



Diocese of Aberdeen and Orkney
Scottish Episcopal Church
Newsletter – 16 June 2022

From the Bishop

Lift up your eyes and see the fields, because they are already white toward harvest!

(John 4:35)

This newsletter comes with the encouragement to make time to connect with the wider church and world. However heartened we might be by what is happening where we are, we can benefit by having a greater perspective on what God is doing in our world. As we 'lift up our eyes' we see concerns beyond our own, and hear the needs of those most affected by the challenges of our times, from climate change to the world wide rise in the cost of living.

Last week the **General Synod of the Scottish Episcopal Church** took place in Edinburgh. Eleven people represented the diocese, ten making the trip to the synod venue, and one person participating remotely. Other diocesan people were present in attendance or as visitors. A couple of those present for the first time have offered their reflections in this news letter. Also included here is the address from the Bishop of St Andrew's, Dunblane and Dunkeld as part of the Provincial Environment Group.

The Bishops of the Anglican Communion, who have been preparing for the **Lambeth Conference** for some time, are now making their arrangements for travel and hospitality. The theme 'God's Church for God's World' continues to inform our preparations. Included in this newsletter is information from the Archbishop of Canterbury, including the Lambeth prayer guide. Please note the invitation to the Lambeth Evensong in the diocese.

Around the diocese there were different views on the celebration of the **Queen's Platinum Jubilee**, some charges holding events, some not. The very happy event at St Mary-on-the Rock is reported below.

Finally – on **25 June** there is the first of this year's '**Let's Get Together**' events, this one at Cruden Bay. Everyone is welcome – come and enjoy the company of others from across the diocese.

Provincial Environmental Group (PEG)

At General Synod we heard from the Provincial Environmental Group, and there was an exhibit throughout the three days where we were asked our thoughts on progress at Charge, Diocese and Provincial level.

The session at Synod included a presentation on the SEC's Carbon Net Zero (how we measure, baselines, scope of action) and how we might progress. The session was opened and closed by Bishop Ian Paton, Bishop of St Andrews, Dunblane and Dunkeld who convenes PEG. The closing statement is below.



Climate change is more than just a secular environmental challenge, but one goes to the core of our faith and spirituality. It is an issue about climate and biodiversity, yes, but also a crisis about people. Those hit first by climate change are those who have contributed the least to causing it. Millions of people are already suffering. Forests and farms are turning into desert. Fires and floods and extreme weather are already with us. In time there will be food shortages, rising sea levels, and the mass migration of people. So, as Rowan Williams said recently, "For the Church of the 21st Century, good ecology is not an optional extra but a matter of justice. It is therefore central to what it means to be a Christian."

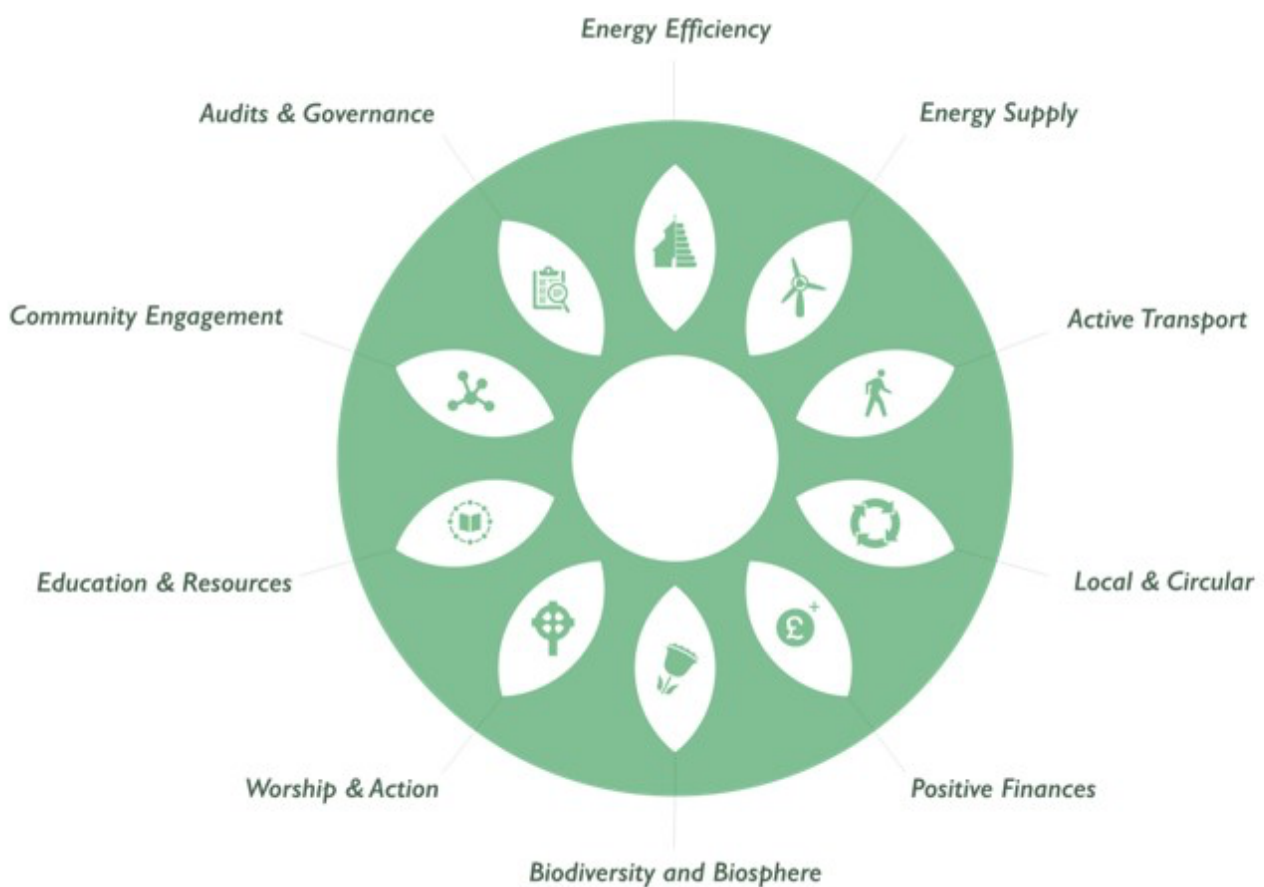
Yesterday Dave Richards reminded us that Churchill once said, "Don't let a good crisis go to waste." And at the heart of this crisis is a spiritual crisis, for humankind as a whole, for the Church, and for each person.

As the world approached the meeting of COP26 in Glasgow, Gus Speth, an American academic, wrote "I used to think that the top global environmental problems were biodiversity loss, ecosystem collapse and climate change. I thought that 30 years of good science would address these problems. But I was wrong. The top environment problems are selfishness, greed and apathy, and they need a spiritual and cultural transformation. And scientists do not know how to do that."

But, my friends, we people of faith do know how to do that. Our faith teaches us to be tenants not owners, stewards not exploiters, creatures not users, of Creation. We have often thought of ourselves as co-creators, the summit and centre of Creation, but now we need to think of ourselves as co-creatures instead, co-creatures with all life and with the earth itself.

We can re-learn this from the deep resources of our Christian faith, and share them with others. We serve a God who created all that exists, who rejoices in its flourishing, calls it “very good,” and is present and active in the world. Through our liturgy, our scriptures, and our partnerships with other churches and faith communities, we can find the language, strength and inspiration to change our lives and help others to change theirs.

That is why I truly believe that, together, we can acknowledge the dire urgency of this moment and work together towards achieving ‘net zero,’ not with despair and confusion but with hope and determination. So, as small people taking small steps in small places, keep on doing all that you are and more, and have courage because God is with us.



Notes from a General Synod Newbie

A personal perspective on the SEC's 2022 General Synod

Brian Harris, St Magnus, Lerwick, Shetland

A case of imposter syndrome

I had the genuine privilege - not a doubtful one as some had implied - of attending the SEC's General Synod between Thursday 9th and Saturday 11th June. As a resident of Scotland and SEC member for less than a year, I felt like an imposter, but Canon Neil Brice, Rector of St Magnus, Lerwick, had indicated that the Diocese would particularly welcome a (first ever) lay representative from Shetland among its quota of General Synod members.

After discussion with Neil, and in the absence of any other expression of interest, I put my name forward - then anguished about what to write in a biography to persuade Diocesan Synod members of my suitability. But there was no need to have concerned myself. It turned out that mine was the only nomination for three vacancies . . . at which point I started to worry there was something I hadn't been told!

The logistical challenge

One reason for Shetland's lack of previous lay representation soon became clear: the early-morning departure of the only Saturday flight from Edinburgh to Sumburgh, with the next not until Sunday afternoon. Most people would be unable to accommodate the five-night absence necessary to attend a three-day meeting, but being retired I was blessed with the time available.

Though five nights very nearly became six, as I resigned myself to an additional one in Aberdeen at the expense of ScotRail, when the branches of a small fallen tree became tangled in the wheels of my train back to Aberdeen. After the ensuing delay, I and others just made it onto the ferry home, despite boarding 15 minutes after the final check-in time.



St Paul's and St George's Church ("Ps and Gs"), York Place, Edinburgh, venue for the General Synod meeting ([cc-by-sa/2.0](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/2.0/) - © [Mike Pennington](https://www.geograph.org.uk/p/5417273) (Island of Unst, Shetland) - [geograph.org.uk/p/5417273](https://www.geograph.org.uk/p/5417273))

A positive experience

Notwithstanding the misgivings expressed by others beforehand, my participation in General Synod was almost - though not quite entirely - a positive experience. I now have a better understanding of the SEC's broad but distinctive character (and how it differs from the Church of England).

The meeting was preceded by a helpful "Freshers'" introduction in which the Secretary General explained Synod's protocols and processes to new members. He also pointed out that the pages of the main volume of papers were provided with perforated edges for ease of tearing . . . something open to more than one interpretation.

But a troublesome asterisk

Each day of Synod began and ended with collective worship, including an opening Eucharist during which the primus delivered his "Charge" to Synod and rightly condemned the inhumanity of the Government's intention to deport asylum seekers to Rwanda.

At other times there was Morning or Evening Prayer, during which we "observed the asterisk" indicating a mid-sentence pause between lines of the Psalms . . . but without a common understanding of the duration of the pause!

Hybrid vigour

As the first in-person Synod since 2019, participants were thankful for the opportunity to be together at the usual venue of St Paul's and St George's ("Ps & Gs" as it's known) in the centre of Edinburgh, a large evangelical church with excellent meeting facilities (and more than a thousand members).

But the meeting was a "hybrid" one that enabled, with few technical difficulties, online participation by those who, for understandable reasons, opted not to attend in person. All participants used the same "Synod Hub" online voting system that was easy to use and provided instant counts of the numbers of votes cast for and against each motion.

A little light reading

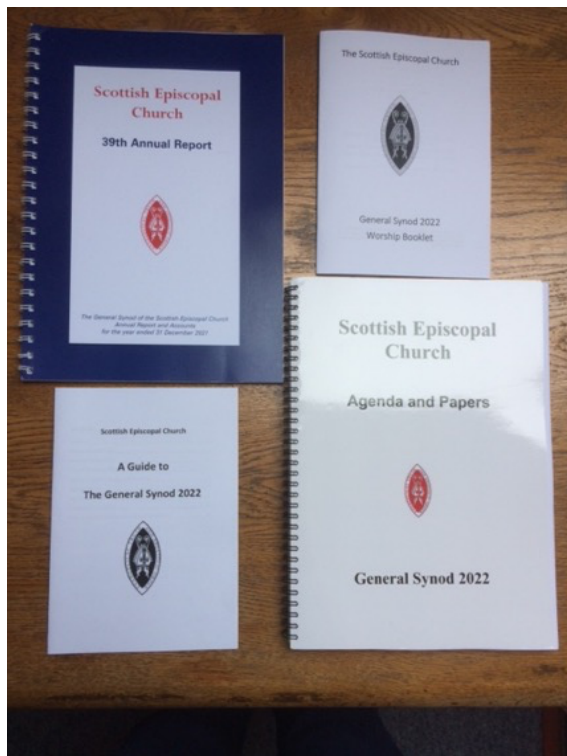
As a former administrator, I was impressed by the quality of the meeting papers. But their 350 pages were the tip of a very large iceberg. They represented an enormous amount of work by Synod's boards and committees over the past year. It was evident from the presentations made by some of those bodies that the SEC benefits hugely from the voluntary contributions of individuals with considerable expertise and professional standing.

Lacking a sense of place

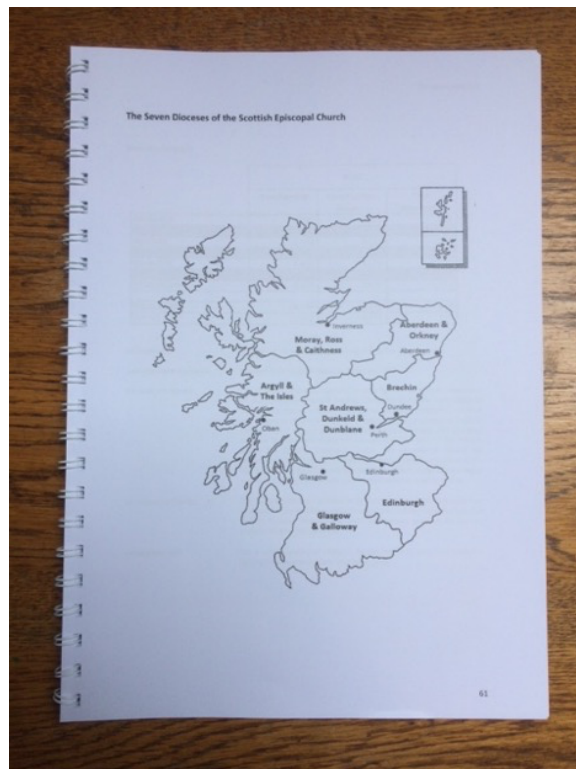
I was disappointed, though, by the map in the Synod papers (and used elsewhere) of the SEC's dioceses, which reinforces common misconceptions about both the location of the Shetland archipelago and its extent - 75 miles (and two ferries) from Sumburgh Head in the south to Muckle Flugga in the north. The map not only places Shetland (and Orkney) in a box immediately to the right of Duncansby Head, but the Northern Isles are drawn at a scale almost three times smaller than the rest of Scotland.

What's in a name?

For a place where "The English Kirk" is relatively thriving (amongst a disproportionate number of other churches, of most denominations or none), it is disappointing that the challenges of distance - both externally to the mainland and internally - are misrepresented by the Province. And while I understand the historical origins of the Diocese of Aberdeen and Orkney - with Shetland in its territory, but not its title - the name really should be expanded to accord Shetland the explicit recognition it deserves. A point made by Neil repeatedly to Synod over the years!



A little light reading - the General Synod meeting papers (just 350 pages in total)



The offending map of the SEC's diocesan territories!

A friendly atmosphere

Although Synod's business is conducted in accordance with formal, at times arcane, Rules of Order, the atmosphere was friendly and relatively informal. Clergy and laity from different dioceses were mixed, and seated around the same allocated circular tables throughout. Some discussions took place at the tables, and it was good to get to know a small group in that way.

In debates of potentially contentious motions proposing changes to the 1982 Scottish Liturgy and to Canon 4 on The Calling and Election of Bishops to Vacant Sees, both speaking and listening were respectful and attentive to opposing views.

“Evangelical Truth and Apostolic Order”

The Church of England's General Synod is seemingly dominated (though I have no direct experience of it) by blocks of conservative evangelical and traditionalist Anglo-Catholic members - and arguments between them - often to the exclusion of those with more open-minded perspectives. In contrast, the SEC's General Synod includes individuals with a similarly broad range of theological positions, but with no evidence of “party political” factions. Notwithstanding some of the differences in our own Diocese, the Province appears to embrace, more comfortably than the C of E, the “Evangelical Truth and Apostolic Order” of the SEC “strapline”, combining the best of Reformed and Catholic traditions.

Unruly rules of order

But then on Saturday, Synod was invited to approve changes to its Rules of Order proposed by the Standing Committee. An amendment to the Committee's original motion was proposed and passed, followed by a further motion that the original motion (as amended) be considered as five separate motions. That, too, was passed, but during the ensuing consideration of the individual motions, Synod's legal Assessor pointed out that the amendment of the original motion had introduced inconsistency elsewhere, necessitating further alteration to deal with its consequences!

At least, that's what I thought I understood. A few members of Synod clearly felt strongly (and not unreasonably) about the distinction between "shall" and "should normally", amongst other points. But most were, by now, baffled, bored or both. The chair of Standing Committee acknowledged her own confusion, and even one of the bishops allegedly admitted "losing the will to live".

A pause for reflection

Thankfully, we were brought to our senses by the subsequent contribution of a guest from the Society of Friends, one of several invited representatives of other denominations. (With whom I had the pleasure of sharing a table, where the output of her crocheting over the three days was prodigious!) After thanking Synod for the opportunity to attend ("I've had a ball!"), Mary read a passage from the handbook of Quaker faith and practice, then "led" a brief period of silent reflection (for which there had been a call from a speaker during the preceding debate).

A moving finale

All that had gone before was then put in perspective by a session with representatives of the Provincial Youth Committee. Unable to attend in person because her fiancé had given her the gift of COVID-19, one young woman spoke movingly on video about what the SEC had done for her. When she was just twelve years old, her father was diagnosed with Alzheimer's disease while her mother had severe mental health problems. The lovely people of her church showed concern for her parents, but none had thought to ask how she was feeling. Sitting alone, a reluctant attendee at the SEC's Glenalmond Youth Camp, and feeling overwhelmed by her family's situation, the (now) Primus came alongside her and enquired "Are you OK?", adding "I'm listening". Those few words had changed her life. That, surely, is what it's about?

On a personal note

It was a pleasure (reciprocal, I hope) to meet Revd Dr Jenny Holden of St John's, Aberdeen. We had been aware of each other vicariously from our respective contributions to *The Ringing World*, the weekly publication for church bell ringers: Jenny's as one of a rota of ministers who provide a "Thought for the Week"; mine as a prolific writer of idiosyncratic letters to the Editor. (Though long before I came to the Diocese, Jenny was taken aback on reading a letter in which I referred to her set of face masks in liturgical colours, sewn by her mother and mentioned by +Anne in an early issue of this newsletter!)

Visitor to Synod – Revd Roger Dyer

This was my first time at General Synod. It was a delight to attend as a Visitor. I experienced it as a kaleidoscope of stimulating encounters that encouraged me greatly as we work together to find God's way forward for us as Episcopalians in Scotland.

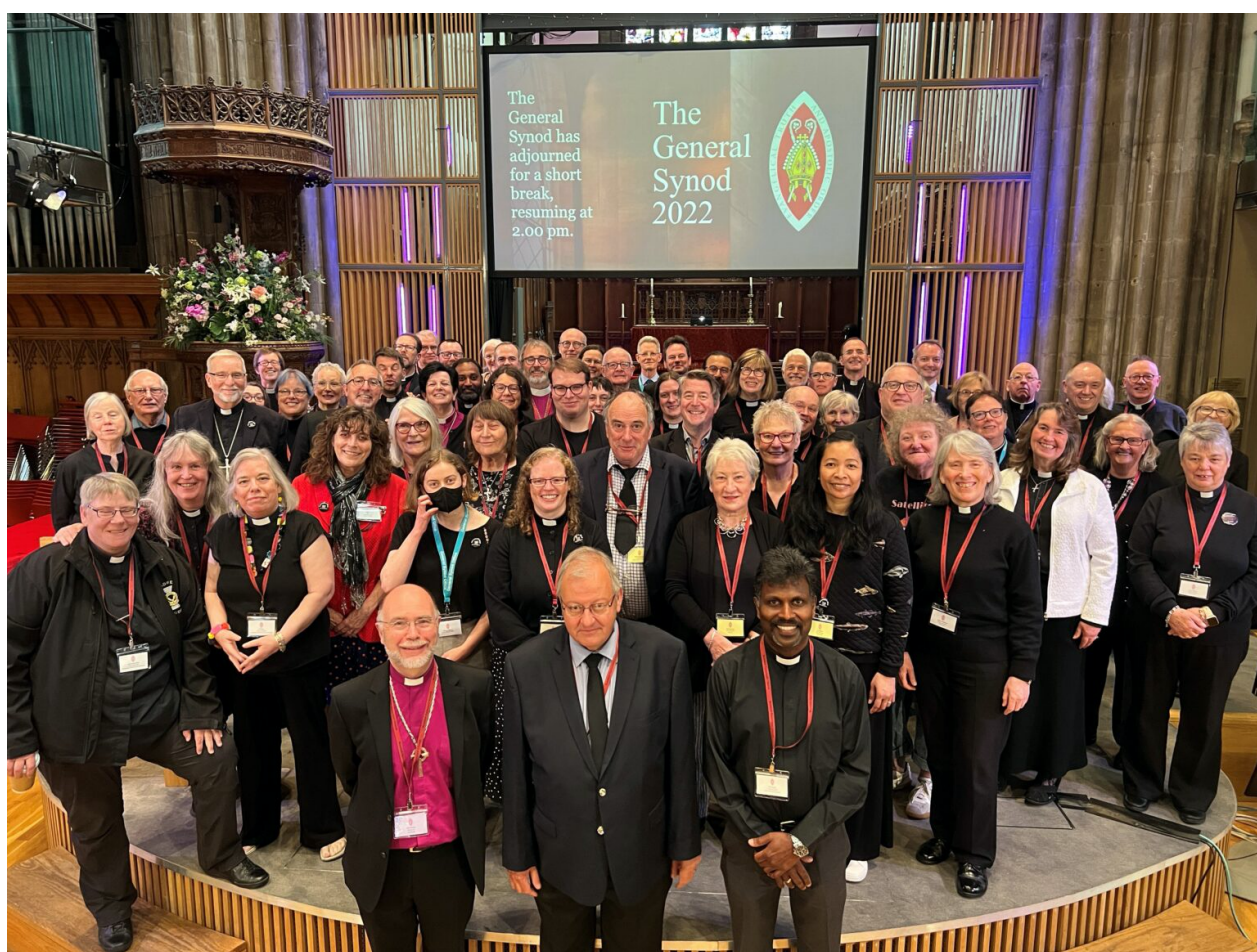
Many conversations, both in formal sessions and informally in coffee queues or over meals, were about how we had come through Covid - the hard work; the unexpected joys; the continuing challenge of finding our new shape that would incorporate the things we had learnt about worship, pastoral care and mission during those hard years.

A common thread through all these conversations was everyone's openness to talk about God. Members of Synod talked about what they had learnt about God through the Covid experience - the steadfast presence of God, the vital place of faith through these years and the cherishing of the community that belonging to Church had provided.

I found that those outside of General Synod (passersby in the street, staff in shops, transport and restaurants) were also open to have conversation about spiritual things. Was this just the high number of clerical collars walking about Edinburgh New Town or was it the openness to the questions of life that many Synod delegates said they were experiencing in their home communities?

A waiter paused to talk to me. 'Are you a priest?' (Dog collar. Big clue!) 'Yes'. 'Do you believe in God?' 'Yes. And how about you? Is it something that's part of your life?' The conversation lasted about ten minutes. We agreed that owning more and more things did not assuage spiritual hunger or answer the big questions of life - only relationship with God could do this. He prayed daily and read the scriptures although he didn't go to church. He wanted to know how I thought you could be fit for heaven. I tried to explain grace! It was a wonderful conversation. Fadel was a young British muslim. We had much in common.

Thursday's in Black



During the opening day, many Synod members dressed in black to show support for the [Thursdays In Black](#) campaign (as pictured above), a global movement urging an end to violence against women.

Read more about the SEC general synod on the Provincial Website

<https://www.scotland.anglican.org/general-synod-2022-day-by-day-reports-and-photos/>

Fifteenth Lambeth Conference

26 July – 8th August 2022

Convened by The Archbishop of Canterbury in 2022, the Lambeth Conference is a gathering of bishops from across the Anglican Communion for prayer and reflection, fellowship and dialogue on church and world affairs. The theme for 2022 is ‘God’s Church for God’s World - walking, listening and witnessing together,’ the conference will explore what it means for the Anglican Communion to be responsive to the needs of a 21st Century world.

The programme themes will include Mission and Evangelism, Safe Church, Communion, Reconciliation, Environment and Sustainable Development, Christian Unity, Interfaith Relations and Discipleship. Wider themes will also be considered including ongoing response to a world changed by COVID-19 and the relationship of the Church with the increasing role of science and technology in our lives.

In a change to previous Lambeth Conferences, there will not be resolutions from the meeting. Instead ‘calls’ will be issued. In a video message announcing the change the Archbishop of Canterbury, Justin Welby said that this was because the Lambeth Conference’s role is to “discern what God is saying to the Church, but to offer that discernment . . . to the whole Church, to every single one of the Provinces. It’s not there to order people about.” After the conference, Bishops will meet in small video conference groups to reflect on the calls made by the conference and how they might be implemented by their dioceses.



A prayer guide for the Lambeth Conference has been released. As the conference draws closer conference delegates and their churches and communities are invited to pray for the Lambeth Conference - and the impact it can have on the life of the Anglican Communion in the decade ahead.

A short prayer guide is available for churches and communities that would like to pray for the conference and all those attending, to download visit

<https://www.lambethconference.org/resources/prayer-guide/>.



**Diocese of Aberdeen and Orkney
Lambeth Evensong**

Sunday 24 July, 5pm, St Mary's Pro-Cathedral, Carden Place

God's Church for God's World

A number of bishops from The Episcopal Church are visiting the Diocese ahead of the Lambeth Conference. We will be pleased to welcome the Bishops of Alabama, Georgia, Minnesota and Missouri, together with Bishop Laura Ahrens, the suffragen bishop from our partner diocese of Connecticut.

You are warmly invited to come to worship with us,
and join us in prayer for the Lambeth Conference.

Ellon's Jubilee Tea

Revd Dr Dennis Berk

After a long time of being socially isolated due to the Coronavirus pandemic, Saint Mary-on-the-Rock finally was able to throw open the doors and welcome people to come and enjoy our hospitality. The extended Bank Holiday weekend created for the UK's celebration of the 70th Anniversary of the Queen's reign provided the perfect opportunity to invite the people of Ellon to a *Jubilee Tea*.

This tea party was part of a "*Community Café*" project funded by a Recovery & Renewal Grant, and it fulfilled its intended purpose of reaching out to the people of our community of Ellon and its environs, providing a venue in which to re-connect with others and to engage socially after so many months of separation and isolation due to the restrictions of Covid-19. With more than half of those attending being "new faces" rather than members of our congregation, it was great to be making contact with people of the town. The "proof is in the pudding" and from the comments made by our visitors, some of whom had never before been here, it was evident that they left being able to say "*I had a great time at Saint Mary's!*"



Saint Mary's Hall was decorated in a festive theme of red, white and blue as balloons, bunting and bouquets of flowers adorned the room. Each table was elegantly arranged with bone china cups and saucers in readiness for the sandwiches and cakes which were to be served to the guests. Outside three gazebos were erected, and these offered people an opportunity to dine outdoors and enjoy the warm weather that blessed the day. Throughout the course of that afternoon an estimated 200 people were served, and the volunteers literally were on-the-go the entire time catering to the needs of all those who were dining inside the Hall and outside in the gazebos. It was a lot of work for the volunteers who were staffing this event, but with grace, charm and efficiency they served each guest with a smile and never failed to convey the warmth of a genuine welcome.

There was no entry or admission price for this event. Instead a basket was available in which people could deposit whatever donation they desired for the two charities that we were supporting: *The Queen's Green Canopy* and *Ukrainian Aid* through the Disasters Emergency Committee. The interior of Saint Mary-on-the-Rock was decorated with an abundance of flowers, and in the windows of the church there were four Prayer Stations. At each of these there was a candle burning before a card containing a prayer for people to read on these four themes: the Queen's anniversary; the Ukraine; world peace, and the environment/climate change. Perhaps one of the clearest expressions of what a positive impact this celebratory occasion had upon the people who attended it is seen by the generosity with which they supported the two charities. £1063 was collected for these two worthwhile causes, and it was a joy to observe the shared spirit of community goodwill that overflowed with a generosity of reaching out to others, both friend and stranger.



Other News



On Sunday 29 May Joy Whitelaw retired from active ministry as a Lay-reader in Shetland. On that Sunday her ministry was recognised by being made Lay-reader Emeritus (Emerita!!). The churches' thanks was led by Canon Neil Brice, see here with Joy.



On Sunday 22 May the Bishop confirmed Jim Fletcher, and Murrone and Alexa More, at St Peter's, Peterhead.



DIOCESAN GET TOGETHER AGAIN!

1.30pm, 25TH June 2022, Cruden Bay

Join up with friends old and new as we enjoy this delightful seaside village.

Meet at 13h30 at the **free Parking** (with toilets) on Main Street, Cruden Bay. If you enter Cruden Bay from the south – Main Street is a right turn sign posted “Beach and Harbour”. Parking is as the road bears right.

There is a well-kept, gently rising footpath to the cliffs and New Slains Castle. On the flat, Harbour Street leads to St Erroll Harbour or you can take the Ladies Footbridge across the sandy beach.

After our walk, we are invited by Fr Dennis and the congregation of St James to join them for Evening prayer at 15h30. St James is 1 mile west of Cruden Bay village on the A975. You can see it clearly atop Chapel Hill. There is ample parking.

What will I need?

Comfortable shoes to walk in and a waterproof coat. Bring your own snack tea and drinks as there is limited choice in Cruden Bay, but many lovely places to enjoy a picnic

LET'S GET TOGETHER AGAIN!

July and August events

16th July - Old Aberdeen.

1.30pm Meet at St Machar's Cathedral South Door for a short guided tour, walk to King's College Chapel via Botanic Gardens and Old Town House.

2.30pm King's College Chapel open for visits, guided tour and organ recital

3.45pm Evening Prayer at King's College Chapel



20 August - Royal Deeside

Further details to follow



From the Bishop's Diary – for your prayers

Sunday 19 June – 11am, St John's Aberdeen

Friday 24 June – Diocesan Standing Committee

Saturday 25 June – Let's Get Together: Cruden Bay

Sunday 26 June – 10.30am, St Clement's, Mastrick

Tuesday 28 & Wednesday 29 June – College of Bishops

Thursday 30 June – Provincial Standing Committee

Friday 1 July – Thursday 8 July – holiday

Thank you for your prayers and messages – these are a great encouragement to me. +Anne

Provincial Services

Service links are available from the Scottish Episcopal Church website, and on the Provincial Facebook page

Sunday at 11am Services from the Dioceses

'Children's Chapel' is back on the first Sunday of every month.

Other services

Details of services live-streamed or broadcast by churches across the diocese and province are available from the churches' websites and facebook pages.

This **newsletter** comes as a PDF, and an on-line copy can be read on the Diocesan website.