friends of St Andrew's, Jerusalem

November 2020

Newsletter No 11

This year our **St Andrew's Day Service on Monday 30th November** will come from Jerusalem, led by the Rev John McCulloch, with contributions from Friends on a global basis. To join in the Service see p10.

News from The Minister



Living water

(Painting by Sieger Koder)

The picture invites us to gaze into the depth of the well of our own being with this unknown woman. She stands at the wellhead gazing into the water. She appears to be alone, both socially isolated and a lone in her contemplation [...] The well is exceedingly deep and dark, maybe symbolizing her troubled life. She, however, is framed in the light of midday. Her meeting with the Sun is already implied. Fierce light will be cast on her circumstances and, at times, she will flinch and change the subject in her ensuing conversation with Jesus [...] The many rivulets that lie under the surface of her life have come together to form a spring welling up to eternal life, just as Jesus promises. The journey towards the well is one that she hitherto made alone. Now she is conscious

that she is not alone in the events or her life, but rather that all the events have been leading her towards the One who is [...]

We Pray

*In your presence,
may we look fearlessly
at the events of our lives.
We know you are reflected
In the life of each one of us
and that you offer us
living water to refresh us.*

(Reflection by Gemma Simmonds, on Sieger Koder's painting)

Introduction and update

I include this picture and brief reflection, as we shared it as part of our Sacred Space worship which now happens on Zoom (more on that below). At a time when many have been isolated and are looking down the deep wells of fear and the unknown, this picture and reflection was a reminder that Christ is with us, even as we look into the depths.

I got back to Israel on the 10th of September, after 5 months in Scotland. We had been in lockdown for the whole of March 2020 in Bethlehem, where there was a curfew in place and no movement. Unable to really fulfil my role, and 121, being concerned about a family being on the other side of the wall unable to get out for medical care if need be, suggested that we come home. Along with 80% of staff at 121, I was furloughed for 5 months, and spent most of my time home-schooling the children and writing. Rev Kate was able to keep an eye on

things in Israel Palestine and provide worship and attend to various other matters. Annette had been asked to return to assist the NHS with the Covid response, so she worked hard during that time.

To cut a long story short, I am now back here in Israel (which was a lengthy and time-consuming process which I am grateful to Kenny Rogers for undertaking), but the family are in Scotland, unable to return at this point as there are many restrictions on who can come back. We have put the children back into School in Scotland in the meantime, as we felt the interaction with other peers would be beneficial for their psychological wellbeing after such a prolonged lockdown. The hope is that they will be able to join me here as soon as that is possible. It is so difficult to make any plans given the context we are in, so please keep us as a family in our prayers.

I am currently based at St Andrew's Jerusalem Guest House, as I am not allowed to head into the West Bank at the moment (instruction from 121 to do with health insurance liabilities), although I am hoping this will change with time as much of my work (and our home) is there. It is strange being here alone, as the Guesthouse is closed due to Covid, so I am the only 'guest', but lovely to be back in Jerusalem again.

Rev Kate McDonald

I was sad to see my colleague Rev Kate leave and return to the USA. She will be greatly missed, and we wish her well for the new chapter ahead. Kate and I have been able



to do a full handover via Zoom, and I will be subsuming part of her work until/if we are granted a replacement.

Unsure about what the Kirk's intention is in terms of any replacement, I have met with our Ecumenical Associates, in order to see how we can continue to offer worship at both Jerusalem & Tiberias when we re-open (Sunday @ 10am in Tiberias, Sunday @10am Jerusalem, Sunday @6pm Sacred Space Jerusalem/ Zoom).

I will probably be spending 2 Sundays a month in Tiberias, which will enable me not only to conduct worship, but to offer pastoral care to the Scots Hotel and visit our partners in the North which Kate used to look after.

St Andrews Jerusalem & Tiberias: Worship in a Covid-19 World

Throughout lockdown we have continued with worship & fellowship through a combination of approaches. We have a church WhatsApp group to keep in touch, and Kate and I have posted weekly sermons on the chat and also the church FB page.

We have also held a live Sacred Space service every Sunday @10am, which was led by Marc Falconer when I was furloughed and by me since I have been back. It has worked well, as it has brought the Jerusalem & Tiberias folk together, and others from further afield including Scotland.

Once we re-open our churches, given that I will need to be spending more time travelling up and down to Tiberias, we may keep Sacred Space as an online form of worship for the time being. We also have a mid-week coffee & zoom (and a short time of prayer to end with). This has been a good way of keeping in touch at a time when many feel isolated.

Update of St Andrew's Tiberias Church Building

The refurbishment that was carried out some years ago has transformed the church, and it is in optimal condition.



The only issue we have is with occasional vandalism, especially during the summer months. I am grateful that the Scots Hotel security are able to keep an eye on it, especially now that Rev Kate is no longer there.

Gaza

I have been in touch regularly with our partners in Gaza. As you will imagine, Covid has added further strain to an already desperate situation. We were able to send through a sizable sum of money back in the Spring of 2020, thanks to generous donations from various individuals from within the Church of Scotland (in addition to the small grants that The Middle East Secretary sends most years).

With Covid on the rise in Israel, The West Bank & Gaza, there is real concern especially within Gaza. Given that 2M people live in a space that is roughly the same size as the isle of Jura, the population density is high. Added to that, is the fact that many live in squalid conditions in refugee camps. Healthcare is stretched at the best of times, and I have heard (although need to confirm) that there is only capacity for 70 beds with full ventilation equipment for the whole population.

With a collapsed economy now in free fall with pandemic closures, and a debilitated population with poor nutrition and basic healthcare, the situation is very serious. The only silver lining is that the population of Gaza has a high

percentage of young people, who are more likely to recover from Covid.

I am in touch with Gaza most weeks, and will continue to try and advocate on their behalf, not just across the CoS but further afield. When the situation opens up, I will be looking to go back to Gaza and take some resources with me.

Other partner (and non-partner) work

All of the Church of Scotland partners have been visited (some numerous times) by myself and Rev Kate, advocacy reports have been written, funding secured from advocacy and the generosity of individuals and congregations across The Church of Scotland. This is in addition to the grants that are secured by The Middle East Secretary every year. With 121 budgets dwindling, there will be considerably less funds available (if any at all) for partners, so I will try and really push the advocacy writing. With Kate now gone, I will need to find a way of visiting all the partners. My idea is to be in Tiberias x2 Sundays a month, and then spend Monday in the North doing partner work that Kate did, on my way back to Jerusalem.

Israel

I won't say much about Israel at this point as many of you will have been following the news. Covid has spiked, we are in full lockdown, airport is closed and there is a political crisis brewing (and considerable public anti-government demonstrations etc). With the normalisation of ties with neighbouring Arab states, there is a sense in which Israel is being emboldened. But unless there is some movement towards a just resolution for the Palestinians, any long-term stability and peace is unlikely.

I have had contact with some Rabbis since being back, and joined in an interfaith Bible Study

with rabbis and others which has provided an excellent forum for bridge building and dialogue with our Jewish friends.

West Bank

Eco Chapel at Tent of Nations Olive Grove Chapel – Tent of Nations, Bethlehem

At the General Assembly in May 2019, a deliverance was passed which instructed the World Mission Council *“to assist the Tent of Nations in creating a sacred space for worship amongst the threatened olive groves and invite other agencies and congregations to help and identify with this project”* (9b).

This project is well underway, and money has been coming in from across the parishes in Scotland to enable it to happen. Daoud is very encouraged by this, and as soon as Covid restrictions are lifted, the idea is for me and others to hold regular communion services there, as an act of sacred resistance and solidarity, amidst the threatened trees.



Last month, the ToN was attacked by some people from within the Palestinian community from the neighbouring village of Nahalin.

They smashed up solar panels, broke in to one of the dwellings and caused considerable damage. The motive is that some are claiming part of the land as theirs, so the ToN is now completely surrounded and isolated, with threats of demolition and violence from the settlers and also from within the Palestinian community itself.

It is therefore important to start communion services there as soon as possible, to stand shoulder to shoulder with our friends, and be alongside them at this time.

Tabeetha

Our Executive Director Mona Ashkar is doing a great job in difficult circumstances, and we have a re-constituted Board of Governors that has considerable expertise in the field of education. There is great hope that the school will go from strength to strength under new management. I was able (just days before lockdown) to attend the Graduation ceremony for the class of 2020. It had been postponed since June 2020 due to Covid, so it was wonderful to be there, say a prayer and blessing over the students, and talk with parents and some staff (reduced numbers due to social distancing etc).

I will continue to deliver assemblies (maybe via Zoom) and engage with my role as chaplain there in the months ahead.

Visas

Visa renewals have been obtained for all our Ecumenical Associates, and I am in the process of trying to get more for a potential Methodist EA. At the moment no new clerical visas are being issued, so everything is uncertain.

Conclusion

It is great to be back, although there is so much uncertainty over the days ahead and what will happen in terms of my family being able to join me etc, so I am grateful for your continued prayers.

In this uncertain troubled the world, may the church both here in the Holy Land and across Scotland and beyond, be communities of compassion and healing for our world.

I leave you with the words of Father Henri Nouwen, writing about Gustavo's Gutierrez's book *We Drink from our own Wells* (see image below).



The spirituality of liberation touches every dimension of life. It is truly a biblical spirituality that allows God's saving act in history to penetrate all levels of human existence. God is seen here as the God of the living who enters into humanity's history to dispel the forces of death, wherever they are at work, and to call forth the healing and reconciling forces of life.

Rev John McCulloch

Appreciation – The Rev Alistair McGregor

And there I was back in June: thinking that this ghastly Covid-19 pandemic was at least beginning to be vaguely 'liveable' with in lock down; that there was the possibility of a light, however dim, further down the tunnel; that the precautions we were and are all taking were having an effect; that one was at least looking forward to the possibility of being able to see more friends under the expected rigid, and rightly so, pre-conditions; and then the dreadful news of Alistair McGregor's hugely sad death hit us all.

Alistair had led the Society so well over four years from 2014. He proved to be the consummate leader of the Friends. He listened to all opinions, gave everyone an opportunity to have their say, then summed up the position and gave clear guidance for the future. This should have come as no surprise to those who knew his background. Alistair started off his legal career after Oxford and Edinburgh Universities – and indeed a spell in the Intelligence Corps – and quickly rose through the legal ranks of solicitor, WS and advocate becoming a QC.

I was hugely fortunate to be on the same visit to Israel/Palestine with Alistair and a group of Friends of St Andrews' Scots Memorial

Church. It was a wonderful few days, not least as it was a great opportunity to get to know Alistair just a little more. But even I was surprised at the breadth of his interests. After his formal legal career, he became licenced in the Church of Scotland and his first charge was as the Minister for North Leith Parish Church which he held for 15 years. After which he was pastoral Minister at St Andrew's and St George's West for 14 years. In that time, and before and after, Alistair took on plethora of other tasks, not least his promotion of Hadeel, the Kirk Care Housing Association, the Dean Orphanage Trust, Loretto School and for ten years Alistair was a General Trustee of the Church of Scotland. When he ceased that role, he became our President. The old saying 'if you want something doing, give the task to a busy man' was personified by Alistair.

The implications of Covid-19 are huge. One of the saddest things for all families that have been affected is the inability to properly mourn amongst the wider family and friends. Memorial services are events when friends who think they know the deceased so well, learn about so many other facets of the individual's life. This would certainly have been the case with Alistair. A man who never shouted from the roof tops his achievements. A Christian who had a calling and pursued it in so many different ways. It was a privilege to get to know him, just that little bit more, over the past few years.

I am sure I can say that all the Friends send our deepest sympathy to Margaret and the family. Alistair was a wonderful Christian man.

Colonel Andrew Campbell, President



Reflections – Rev Kate McDonald



It's hard to believe that it was only a year ago that I was with you on deputation. How much has changed in these past months. It feels as though we are living in a

world whose landscape is completely altered, and we will emerge eventually from this time of pandemic and lockdowns and restrictions into unfamiliar surroundings.

The landscape of my life has changed radically as well since I was with you last September. I am writing to you from the back porch of my parents' house in South Carolina watching the sky lighten over the pond, a hint of autumnal colour in the leaves on the trees and a definite chill in the air. I arrived last week, having decided to fly before both the Jewish holidays and a second national lockdown began.

And this, as many of you will be aware, will be my final letter to you. Following the sudden and tragic death in July of Scots Hotel General Manager Peter Hehle, my friend, colleague and partner, I made the difficult decision to resign from the position of Mission Partner and Minister in Tiberias. I never imagined leaving under such circumstances which, if I'm honest, still feel surreal.



Endings and transitions can be painful, even when planned, even when the promise of new beginnings lie ahead. And when they come

unexpectedly the sadness is even more acute. My final weeks were overshadowed by grief, as I packed up a life I had loved, in a place which held so many memories of joy and gratitude,

and stepped forward into an uncertain future. The Covid-19 pandemic meant that a farewell service or gathering was impossible, and most of my goodbyes were said via WhatsApp or Zoom.

The managers and staff of the Scots Hotel were of course also shocked and devastated by Peter's death, and each day



when I went to the hotel, they wanted to share stories of him. We cried and laughed together as we remembered him, and I was moved by how many said they now see their work as a tribute to him. The hotel had opened at the start of July and was full with local tourists throughout August and into the first week of September. As I was leaving, however, the hotel was closing once again in preparation for the national lockdown.

Since March, the congregations of St Andrew's Jerusalem and Tiberias have been meeting online for worship and fellowship. Even when we were permitted to open our churches, we felt the online services allowed a unique opportunity for the two congregations to pray and grow together, and with Rev John furloughed in Scotland until July, it would have been a challenge to hold worship in the two churches. It is strange to think that our final communion service together was back in February. None of us could have imagined then what lay ahead.

Our partners face an uncertain future as well, and yet their creativity and adaptability in the face of so many changes and challenges continue to inspire me.

[House of Grace](#) (*click here*) has continued to receive newly released prisoners throughout the last six months, and created a separate area for them to quarantine before they joined the rest of the community. The first session of their big brother/big sister mentor programme had to finish early in the spring as a result of the lockdown, but several of the young people and their mentors valued the relationships that had been built and maintained contact by WhatsApp throughout the summer. The youth programme also had to adapt to ever-changing regulations, pausing initially for the lockdown, then continuing in smaller numbers as restrictions eased. Some of its activities also moved online, though limited access to technology was a challenge for some of their youth.

[Sadaka-Reut](#) (*click here*) in Jaffa was one of our first partners to furlough staff when most of their community and university programmes had to stop. But they brought the group facilitators and other staff members back to work over the summer for a time of strategic planning and restructuring to create a way of working and offering programmes which will be more adaptable to the changing needs of their community in Jaffa which is facing the effects of gentrification and increasing marginalisation and discrimination. They have now held several virtual tours of Jaffa for the international community to raise awareness of its rich and complex history.

Sindyanna has weathered this storm surprisingly well. Their factory workers have continued to produce olive oil and za'atar throughout the past six months, following government guidelines for working. And they have seen an increase in sales of olive oil worldwide. Hadas, the Director, suggested this is perhaps a result of

people staying home and cooking more, and wanting to support small ethical businesses. Bank Hapoalim, one of

Israel's largest banks, chose two of Sindyanna's olive oils (including one made from olives from the Scottish Grove), for its Rosh Hashanah gift package. And despite the pandemic, Sindyanna has won more than 10 international awards for its oils.

Many of our partners rely on international tourism for both income and advocacy, and they have felt acutely the impact of the closure of Israel's borders to foreign nationals. Many of them have held webinars and online interviews to continue awareness of the issues they are facing. And as international donors experience funding cuts as a result of the current crisis, our partners are affected.

An air of uncertainty and frustration hangs over the nation as unemployment stays high and small businesses struggle to survive. People are increasingly unhappy with the government's handling of the pandemic and are concerned that religious and political motives are being prioritised over public wellbeing, leading to long debates and last-minute changes to regulations. While Israel seemed to handle the first wave of infections well and the public were surprisingly compliant during the first lockdown, cases have now soared, hospitals are reaching capacity, and people are exploiting loopholes in the regulations or defying them outright.



Throughout the past months, it has felt like our presence and solidarity as a church has been needed more than ever. So as I leave, I am grateful that Reverend John has been able to return to Israel to be amongst our partners, staff, and congregations.

All that has happened in the last months, personally, nationally, internationally, serves as a stark reminder that none of us can know what lies ahead.

Perhaps poet Mary Oliver was saying something in her poem Summer Day: *Doesn't everything die at last, and too soon? / Tell me, what is it you plan to do / with your one wild and precious life?*



As I have reflected on the experiences of the past five years and thought about all the people I have met and worked alongside, I have come to see that they have taught me to live and love fully, to embrace this one wild and precious life I have

been given, and to use it to do whatever work is needed that others too may live and love fully.

Friends, thank you for your prayers for me and for those I have served throughout these years, and for the prayers which see me and them into this new chapter. If you wish to keep in touch, my new contact details are below.

With every blessing,
Kate (email: rev.kate.mcdonald@gmail.com)

Rev Kate McDonald
Former Minister St Andrews Tiberias



Partners supported by St Andrews

Churches

Episcopal Diocese of Jerusalem and HL
Evangelical Lutheran Church of Jordan and HL
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Jerusalem

Breaking the silence?
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Sabeel
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YWCA of Palestine

Bethlehem & West Bank

Al Sherouq School
Bethlehem Bible College
Episcopal Training and Vocation Centre (ETVTC)
Joint Advocacy Initiative
Kairos Palestine
Military Court Watch
Tent of Nations
Hebron International Resources Network

Tel Aviv

New Profile
Who Profits?
Physicians for Human Rights (PHRI)
Parents Circle
Sadaka Reut

Northern Region

Afnan al Galil
Galilee Society
WAC Maan
House of Grace
Sindyanna

Gaza

Al Ahli Hospital
Aftaluna
Womens programme centres
Palestinian Centre for Human Rights
Near East Council of Churches NECC
YMCA Gaza

Beduoin & other

Khan Al Ahmer
Um Al Khair

Middle East Update – as at September 2020

The recent world-wide situation needs no introduction, and of course has had a major impact in Israel as it has here. Below I will give a brief summary of what has happened over the last few months.

In March, the decision was made to bring John McCulloch and his family back from Bethlehem due to the worsening situation there. There was an inability to move around and a state of emergency declared, which gave too much risk for the family as a whole. He was furloughed for a number of months, before coming back to work in August. The hope is that John (without his family at present) will return in mid-September, although he will not be able to go back to Bethlehem at the present time, and until the state of emergency is lifted.



The **Guesthouse** was being renovated during the winter, and has not re-opened since. The good news is that the renovations have finally been completed (in late August) and there are now simply defects to fix. I am aware that we have had discussions around whether

FOSAJ would like to contribute to some aspect of the renovations, and it would be good to discuss this when it is possible to do so. The Guesthouse will remain closed currently as no tourists are able to enter the country, but they are now hosting some events, which is helping a little with the cash and staffing situation. Lilian Lepejian returned off maternity leave on 1 September, following the birth of her twins in late April.

The **Church in Jerusalem** is still closed and will remain so until it is safe for everyone to return, according to the regulations.

Tabeetha School

had one of the bumpiest rides. After being closed when the lockdown occurred, it then re-opened for a few days before



being closed due to a staff member and children testing positive for covid-19. It then re-opened for a few days before the end of term. School began again on 1 September with huge restrictions and new requirements. The new Executive Director, Mona Ashkar, has done a phenomenal job in organising and planning everything so that school could re-open safely.

The staff of the **Scots Hotel**, and many others, were rocked in early July with the death of the Hotel Manager, Peter Hehle. Peter had worked with us for almost 10 years, and had been a key part of not only the hotel, but also the leadership team of the Church of Scotland. It was a sudden loss and left everyone in shock. The Hotel had just re-opened and has performed very well in the last two months due to the increase in local tourism. The Hotel is being led well by two of the Senior Team at the current time, and is open for business. Occupancy was excellent in August due to the locals taking holidays 'at home', but this has not been without its challenges.

Sadly, following Peter's death, **Kate McDonald** decided to resign from her post, and return to the USA to be with her family in the middle of September. Kate has done excellent work with us during the last 5 years, and she will be missed by many. Kate has been in regular contact with all our partners, as well as helping with much of the pastoral work at the Hotel. She has also managed to grow the regular congregation in Tiberias and has seen many more pilgrim groups attending. Kate leaves with our best wishes for the future.

Kenny Roger, Middle East Secretary

St Andrew's Day Service 30th November 2020



Circumstances this year have presented us with the exciting opportunity to bring you our annual St Andrew's Day Service direct from the Holy Land, no matter where you are.

Led by the Minister, the Rev Dr John McCulloch, it will be based on the traditional service from St Andrew's, Jerusalem, incorporating readings, music and thoughts from the Holy Land. Threaded into the format will be the traditional element from Scotland – the address given by the recently retired Moderator, the Very Rev Colin Sinclair.

This year's 'retiral collection' will go towards the invaluable work done by the joint advocacy initiative of the YMCA in East Jerusalem with the YWCA of Palestine. ([click here](#))

Details of how you can participate, along with how you can contribute towards our chosen project, will be circulated in good time.

Of course your support in widely sharing this information is hugely appreciated.

Our AGM

As you will be aware, the AGM is normally held just prior to the General Assembly in May. Neither of these events took place. At present there are no immediate plans to hold the AGM. We will of course keep you updated once a new date has been confirmed.

Scholarship News

Craig Dobney – 2018



We are absolutely delighted to share news of our scholar from 2018. Craig Dobney (who is now an active member of our Administrative committee) has just been selected to be in charge of Comrie linked with Dundurn. Warmest congratulations and blessings from The Friends to both Craig and Donna as, together, they embark on Craig's first ministry.

Let Craig share with you the influence of his scholarship on his faith and ministry

Well it has certainly been a rollercoaster year so far for all of us including probationer ministers like myself! As I approach the end of my training and look forward to entering into the realms (and realism) of full-time ministry, I have an opportunity to look back and look forward. Looking back I am so thankful to have received so many exciting opportunities to travel around the world. Every visit transformed me in some way, but none more so than my trip to Israel/Palestine made possible by the generosity of the Friends.

The people I met, the experiences I had, the places I saw combined to bring a new dimension to my theological thinking, to my preaching, to my understanding of the Middle East and to my pastoral ministry. Those experiences will remain with me and help to form an important additional context as I become the minister of Comrie linked with Dundurn in late November.

One might ask what that means in reality but it is a difficult thing to explain. However I will try.

As we approach the end of the period of Christendom, a period blighted by the overwhelmingly Western, white, male, middle class superiority approach to Christianity, one can begin to glimpse the exciting changes occurring within the church around the world. The acceptance of the authority of Christ is returning, but it is Jesus the Jew, Jesus the Nazarene, Jesus the Palestinian, the Jesus of colour, the Jesus of the Bible; the Jesus who preached love of our neighbours, the Jesus who preached love of God our Father. I reckon that was the biggest change in me. In my travels around the Holy Land, I was finally able to see Jesus as he truly is. Not the white guy in the children's bibles but a Middle Eastern guy who just happens to be the Son of God and my personal Saviour. I do so hope to return to Israel/Palestine one day as there is so much more I would like to see and do. There are so many more people I would like to meet and get to know. There is so much more I would like to learn.

For now though, God has other plans and the excitement continues for Donna and I in the coming weeks and months.



Every blessing,

Craig Dobney

Scholarship Student 2018

Awards 2020

Two scholarships were awarded in February this year. Due to Covid neither of the winners have yet been able to fulfil their plans. However, we have given them the opportunity to introduce themselves to you as they await that green light.

George Sneddon

There is a familial and emotional tie to the land of Israel and Palestine that I have always felt hovered in the distant psyche of my mind. My paternal grandmother was born in Haifa and this journey would not only be a way for me to delve into



culture, experience God in a new way, and witness first-hand the important work of many charities and agencies at work there, it would also include a little diversion into my family history which I was profoundly excited about.

As preparations took place I was anticipating more and more about the experience itself and I was threw myself into engaging with a variety of different people to work with, folk I could learn from, and who could give perspective, context and depth to the otherwise complex and paradoxical world of the Holy Land.

I had opportunities booked to lead worship both at Galilee and in Jerusalem, to explore the work of organisations such as KAIROS, the Bethlehem Icon centre, Bridges for Peace and the Sindyanna Workshops. It was to be an enlightening, enlivening and enveloping trip lasting almost five weeks. My flights were booked and I had secured accommodation.

Then along comes Covid.

Since my trip was in June, I had further organized to travel again in August which was subsequently

cancelled and I have now delayed the trip until June/July 2021 and I am already thinking about how that will look, and of course, whether it will actually go ahead.

In the meantime, I have successfully completed two of three of my study placements and I am currently serving my final one at Claremont Parish Church under the



Rev Gordon Palmer. This will also be my final year at University before progressing with Probation in Autumn 2021. It's all very exciting, and very much overflowing with blessing.

The Covid period has provided significant personal reflection for me as I know it has for many of the faithful. I have tried to rededicate myself to Holy practices by focusing on prayer, ancient contemplations such as Ignatian worship, and on getting through an ever-growing reading list. I've had the joy of working with rural churches during the summer as well as my good friends over at [Sanctuary First](#) ([click for the link](#)) which have provided theological elasticity in practical ministry. Finally, I committed to working through the Psalms one by one each week, and will finish my update by telling you that I'm encouraged and inspired by 'the joyful and praiseworthy unknown' that my thoughts are not His thoughts, my plans are not His plans, and my ways are not His ways. And most of all, His time is perfect and when it happens, the lamp to my feet and the light to my path will be given when he intends it to be given.

In the name of the Lord Jesus, may I extend every hope, blessing and joyful unknown to you all too.

*George Sneddon
Scholar 2020*



Clarke Muir



Just before lockdown, anticipation of the scholarship trip was something I was experiencing on a daily basis; I had announced my trip on my Facebook page, paid my flights and accommodation and an

itinerary was beginning to take shape. With John not being scheduled to be in Jerusalem in August, my communications were almost entirely with Kate. Dates and excursions were largely influenced by her experience and recommendations so I was very sad to learn of her resignation.

We have to hope and believe that the doors will open for this to happen next year. I must acknowledge that Israel and Palestine have required completely locking down again and this has been without tourism! Nevertheless, we rest in the knowledge that God is sovereign, that He loves Israel, and He loves us - His church - we will be able to visit in God's time.

My knowledge of the Holy Land has increased hugely since being awarded the scholarship. When I eventually get there, I will benefit greatly from my preparatory work which has been fuelled completely by excitement and genuine interest in the history and current circumstances. I am in regular contact with George Sneddon and we both speak of the prospect in certain terms.

I resigned from my 31-year Social Work career in July as the initial plan was, to go to Israel and Palestine for the month of August. However, I began full-time study and training in September with the Church of Scotland. I am currently on placement with Reverend Alastair Duncan at St

George's Tron (SGT) in Buchanan Street, Glasgow (which also accommodates The Wild Olive Cafe). The city centre experience is quite unique and the church engages directly and meaningfully with marginalized groups including homeless persons and ex-offenders trying to rebuild their lives. I will remain at SGT until after Easter and the end of my second year of BA Theological Studies.

By May, I should know where my summer placement is going to be. Ordinarily, this is a 10-week full-time experience spanning June to August. However, 121 is aware of my scholarship award and they are flexible in terms of incorporating my time in the Holy Land into the overall learning requirements of the 'summer placement'. This would mean that I would serve with another minister here in Scotland for approximately six weeks just before or immediately on my return.

In my current placement, we are working through the book of Ezra and we noticed the protracted frustrations with the rebuilding of the Jerusalem walls in particular. It is easy to lose sight of this detail but it was a reality for Nehemiah who had to be patient in order to see the completion of the work. We will continue to pray, press and make every effort with our plans but we must also rest in faith knowing that God has Israel and our trip will open up in His time.

The opportunity remains a very exciting prospect and I thank you all again for the award.

Clarke Muir
Scholar 2020



Together there are ways we can lend our support...

Bookmarks



Already isolated in a village near Hebron, Surif Women's Cooperative depends on sales of their embroidered work as they struggle to survive. As Friends we have undertaken to support them through their intricately woven bookmarks. At £6 each (including postage), the funds from every purchase will directly benefit the cooperative. Enquiries for all orders should be sent to friends@standrewsjerusalem.org.

Seeds of Hope



Along with The Scots Hotel, the Guesthouse and Tabeetha, The Friends have pledged to support [Sindyanna](#) of Galilee in their Olive Grove project at Rocha. In 2019 our contribution amounted to £5,000 and we hope to continue that commitment for the next three years.

This marvelous olive grove allows promotion of the modernization of traditional Arab farming and agriculture by introducing new techniques, irrigation, and olive cultivars; aid of sustainable cultivation and agriculture; investment in all future proceeds of the grove in community projects that promote fair employment for Arab women; and oversee the entire value chain, from seed to extra virgin olive oil.

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