

OPEN HOUSE

Comment and debate on faith issues in Scotland

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Opening hearts and minds to
refugees and asylum seekers

The role of education in places
of conflict and chaos

Which way for the church?
Exploring new directions

In search of good government

In his letter of 6th January, Bishop William Nolan, President of the Catholic bishops' Justice and Peace Commission, urged Scottish Catholics to get more involved in politics. Voting is not enough, he says. Governments can't be left to get on with solving major issues. Good government requires people of good will to join political parties so that they can help choose candidates and influence party policies. They should also speak up in public. Pope Francis described political engagement as one of the highest expressions of charity – but it also requires courage because it is a 'kind of martyrdom'.

Sophie Walker, who resigned in January as leader of the Women's Equality Party thinks good government requires a new political model. The WEP manifesto calls for equal representation in politics, business and education; equal pay; equal treatment of women in the media; equal parenting rights; and an end to violence against women. In order to make her case in the media, Walker found that she first had to prove that the issues actually existed. She concluded that public debate needed to be changed, and new kinds of political leadership developed. Brexit, she says, is the ultimate demonstration of how broken our democracy is.

On yer bike!

A couple of years ago a 27 year old Londoner of Jewish and Irish origins bought a bicycle for £70 in a second hand shop. He had decided, without any experience of long distance cycling, to travel round the coast of the British Isles.¹ His aim was to listen to the people he met. He had a small amount of money to spend on food and drink, accommodation and – not surprisingly – bike repairs. He had a smartfone and was able to save expenses by couch surfing from friends and from people who took an interest in his expedition.

Setting out at the beginning of summer he took four months for his journey. He was pleasantly amazed he was able to complete it at all. Two impressions stand out for him: the British Isles are full of tat and booze – he is a serious drinker, occasionally topping up with illegal drugs. The other thing is the rain. Even in summer it is almost merciless. He omitted to take waterproofs and was regularly drenched to the skin. It emerges that he lectures in a small university and is doing research for a PhD.

He makes his way from Essex into Suffolk and Norfolk through Grimsby and Hull into the North East before crossing the border after a visit to Lindisfarne. Scotland – east, north and west – comes out of his project relatively well. He detects that the inhabitants mostly identify as Scots which gives them a sense of commonality to fall back on. There is a certain unity of purpose which he found lacking in much of England. He notes the *Welcome to Scotland* and Scottish Saltire signs at the border. On the

Ireland's referendum experience was very different. A citizen's assembly was established by a parliamentary resolution and tasked with discussing a number of issues, including the Eighth Amendment to the Irish Constitution, which banned abortion in almost all circumstances. The assembly was composed of 99 ordinary citizens, randomly selected and broadly representative of Irish society in terms of age, gender, social class and regional spread. They deliberated on the eighth amendment over the course of five sessions from November 2016 to April 2017. They heard from 25 experts and reviewed 300 submissions from members of the public and interest groups. By the end of the process, 87 percent of them thought the constitutional provision on abortion was unfit for purpose. Their findings were reviewed by a joint committee of both houses of the Irish parliament and informed the referendum. The constitution was repealed.

Perhaps one outcome of Brexit will be that the deep seated and often toxic issues it has stirred up will be addressed in a more constructive manner. But that will require a much more creative and mature approach to good government.

east coast there are Union Flags on the English side but nothing on the west coast.

Manchester and Liverpool strike him as ghost towns. Some of the limitations of his expedition are exposed in Wales where he mentions neither Rugby Football nor communal singing. He finds echoes of Scotland in Cornwall but his tribulations begin in Exeter where for the first time he is refused tap water in a pub. 'I've got to pay for it' says the barwoman. He is also refused it on the Isle of Wight ferry – on health and safety grounds! The Channel Islands send him round the bend, having been reduced to off shore banking facilities (once used by Glasgow Archdiocese). The South Coast is another country – Little England.

Still living in council housing his prejudices in favour of the working poor are clear. He believes them to be squeezed by the gentry and the *nouveaux riches*. His conclusions sound revolutionary: building houses for controlled rent, free education and getting rid of politicians. He notes however that the South Coast was the home of Tom Paine and the Ragged Trousered Philanthropist. What all this says to our SNP Government is a major question. Holyrood would like to manage our five million people together despite the differences between the Celtic West, the Anglo East and the Doric North. It may be time for them to get on their bikes and listen to the people.

¹*Island Story: Journeys through Unfamiliar Britain* by J D Taylor. Repeater Books £8.99

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Thank you to all those who contributed to this edition of *Open House*.

Open House, which was founded in Dundee in 1990, is an independent journal of comment and debate on faith issues in Scotland. It is rooted in the reforms of the Second Vatican Council (1962-65) and committed to the dialogue which began at the Council - within the Catholic Church, in other churches, and with all those committed to issues of justice and peace.
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Cover photo of the St Mungo mural in Glasgow High Street by Dominic Cullen.

DUNCAN MACLAREN

Opening hearts and minds

The former director of SCIAF addressed the issue of attitudes to refugees and asylum seekers at a service in Glasgow Cathedral, as part of the city's annual St Mungo Festival.

It's a great privilege to speak on St Mungo's feast day about refugees, asylum seekers, migrants and all people on the move, especially within earshot of his tomb in the crypt. When we in Glasgow think of St Mungo or St Kentigern as he is also known, we think of the motto of the city 'Let Glasgow flourish by the preaching of His Word', now curtailed to 'Let Glasgow Flourish', and the icons of some of his miracles – the bird, the salmon, the tree and the ring.

His memory has been brought up to date by the beautiful murals in George Street and High Street. In George Street, the mural is a kind of *Giesga pietà* with Mungo's mother, St Enoch, in jeans and blouse cradling her boy with a robin perched on her finger. In the High Street, the mural is of St Mungo looking like a young Tom Weir with his bunnet on, ready to tackle another Munro, but he too is gently holding a robin, testament to one of Mungo's first miracles. The story is that while at St Serf's monastery school in Culross in Fife, some of the other pupils threw a stone at a bird and it fell to the ground dead. Mungo picked it up, caressed its feathers and prayed over it, and it flew away, singing.

Stung by the bullying of the boys, Mungo had his first taste of exile – from Fife to the Kingdom

of Strathclyde, where he settled down as a monk at the Molendinar Burn in the *glas cau*, the 'green hollow' that became Glasgow. Then he experienced a further exile in Wales.

There are many myths surrounding St Mungo and, though we have only sketchy proof of his actual life in the 6th century, we know that he was exiled because his life was threatened, that he was kind and that he served the poor.

In our own day, there are many myths surrounding the exiles we call refugees, asylum seekers and migrants. People who have to leave their homelands not because they have been the butt of youthful bullying, but because they have been persecuted, often to the point of death threats, over their ethnicity, race, sexuality or some other difference. When they cross an international border for these reasons, they are covered by the 1951 UN Convention relating to the Status of Refugees, signed by the UK and most countries in the world, and their safety should be guaranteed. There will also be some people who leave because they want a better life for themselves and their families, trying to escape a poverty which dehumanises them and eats away at their self-esteem, grinding down their God-given dignity.

We should be aware of the myths surrounding refugees, migrants and asylum seekers spread by xenophobic and racist social media, so that we can counteract them not only through fact but through the ethics of our Christian faith.

One myth is that people on the move are 'illegals'. No-one is an 'illegal person' and seeking safety and asylum is recognised as a universal human right. What is illegal is to dismiss those seeking asylum without hearing their cases. Viewed through the Christian lens, of course, all people are created in the divine image giving everyone an inherent and equal dignity. Human dignity is not conferred by a treaty or a decision made by prejudiced individuals, but is given universally without exception by our Creator. That is our starting point in dealing with other human beings.

Another myth about asylum seekers and refugees is that we Western countries cannot afford them because we already shelter a huge number of refugees. This is a falsehood. Eight out of ten of the world's refugees are cared for in so-called 'developing' countries. Of the 15 million refugees worldwide, 86 per cent live in some of the poorest countries such as Pakistan and Tanzania. As for not affording them, evidence-based research shows that asylum seekers in Europe have actually positively benefited the economies of their host countries. After refugee flows, GDP per capita rose while unemployment rates fell. The so-called 'refugee burden' on schools, NHS and other public expenditures is more than outweighed by the increase in tax revenues. Rather than starting an economic crisis, refugees provide an economic opportunity for themselves and their host countries, especially in countries like Scotland with ageing populations.

Seen through a Christian lens, of course, we don't concentrate on our national interest. We are urged by the scriptures and traditions of the Christian faith to welcome the stranger and to find Christ

in the face of the migrant fleeing poverty, the asylum seeker escaping persecution and the refugee seeking safety. Our task is to enable their flourishing through the exercising of this solidarity. As Pope Francis said, 'The duty of solidarity is to counter the throwaway culture and give greater attention to those who are weakest, poorest and most vulnerable'. And if you've gone in a flimsy boat across the busiest shipping lane in the world, you belong to the Pope's categories. To welcome is a moral imperative.

The final point I'd like to make is more personal. I still work with refugees from Burma who live in camps along the Thai side of the border with Burma. I teach in a programme from the Australian Catholic University where I used to work, giving young refugees whose families fled violence and oppression in Burma a chance for tertiary education after graduating from a secondary school in the camps. They are some of the most extraordinary young people I have ever met. Almost to a woman and man, they wanted a university education so that they could serve their own people, not line their own pockets.

Most have gone back to Burma and are working in schools, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) serving the poor and some have gone back to the camps as leaders. One is the head of the Karen Human Rights Group which distributes information internationally on the ongoing human rights abuses in Burma. Others work for the Backpack Medics who take medicines from Thailand over the mountains to the displaced within Burma, at great risk to their lives. Others have gone on to do full

degrees in other universities. But they were taught not just subjects but ethics, a view of the human person with an inherent dignity that is universal and cannot be undermined. Their confidence increased, their self-esteem bloomed and their passion for education and serving others changed not only their own lives but the lives of the lecturers.

The reason for this human transformation is that when we listen to the stories of people on the move, learn from them and interact with them, our minds and our hearts and our horizons open and our selfishness oozes away. That is the beginning of the blossoming of our spirituality and the point when prayer results in action for the suffering. Mindful of St Mungo, let us all commit on this, his feast day, to prayerful action on behalf of refugees, asylum seekers and migrants. Remember that Jesus didn't beat about the bureaucratic bush when it came to welcoming the stranger. He merely instructed: welcome them. St Mungo, patron of Glasgow, make our city even more a place of welcome for all fleeing oppression, poverty and violence.



Duncan with Sar Lu Lu, one of his former students in Umpiem refugee camp, Thailand.

Duncan MacLaren is a former secretary general of Caritas Internationalis, the confederation of Catholic aid and development agencies.

BART MCGETTRICK

Ordered freedom from chaos

A retired Scottish professor of education who now devotes much of his time to the development of education in the Holy Land reflects on its role in a situation of conflict and oppression.

The main thrust of education is the development of the person – not simply the acquisition of information, skills or even qualifications. These may be the means of education, but they are not the main purpose. Education is a deeply human activity, and my work in the Christian schools of the Holy Land tries to bring this emphasis. I am aware that this is being articulated in a land where there is conflict. This context somehow forces us to think more passionately, more intensely about what is the real purpose of education – and schooling.

The experiences I have in the Holy Land derive from my role as Chairman of the International Board of Regents of Bethlehem University; as Chairman of the Holy Land Commission; in advising the Christian schools (and especially the schools of the Latin Patriarchate); and as a member of the Board of the Church of Scotland School, Tabeetha School, in Jaffa-Tel-Aviv. So I shall be referring to education in the Christian schools of the Holy Land, and in particular those in Palestine and the West Bank.

For the sake of simplicity I am defining the ‘Holy Land’ as Palestine, Israel, and Jordan. I am aware that there are other definitions that might, for example, include Cyprus, parts of Egypt, Lebanon, Syria and Turkey.

We are talking of a reasonable size of population in the Christian schools. Of the total of 55,198, note that round 54% (29,730) are not Christian. These are in 107 Christian schools – 27 in

Israel, 32 in Jerusalem and Palestine, and 48 in Jordan.

A Christian school is therefore not only a place to educate Christians, but is a community which is characterised by education through Christian values and ideals. One of those values is that it is a community open to all God’s children.

The socio-political context

To attempt to describe the socio-political context of the Holy Land at present would require a great deal of time and considerable insight. Suffice it to say that it is complex... but a complexity that leads to daily life in what might be described as ‘institutionalised chaos’. It is chaos, since day by day there are huge uncertainties in matters such as where checkpoints appear, how movement for Palestinians is indiscriminately limited, how restricted people are in moving through the West Bank, what new land is being confiscated, the need for constant vigilance in the way controls are exercised by one group of people over others.

Perhaps the icon of these restrictions is the so-called ‘Separation Wall’ between Israel and Palestine. Many Palestinians cannot move through the wall and Israeli citizens are warned that if they pass into Palestinian territory they are ‘at risk’. This means there is effectively an apartheid social system established. One sees this at its most extreme in the refugee camps in Palestine, such as those around Bethlehem and Jerusalem.

I have used the term ‘institutionalised’ as an adjective for this chaos since it is clear that the chaos is created not by accident, neglect, or some fluke of circumstances. The ways in which controls are planned are carefully thought through and create confusion and uncertainties that disturb the citizens of Palestine.

Even for some of the youngest children there is a chaotic world. In the ‘baby warehouses’ of the Holy Land, where there is a total of over 2,500 babies, up to 60 children at a time are stored in small rooms. Typically there is one untrained supervisor for these 60 children. The children are ‘stored’ to allow their mothers to take on the most menial employment. These are not completely abandoned children. The warehouses are small, dark, silent places with the overpowering stench of children not cared for. Part of the work of the Catholic Church is to eradicate these places. This is a form of ‘early education’.

The Principals of Christian schools face this chaos in different ways. They see that their greatest need is ‘*a new spirituality: one that integrates the hope of the Gospel with the pain of daily living*’.

The Principals are expressing the frustration of living in, and leading communities in, an environment of constant challenge and change; a lack of clear purpose for their schools; and feelings of isolation. They are desperate for an adequate vision that will sustain them. This is a form of ‘liberation theology’. It is a liberating pedagogy... in an environment coping with the oppressed. The oppression comes from the chaotic lifestyles and ways of being, such as behaviour at checkpoints, additional mobile checkpoints, night raids in refugee camps and political decisions – building walls, accessing land, and demolishing houses.

TOTAL STUDENT NUMBERS IN CHRISTIAN SCHOOLS OF THE HOLY LAND ‘17 - ‘18									
	Number	GENDER				RELIGION			
	Total	M	%	F	%	CHR	%	N CHR	%
JERUSALEM & PALESTINE	16814	8126	48	8688	52	5521	33	11293	67
JORDAN	22406	11331	51	11075	49	9877	44	12529	56
ISRAEL	15978	7827	49	8151	51	10070	63	5908	37
TOTAL	55198	27284	49	27914	51	25468	46	29730	54

The value of education

Education is incarnated in the person. It is not essentially a process of transmitting facts or skills or ideas, but is a process of fostering relationships that lead to a better society. It is not intended simply to form people of compliance, conformity or who are parasitic on the thinking of others. The real value of education in a Christian setting is that it brings order.

In my experience education is the only source of hope in this world of turmoil. Yet it is not just any education – it is education infused with the values of love, hope and justice. This is the mission of Christian schools and holds the key to future generations. Education in the Christian tradition is, at its core, an encounter; an encounter with ‘the other’.

The liberation of the person comes through being educated with a thought-filled mind. Education is the practice of “ordered freedom.” We need freedom and a sense of liberty if true human development is to take place.

It is this idea of order that supports and inspires Christian education. It is not the knowledge alone, or the curriculum imperatives that educate – but the structures of order. That is what ‘the

disciplines’ offer... an ordered set of principles that enable connections and applications. The confidence of being able to think things through brings freedom and the capacity for further human development. Education is concerned with thinking and not just with learning.

This is not to be confused with ideas of control or restriction. Human development flourishes through relationships, and the formation of each person in terms of her/his values. This needs to take place in an ordered world; but is put at risk in a disordered world. The risk is of despair, injustice and violence. The greater the imposition, the greater the risks of violence and continuing chaos. (Note the flashpoints of violence at checkpoints where restrictions are imposed). This is why we need to see schools and universities run in the Christian tradition to be communities where there is ordered freedom. They are to be communities of hope, love and justice.

There is a real sense in which education has, as one of its purposes, the protection of the individual. Especially in the refugee camps in the Holy Land there are abuses and criminal activities to which the Christian communities (and

other refugees) are prey for gangs and vice squads.

There is a world of a difference between being well informed and well educated. Communities that are inspired by a vision of hope, justice and love that are the lifeblood of humanity should be a priority for the whole of our society.

We need to find ways that inspire the dialogue between religions and cultures, sciences and the arts, and across generations – cleansed with the enlightened springs of water from different sources. Education needs to create oases watered from many different springs.

We have to be aware of the kind of cultural invasion and tyranny which can ignore the lived reality of real people. These are the ‘walking books’ from whom we must learn. Yet surely we can offer everyone an education of the heart? For that is where the lifeblood of our being is nourished... through hope, love and justice.

Bart McGettrick is Emeritus Professor of Education at the University of Glasgow.

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MIKE MINETER

Calling for prayer and justice

Time and again, ever more desperately, Christian Palestinians have called us to prayer and to seek justice for all in the Holy Land. In the last 12 months, justice has receded: we can see it in the glowing hill top settlements, the ruins of demolished buildings, the sunlit mists of tear gas near the Gaza fence, the pain of huge numbers of maimed people, the 350 Palestinian children in Israel's prisons. (See <https://defenceforchildren.org/enfants-et-detention-en-palestine/>). All are transgressions of international law.

The powerlessness of the UN has been starkly revealed in fruitless resolutions condemning Israeli actions. Resolution 181 in 1947 called for the partition of Palestine into Arab and Jewish states, with the city of Jerusalem to be governed by a special international regime. Subsequent resolutions, including the right of return for Palestinian refugees, have been ineffective in calling Israel to a future that is creative for all in the land. Instead, the de-development of the West Bank and Gaza has accelerated with a tightening 'matrix of control,' to use the Jewish campaigner, Jeff Halper's term (<https://icahd.org/get-the-facts/matrix-control>).

The Barrier, checkpoints and land taken for roads and settlements fragment the West Bank. Together with the permits system, the control of resources and infrastructure, they obstruct Palestinian rights, economy, society and politics.

Of Israel's almost nine million population, 24.7percent are not Jewish (<https://www.cbs.gov.il/>). A Knesset press release on June 5th 2018 describes how a law proposed by two Arab members met a speedy demise: 'the Knesset Presidium decided on Monday to adopt the opinion of the Knesset's legal advisor and disqualify a bill ... calling for Israel to be defined as a state of all its citizens... [The opinion was] that "it is hard to not see such a proposal as one that seeks to deny Israel's existence as the state of the Jewish people".'

At the opening of the meeting,

Speaker Yuli Yoel Edelstein (Likud) described it as a bill that aims to gnaw at the foundations of the state.

Israel's Declaration of Independence of 1948 said that it would be faithful to the principles of the Charter of the United Nations. Those principles include equal rights and self-determination of peoples, promoting and encouraging respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms for all.

The Nation State Law was passed by the Knesset in July 2018. It states that the land of Israel is the historical homeland of the Jewish people, in which the State of Israel was established. The right to exercise national self-determination in the State of Israel is unique to the Jewish people. Jerusalem complete and united is the capital of the state. The state views the development of Jewish settlement as a national value and will act to encourage and promote its establishment and consolidation.

See <https://knesset.gov.il/laws/special/eng/BasicLawNationState.pdf>

It is not original thought to ask: what is 'the land of Israel'? Is its extent that of the State? What are the envisaged, undeclared borders? Similarly, what are the boundaries of Jerusalem? If I converted to Judaism then wouldn't I, like converts across the globe in past centuries, become a member of the 'Jewish people....with a right to return to my homeland in Israel?'

The Palestinian refugees' right to return is, in part, denied, in order to maintain the Jewish majority in Israel. The US (President Trump and his son-in-law and adviser Jared Kushner) has proposed to redefine who is considered to be a refugee, to exclude most of the four million people deemed refugees by the UN. It has cut funding to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA).

In October, Defence for Children International – Palestine (DCIP) reported that 39 children had been killed in Gaza since 30th March. https://www.dci-palestine.org/israeli_

[forces_killed_at_least_44_children_in_40_weeks](https://www.dci-palestine.org/israeli_forces_killed_at_least_44_children_in_40_weeks)

Medical Aid for Palestinians (MAP) reports that since March 30th more than 250 Palestinians have been killed by Israeli forces and over 26,000 injured. Of 13,840 patients hospitalised, 6,174 suffered gunshot injuries, mainly to their limbs. An estimated 1,500 have complex limb injuries which will need up to two years of surgery and treatment.

(<https://www.map.org.uk/news/archive/post/964-deaths-and-injuries-continue-in-gaza-amid-deepening-health-crisis>).

The building of a Jewish majority in 'Greater Jerusalem' continues by diminishing the number Palestinians residents and by extending the Barrier far inside the West Bank. When news of President Trump's election came through, I was appropriately on the via Dolorosa in the Old City of Jerusalem. The Palestinian who had been showing me the buildings in the Muslim quarter that are now in Israeli hands, said, 'Well at least we will now see how supportive of Israel the US is. It's been largely hidden for years'. Recently, Trump said, 'We give Israel 4.5 billion a year. And we give frankly a lot more than that if you look at the books. They've been doing a good job'.

"Trump on Syria Withdrawal: We Give Israel Billions of Dollars, They'll Be OK", Haaretz, 27.12.2018.

Kairos Ireland was recently launched with the publication of Ireland's response to the situation in Israel and Palestine, 'That Justice and Peace might embrace'. <https://kairosireland.org/>

Individuals and groups seeking to engage in prayer and action for justice for all are also referred to the Sabeel-Kairos website, and are welcome to contact me at: mike.mineter@gmail.com.

Mike Mineter works as an expert in applying high performance computing to climate science. He has visited Israel-Palestine on three occasions, as described in the August 2017 and April 2018 editions of Open House.

MARY CULLEN

Which way for the church?

The editor sets the scene for the *Open House* conference in June which will explore some of the new directions opening up in the Catholic Church in Scotland. The article is followed by two others which highlight, in different ways, the challenges which face the church today.

There is deep disagreement within the Catholic Church over its future direction. Its institutional failure has been laid bare by the widespread cover up of child abuse, while empty churches and dwindling vocations to the ordained priesthood across much of Europe reflect a loss of credibility. There is even open hostility within the church to the papacy of Pope Francis. How can we move forward?

It used to be said about the peace process in Northern Ireland that for every solution there was a problem. One group's breakthrough was another's stumbling block. One of the reasons why the peace process worked was that it brought everyone to the table. Without community involvement, peace would not have taken root. The Women's Coalition, for example, which helped shape the Good Friday agreement, was formed when an initial request from women to be involved was rejected on the grounds that they had nothing to contribute to constitutional issues. So they formed a coalition and stood for election under the slogan 'wave goodbye to dinosaurs' and won themselves a place at the multi-party negotiating table.

Mark Hederman, former Abbot of Glenstal Abbey in Co Limerick, suggests that we would all do well to recognise the dinosaur nature of our institutions, including the church. It has enabled them to survive the vicissitudes of history. The trick is to learn how to live with them, without doing serious damage to ourselves.

A growing number of lay people, women and men, are claiming their place at the table of the church in the belief that they have something to contribute. Pope Francis agrees, stressing the importance of the *sensus*

fidei – the innate wisdom of all the baptised – and the need for more lay people in governance. Both are necessary for the health of the church. In his address to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the Synod of Bishops in 2015, Francis made clear that he wants synodality – a process of mutual listening in which everyone has something to learn – introduced at all levels of the church. Even, he says, when it seems 'wearisome' (easier to tell people what to do?) it must be valued as an opportunity for listening and sharing. In his article on page 10, Bob Hendrie highlights the hurt and anger which are caused by the failure of diocesan authorities to engage in mutual listening.

Another lesson from the peace process is to know your history. As Mgr Roderick Strange pointed out in a recent talk to Newman Association members in London, the church's definition of papal infallibility in 1870 ushered in an era unlike any other in its history. From 1870 to 1960, the church defined itself in contrast to the rapidly changing and insecure world of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries as a 'fortress' and a 'perfect society' which was secure, exclusive and unchanging. For those born at the time, this exceptional period seemed the norm. But it was a church which had become paralysed and static. The bishops of the Second Vatican Council (1962-65) voted for change.

As the Jesuit historian John O'Malley suggests, Vatican II was a 'language event' in which two different visions of Catholicism were at stake. He summed them up in a series of paired words: 'from commands to invitations, from laws to ideals, from definition to mystery, from threats to persuasion,

from coercion to conscience, from monologue to dialogue, from ruling to service, from withdrawn to integrated....'¹ Those critical of Pope Francis today are looking for the security of command, definition and threat, while those who respond to his invitation to create a synodal church are seeking dialogue and integration.

One of the Council's greatest insights was the acknowledgement that while the church has much to teach the world, it also has much to learn. The church finds its identity and purpose by being immersed in the service of and dialogue with the world. We have to get out from behind the fortress walls. *Gaudium et Spes* spells out what the church receives from the world, which includes 'riches hidden in various cultures' which open up 'new avenues to truth' (44). There is a recognition here of the prior presence of God among the people whom the church seeks to evangelise.

As the church finds itself in numerical decline in an increasingly secular society, there is much talk of finding new ways to preach the gospel. Pope John Paul II spoke of a 'new evangelisation' and of the need for inculturation of the Gospel which enriches the church as well as the receiving culture. But he defined inculturation as a top down rather than a mutual process. Pope Francis strikes a different note. He speaks of 'missionary discipleship' and urges Christians to enter into a deeper and more profound solidarity with the world. This is a church which learns from the poor because 'they have much to teach us.... We need to let ourselves be evangelised by them'. (*Evangelii Gaudium* 198). While some continue to hark back to the perfect society

and emphasise what the church has to teach the world, Francis stresses the need for humility and openness to learning from others.

Many good things are happening. As *Open House* has highlighted, lay people are increasingly taking responsibility for the development of the church in the diocese of Galloway. The Newman circles of Glasgow and Edinburgh continue to promote lively discussion and greater understanding within the church. Lay people across the country are taking courses to equip them for ministry. There are many parishes which have opted for the dialogue and invitational style of Vatican II.

On the first Saturday in June, *Open House* would like to invite people from all over Scotland to take part in a day conference in Glasgow about the future of the church in the 21st century. We will have the opportunity to hear from Bishop Brendan Leahy of Limerick about the way his diocese is embracing the idea of a synodal church. What is the thinking behind it? What does it look like in practice? And how is it going?

We will hear from communities in Scotland about the way they are responding to change.

And we will share ideas about the way ahead.

Booking for the conference will be

available from April. In the meantime, keep the date and tell your friends – we want as many people as possible to come to the table.

We look forward to seeing you on 1st June.

¹John W O'Malley, *What Happened at Vatican II*. Harvard University Press 2008 p 307.

Dr Mary Cullen is the editor of Open House. Her PhD thesis was on the development of a new ecclesial relationship between ordained and lay people in the Scottish Catholic Church.

Dancing with dinosaurs

The word 'dogma' in Greek means 'that which seems right'. The word 'heresy' comes from the Greek word meaning to select, to section yourself off from the fullness of truth. No Christian wants to do this. That is why it is imperative for all Christians to enter into a dialogue about the full meaning of the mystery which we all believe, and which it is our privilege to find enunciated in many and various ways throughout the 2,000 year history of this tradition. Unity is an essential mark of the church founded by Christ: that they may be one, his constant prayer. As disciples of Christ in dialogue we cannot afford to situate ourselves in front of any text, any written words. We have to situate ourselves together in the space between those formulae and the living persons who are the authors, the objects and the only purpose of any such credal expressions. Our dialogue is in and through the Holy Spirit.

Mark Patrick Hederman, *Dancing with Dinosaurs: a Spirituality for the 21st century*. Dublin: The Columba Press, 2011 p. 59

Scottish Laity Network

It has been a year now since the Scottish Laity Network (SLN) met Archbishop Cushley to dialogue on a number of important governance matters. Since then we have continued to consolidate our membership base, network with parishes and provide resources when requested.

We held a successful open meeting in November 2018, at which we focussed on becoming a church that is poor and for the poor. This was prefaced by a powerful prayer service which sought to bring together four elements: the vigil of St Margaret of Scotland and her service to the poor; the vigil of the 29th anniversary of

the execution of six Jesuits and two women at the University of Central America, El Salvador, in 1989; the second World Day of the Poor which was celebrated on 18th November, and established by Pope Francis at the end of the jubilee year of mercy; and the question of how we respond to the challenge of 'becoming a Church that is poor and for the poor'.

A key aim of our network is to enable members to hear about initiatives that move from vision to reality and put people in touch with such initiatives. Among the many shared were the Divine Renovation programme from the South Edinburgh

cluster, and contemplative prayer and faith formation groups established across parishes.

SLN is pleased to be a collaborative partner in the Scottish Conference sponsored by *Open House* to be held on 1st June.

As a network, we endeavour to continue to exercise our baptismal rights as laity, to speak truth to power when needed, and to work collaboratively and co-operatively with clergy to bring about the kingdom here in Scotland.

To join the network, email slaitynetwork@gmail.com

BOB HENDRIE

Missions and closures

There was a time when we were urged to look with admiration and for inspiration to mission countries. We were regaled with stories of priests travelling from station to station to say Mass. There they would provide the church's blessing for those marriages which had taken place and preside over those in waiting, hear confessions – with upturned bicycles to provide the necessary canonical grille with their spokes. (We were all like that in those days).

Between the priest's visits, the community would be fostered and held together by catechists who led it in prayer, evangelised and catechised converts and children, all in preparation for the next visit of the ministerial priest. It was assumed, perhaps vaguely, that these communities would eventually produce their own clergy to be ordained and establish a proper parish system, each with its own resident priest. Given time, they would be as we are. The structures were assumed to be as eternal as the church.

In the meantime, *our* situation has changed. The abundant generation of clergy from the first half of the twentieth century slipped away. It was not replaced. The preconceptions and assumptions of a secular culture with new and attractive job opportunities began to have their effect even within the ranks of the clergy.

Vatican II had raised hopes of new vistas for persons and Church. Subsequently, many of the disillusioned priestly generation turned to other paths and packed their bags. Hopes raised and dashed are always more difficult to live with than acceptance of a normality presumed to be inevitable and everlasting.

Some of all generations were found to have abused their status and power to the destruction of lives and the humiliation of us all. No doubt other factors, too various and subtle to explore here, were at work but, not surprisingly, parents were no longer

so willing to encourage their sons to a priestly vocation.

On the other hand, humiliation should be a great begetter of humility.

The crisis in organisation, long foreseen by those with eyes to see, arrived with astonishing speed. Other lands were explored to fill our gaps; the poor were called upon to help the rich. At a recent meeting of our deanery, half of those present were from other continents, more than replacing the former Irish contingent. Ireland has its own problems. We were still short staffed. The gaps remain and are increasing.

We have been praying for 'vocations' for half a century; perhaps God has other plans. We might also pray that we may 'accept the things we cannot change, the courage to change the things we can, and the wisdom to know the difference'. It is necessary for us to make the distinctions.

There is an old saying that a rebellion in retreat is already defeated. Among other things, the church is a rebellion against the world as it is. It is a sign of the kingdom of God as it should be, not the spoiled creation we see. By its very nature it has the duty to make its presence as that sign felt, wherever our world is. Its duty is to go forward.

Military propaganda always describes a retreat or a rout as a strategic withdrawal to a prepared position to reorganise and regroup. We generally know better. By no leap of the imagination can the present process of parish closures in the church in Scotland be characterised as an advance. If what is in process is Plan A, the follow-up has yet to be revealed. It would seem a more obvious course would be to look for an example of some successful model in the church's experience to indicate a way forward.

That of the mission churches comes to mind and seems promising. That would lead us to encourage 'priestless parishes' to organise themselves as self-sustaining units. These communities would set up services where the

presence of a ministerial priest is not required, attend to the sick and the poor and, above all, keep open and maintain the church their contributions built, so preserving the sign of the presence of the Kingdom in their localities. Ecumenically this is even more important in rural areas where the Catholic church can be the only remaining visible sign of a Christian presence. The closure of such a church can cause distress even among other Christians in addition to the dismay, sense of betrayal and subsequent bitterness among the Catholic parishioners.

This latter reaction should not be underestimated. The strength and depth of parishioners' investment, material and spiritual, in their church and parish is great indeed. Generations of families have made their contributions, often of scarce money and time, to keeping that community alive. They and their family members have been sustained, baptised, married and buried from it. It was their weekly and often daily resource, their sacred place. Without it, they have no centre for their activities and motivation. As they see it, something that is theirs and precious is being taken from them without their consent. They do not see why they should not continue it with the help of a regular priestly visit. In the absence of a resident priest, they have been doing so already. Every crisis can provide an opportunity.

It would be nice if on the bishop's visit, instead of announcing the closure of the church, he could praise the parishioners for their efforts, ask them if they were prepared to continue, await their answer and commission them officially to do so. If this seems a step away from clericalism, that would surely be in tune with the thinking of Pope Francis.

Bob Hendrie is a retired priest of the Archdiocese of St Andrews and Edinburgh. He was ordained in 1962.

JOE FITZPATRICK

Facing up to challenges

A regular contributor to *Open House* identifies two issues that need to be addressed before the church can move forward.

Looking back, I think we can identify two important issues that have had a massive impact on the church, both on the way it is perceived in the media and in normal parochial life. The two issues are the continuing revelations of the sexual abuse of minors by priests and religious and the dwindling number of priests. The number of ordinations to the priesthood does not begin to match the number of priests leaving the active ministry through death or retirement.

First, the abuse scandal. There have been abundant revelations of abuse and cover up in the USA, going back to mid-20th century. More recently, Catherine Pepinster had a devastating article on abuse and cover up in the Archdiocese of Birmingham, again going back decades. (*The Tablet*, 24th November). We all know about this dreadful problem; anyone who claims to be ignorant of it should watch the film *Spotlight*. To remedy a problem like this we have to understand it, and that means understanding why and how it was allowed to go on and on for so long.

One reason why it endured for so long was because it was treated by bishops and superiors as a *moral* problem only – if the perpetrator confessed and repented, then he ought to be given a fresh start, like any other penitent. So bishops simply moved offending priests about and, lo and behold, they continued to re-offend. For the practice of abuse is not merely a moral problem but stems from a psychological condition, from a powerful sexual urge that is shaped in a particular direction.

But that is not the only cause of abuse. As many studies have shown,

it is supported by a power imbalance between the perpetrator and the victim. As *Spotlight* illustrates over and over, the victims of abuse looked up to priests who, in their opinion, were next to God in status. So if a priest cajoled or persuaded them to behave in a particular way, they went along with his suggestions. For a time they might have even felt flattered or honoured, knowing that their parents had a high regard for priests – one American mother flatly refused to believe her son's accusations against a priest and, to compensate, showered the offender with cookies! And the reason why bishops covered up abuse time and again is not hard to discern: they wished to protect the reputation of the Church and put the interests of the institution, and in many cases of the perpetrators, ahead of those of the victims.

If we are to remedy this problem we need to dismantle the culture of clericalism and secrecy that has made abuse and its cover-up possible.

As Catherine Pepinster observed, abuse lays bare 'a culture of clericalism, secrecy and authoritarianism'. If we are to remedy this problem we need to dismantle the culture of clericalism and secrecy that has made abuse and its cover-up possible. We have to break down the power imbalance between clergy

and laity that has been a feature of Catholic life for decades, if not centuries.

To do this two things, I believe, are necessary. The first is to act on the proposition that the days of confining church government only to bishops have to be over. The second and related action is to re-structure accountability. At present, accountability is bottom-up only: lay people are accountable to priests, priests to bishops, bishops to archbishops, and all to the Pope. In future, accountability needs to be both bottom-up and top-down. And this can only mean that members of the laity need to be involved in decision-making. These should not be episcopal appointees, as that would simply perpetuate the problem. They need to be chosen by the laity in order to represent lay opinion. The gulf that has separated clergy and laity needs to be bridged. Ordination should not be an act of separating one section of the Church from the other.

And that brings us to mandatory celibacy. As the Australian Bishop Vincent Long has observed, 'Celibacy is an act of separation' – because it requires the men who are priests to have a different lifestyle from most other adults. As one commentator put it, 'Celibacy adds another layer that ensures that priests are insulated and set apart.' It is precisely this 'apartness' that needs to be dismantled if there is to be transparency and openness in the church: no more 'let's keep this among ourselves, in-house'.

The second major issue afflicting the church is the shortage of priests. This is not entirely detached from the problem of abuse because the

abuse scandal has seriously damaged the Catholic 'brand'. In our changed times, priests have lost the glamour and status they probably had in the 40s and 50s.

Celibacy is also at the heart of the priest shortage since many studies have shown that it has been the main reason why so many priests have 'left' the active ministry. It is also a requirement that deters many young men from considering priesthood as a life option. The theological argument against mandatory celibacy is that a vocation to the priesthood is not necessarily a vocation to celibacy, that celibacy is a separate 'charism' and not all who are called to priesthood have this charism. After all, St Peter and most of the apostles were married men. And the imposition of celibacy in the Middle Ages was associated with a dreadfully negative view of conjugal sex stemming from Saints Augustine and Jerome, a view not shared by moral theologians today.

The main response to the problem of priest shortage in most British dioceses is the amalgamation and closure of parishes, something that many Catholics find upsetting. It also results in priests being asked to work harder and harder as they are required to cover ever greater distances.

The other solution is the importation of priests from countries like Africa and India. But this has been likened to an extension of colonialism, only this time it is not raw materials that are being plundered but personnel, who are needed in their country of origin.

Both the closure and amalgamation of parishes and the importation of foreign priests are false remedies that are designed to compensate for, rather than address, the shortage of priests. They are not a lasting solution. A true solution, one that addresses the problem, would be to admit married men of good standing (*virī probati* in Latin) to the priesthood. This would immediately enlarge the pool from which priests, natives of this country,

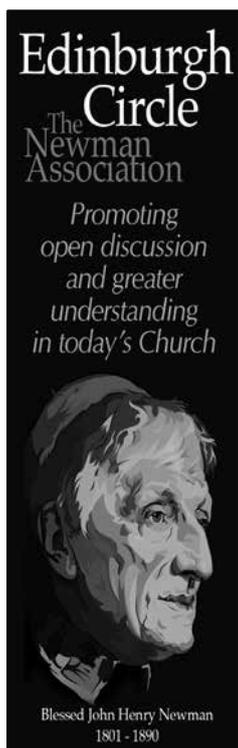
could be drawn. We could begin by re-admitting those who left to get married to the active ministry.

The second part of this solution would be the admission of women to the priesthood. A study of the gospels and of the epistles of St Paul makes it clear that women played a vital role in spreading the faith and leading local Christian communities in the early Church. As the eminent German Catholic scripture scholar, Herbert Haag, has argued, the exclusion of women from the priesthood was an accident of history and, in all likelihood, contrary to the wishes of Jesus. Priests today perform a pastoral role and there is nothing special about men that equips them to perform this role better than women.

I hope in this article to have identified two problems facing the church and to have proposed solutions to each. It is my conviction that the solutions agree with Pope Francis's 'baptismal ecclesiology', which envisages the baptised faithful playing a much more vital role in the church of the future.

Joe Fitzpatrick is a writer on theological issues.

Both the closure and amalgamation of parishes and the importation of foreign priests are false remedies that are designed to compensate for, rather than address, the shortage of priests



Tuesday 12th February
The Quiet Revolution of Pope Francis – Towards a Synodal Church
Gerry O'Hanlon SJ

Tuesday 12th March
"The caring that Jesus illustrates"
Christine Dodd

Retreat Leader with Creative Arts Retreat Movement (CARM)

Meetings are in Mayfield Salisbury Parish Church, 18 West Mayfield, Edinburgh DH9 1RQ - 7.30pm - 9.30pm

All are warmly invited to attend. We ask for a small donation to cover our expenses. For further information please contact Bernadette Campbell: bjcampbell512@gmail.com

FLORENCE BOYLE

The unacceptable face of capitalism

Asked to describe the ‘unacceptable face of capitalism’ as a person, the most likely description would be a middle aged man in an expensive suit, not a baby faced thirty something in a t-shirt and jeans. Through careful management of their public image, tech companies have been able to characterise their businesses as benevolent non-threatening enablers; businesses which take the difficult-to-understand part out of tech.

Social media companies like Facebook and Twitter have successfully fended off regulation of the content they produce by arguing that they are technology companies not publishers (like newspapers). They argue that all they do is provide a platform. However awful or untrue the content customers contribute, it is nothing to do with them. So far that defence has held. But then there was the 2016 US Presidential election.

Facebook’s mantra used to be ‘Move Fast and Break Things’. It appeared on posters throughout the company’s offices and summed up the company’s philosophy that it was better to deploy new tools quickly and fix the bugs as they appeared rather than waste time with costly testing. Following the Cambridge Analytica scandal and allegations of Russian hacking in the 2016 US elections, that now abandoned motto seems more prophetic than intended. Because that’s exactly what Facebook did, they broke things.

Companies like Facebook and Twitter have a couple of things in common: their business models and the limited life experience of the people in charge. Their business models are based on maximising volume, and that is what has become their biggest vulnerability. Try and sign on as a new customer for any service or utility. A formal identification process captures contact information, length of time at your current address and bank account details. Behind the scenes these details are verified to ensure that you are who you say you are.

By contrast, access to social media platforms is like walking through an open door. Create an email address, a username and password and you’re in. You can be anyone, you can create an

army on your own and you don’t even have to be human. The Russians didn’t ‘hack’ anything, they did exactly what the business model intended. Customers matter to social media companies insofar as they represent volume which generates advertising revenue, drives share price and executive bonuses.

Until recently, there has been no business imperative to manage customer access, no matter the damage those customers create. In the last US presidential election political advertising on Facebook paid by foreign donors (forbidden under US election rules) went unchecked. Fake groups were easily set up and acted as provocateurs. Facebook only knew when the intelligence agencies told them.

Regulators and legislators have become more focussed in their investigations and among the tech companies the penny is beginning to drop: improve self-regulation or government will step in. Reputational damage has had real life financial consequences.

In July this year Twitter purged 70 million accounts (20% of its user base) which it suspected of being bogus or bot (robot operated) accounts. Recent research estimated that nearly 50 percent of the traffic on Twitter was generated from bots. The recent scandals about misuse of data have prompted Facebook to tighten internal controls and employ more humans; old fashioned information processors who understand nuance and can make judgements. But that increases operational costs.

In 2012 Facebook appointed an ‘adult in the room’. Sheryl Sandberg, founder of ‘Lean In’, an organisation focussed on supporting and encouraging women to achieve their goals, had credibility with the market. She became the Chief Operating Officer of Facebook because of increasing concerns that Facebook had outgrown the ability of its founder and creator, Mark Zuckerberg to manage.

It is difficult to imagine that happening in any other industry. Think about it, a senior officer of a company with doubts about his/her competency is given the option to hire someone else as cover. It would not happen in a bank,

a car manufacturer or any other global enterprise. So far it has worked. Sheryl Sandberg has taken the heat, most commentators expressing disappointment that for all her reputation, little has changed.

Zuckerberg, the third richest person on the planet, founder and CEO of Facebook never completed his degree. He became a billionaire instead. His curtailed studies focussed solely on technology, building the technology and writing the code. In his recent evidence to a US Senate enquiry into Cambridge Analytica, Zuckerberg’s appearance was carefully stage managed and heavily scripted.

Early in the sessions it became obvious Facebook had little to worry about. The senators, who undoubtedly have Facebook pages, probably managed by their much younger staff, appeared to have little clue about how the business or the technology worked. The inquisitors, most of them in their 70s and 80s were confused about the basics, seeming not to understand the differences between email and social media platforms. Facebook breathed a sigh of relief and bought themselves more time.

Pressure is increasing from other quarters; institutional investors are increasingly concerned that the computer nerds who built the platforms are not the best people to manage some of the biggest companies in the world. Most observers of the Senate sessions concluded that in his relentless focus on the positive, Zuckerberg ignored or was blind to the obvious potential for misuse and offered up little in the way of ideas about how the future could be made safer for society.

Signing up is free but the cost of joining a social media platform is privacy. For the tech savvy who know how to manage their privacy settings it’s a calculated risk. For most, whose exposure to technology extends no further than sending a few emails and a bit of internet shopping it’s akin to closing your front door and leaving the back door open, all the time.

Florence Boyle is the treasurer of Open House.

MICHAEL L O'NEILL

The politics of power and money

A Scot who has lived for many years in the USA reflects on the shift in political power on both sides of the Atlantic which has placed power and money at the centre of political life.

For the past two years it has been a toss-up which is worse – Donald Trump's presidency or Brexit. At least the Democrats, in November's 'mid-term' (of a president) election, achieved the minimum required to restore some semblance of political sanity in this country, by winning back the House of Representatives. This prevents, we can only hope, Donald Trump having free rein to destroy what remains of American democracy.

When I first invoked the spectre of Trump as a 'clear and present danger' to the Republic, before he ascended to the presidency, it was predominantly based on his career as a shady real estate business operator, as chronicled in particular by the journalist David Cay Johnston; and Trump as a 'reality television' performer and New York City tabloid star, 'the Donald'. Now we can recognise the latter as a harbinger of the 'fake' political 'reality' and 'fake' political 'news' he has been peddling the past two years.

The proprietor of the *National Enquirer*, the best known of the 'supermarket check-out counter' tabloids, has now been implicated in the special counsel's investigation of the Trump campaign, for doing favours for Trump related to the campaign.

He shamelessly portrays himself as the offended one, while trying to project his own political fakery on those he considers his enemies and hence 'enemies of the people'. Like other bullying autocrats presently afflicting the planet, Trump demonstrates every day of his presidency the relevance of George Orwell, whose *1984* and *Animal Farm* warn about the road to political tyranny being paved with disinformation used as political propaganda, in the service of spreading fear and hate.

Likewise, Orwell's essay *The Language*

of Politics is as relevant to the Brexit debacle as it is to the Trump. Orwell had the benefit of personal experience from his involvement in the Spanish Civil War of the 1930's against the rise of fascism in Europe, described in his *Homage to Catalonia*. It was an experience which prefigured the Second World War and its aftermath, including the twin dangers of right and left wing totalitarianism.

Since his unconscious tribute-to-Orwell performance in the great 'Birther' lie during the presidency of Barack Obama - 'Obama was not born in the U.S. and therefore is an illegitimate president', Trump has continued to dramatise the relevance of Orwell. The fact that his 'Birther' performance was the ticket to precipitate him into the Republican presidential campaign, and ultimate success with the Republican Party and the 'electoral college system', without a majority vote of the electorate, was the prelude to his behavior in office.

The power of money

Like his 'Birther' lie, and contrary to his populist pretense of being the 'anti-establishment' champion of the people left behind by the Washington, DC 'establishment' (abstract and undefined), Trump's signature achievement of his first two years in office has been to further solidify the power of what is the real Washington political and economic 'establishment' as well as 'deep state' – the major corporations and billionaire investors; the big four Wall Street banks; other financial institutions like hedge fund and 'private equity' firms. These intermingle for their mutual benefit, fund politicians and political campaigns, have been given the green light by the Republican-controlled U.S. Supreme Court to do this without having to disclose the 'dark money' behind their funding, and are controlled by less than one percent of the population.

The 2008 bailout they enjoyed from the public purse, after they had collapsed the whole economy, contrasted with the 'austerity' imposed on the millions of people who lost their jobs and their homes on account of the malfeasance of the financial establishment. It was complemented ten years later by the trillion and a half dollars in tax cuts and other corporate giveaways Trump and the Republicans controlling the House and Senate presented to their financial sponsors this past year. Trump's Secretary of the Treasury, previously his campaign treasurer, was one of the most notorious profiteers from the collapse of the fraudulent mortgage backed securities in the 2008 financial 'great recession'. So much for Trump 'draining the swamp'!¹

If they had managed to keep control of both houses of Congress in November's election, Republicans had already telegraphed their intention to pay for their tax cuts by yet again going after Social Security, Medicare and Medicaid, the government-run social insurance programmes the non-elite majority of the population depend on. The rapturous response of Trump's 'base' to his lies and falsehoods at his political rallies, when combined with incitements to violence, in particular against reporters, constitute a red flag warning that we have crossed into dangerous political territory reminiscent of a religious cult.

Many of the people in the 'rust belt' states of the mid-west, like Ohio, Pennsylvania, Michigan, Wisconsin, and West Virginia who still support Trump seem to be oblivious to the fact that they depend on the government programmes Trump and his party would eliminate if they could. Not even the spectacle of the since deceased Republican Senator John McCain having to cast the deciding vote that prevented eleven million people losing their health insurance because

Trump wanted to destroy 'Obamacare', seems not to bother the Trump cultists.

What that spectacle also represented is the salutary situation that some at least of the Republicans still resist Trump, and are often his fiercest and most articulate critics, even though the Republican Party as such, once the 'Party of Lincoln', has become the Trump party, and has ceased to exist as an honest 'conservative' party. Trump, like his fellow right wing 'populists' in Europe and Latin America, are not about 'conserving' anything but the neo-liberal, 19th century, undemocratic, and worker-slave economic model, allied to social Darwinism and white nationalism.

As such they are the epitome of what Pope Francis warned against in response to a question from a group of Belgian youth at the Vatican on April 7, 2014:

'Humanity is at the center of history, and this for me is very important: humanity is at the center. In this moment of history, humanity has been thrown out of the center...and at the center is power, money.'²

In this regard, the treatment of people fleeing for their lives from the U.S. client states in Central America, especially the deplorable practice of separating at least two thousand children from their parents at the southern border, reported by American lawyers and journalists who have witnessed it, is the image that should haunt the history of this administration and those who support it. The courageous work of concerned civilian and religious people and institutions, including Catholic charities, trying to help the refugees and asylum seekers, and the good border guards who treat them kindly, contrasts with the lack of compassion and inhumane policies of the Trump administration that violate American and international law.

Those of us old enough to have been involved in resistance to the Vietnam War, and to the Central and South American 'dirty wars' of the late 1960's and 1970's, as well as the Civil Rights era veterans, are familiar with this craziness and its Orwellian component. One hopeful sign is the number of

young progressive Democrats in the new Congress. One unfortunate difference is the absence so far of religious leadership in any way comparable to that previous period. But that is a subject for another analysis.

¹See, in addition to Jane Mayer's *Dark Money: The Hidden History of the Billionaires behind the Rise of the Radical Right*, her article, 'Trump's Money Man, How Robert Mercer, a reclusive hedge fund tycoon, exploited America's populist insurgency', *The New Yorker*, March 27, 2017; Dan Kaufman, *The Fall of Wisconsin: The Conservative Conquest of a Progressive Bastion and the Future of American Politics*, W.W. Norton, New York & London, 2018; Nancy MacLean, *Democracy in Chains: The Deep History of the Radical Right's Stealth Plan for America*, Penguin Books, 2017.

²Pope Francis, *The Courage to be Happy: The Pope Speaks to the Youth of the World*, edited by Robert Ellsberg, Orbis Books, 2018, p. 27.

Michael L. O'Neill is a Scot who has lived for many years in the USA. He is a retired defense attorney.

Call for Submissions:

BERNARD ASPINWALL MEMORIAL ESSAY COMPETITION 2019

Entries from postgraduate students and early career researchers are invited for an essay competition in honour of Bernard Aspinwall (1938-2013). The competition is supported by the Scottish Catholic Historical Association.

Submissions of around 6,000 words are welcomed on any aspect of Scottish Catholic history dealing with any period. Biographical, ecclesiastical, Church, architectural, social, theological, literary, gender and other historical themes and approaches are equally encouraged.

The winning entry will be awarded a prize of £250. The winning essay will, subject to normal peer-review and editing process, be eligible for publication in the *Innes Review*, the journal for Scottish Catholic History.

Deadline for submissions is at 5pm GMT on Friday 21 June 2019.

Please send the entry submissions (with 'SCHA Essay Competition' in the subject field) via email to scha1950@gmail.com, accompanied by a brief covering letter detailing your full name and eligibility (degree, university and year of studies, or the year of obtaining your degree).

We would like to publicise the winner's name and essay on our social media, newsletter and website.

Follow us on Twitter: www.twitter.com/scha1950

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Our new website will be live soon at www.scha.scot

Our journal, the *Innes Review*: www.eupublishing.com/loi/inr



POETRY

This poem recalls a visit to Harvington Hall, a Tudor stately home in Worcestershire famous for its priest holes created to hide priests in the times of persecution in the reigns of Elizabeth 1 and James 1. Nicholas Owen, a Jesuit lay brother designed and created these (seven in all). He was eventually apprehended, tortured and killed by the authorities at the age of forty-four. He was canonised by Pope Paul VI in 1970.

AT HARVINGTON HALL

I must sift surfaces for ghosts. Tread floor-boards down this healed but worm-holed corridor, the concertina of this false stair.
Touch old wood, walls porous with fear.
Recusant sweat once seeped here.
For this is Owen's workplace, hide-maker for the faithful, craftsman, past master of the undiscoverable lair.
Where hard held breath stippled wall and floor.
Where only the clandestine could prosper.

Now faded, the Chapel mural's monotone of blood and water beads, a Passion sign, blandly aligns into this rood screen.
I hear murmured proscribed blessings of wine and bread transformed. And see this lily, vine and pomegranate frieze as serpentine deliverance, as grape-eased elevation.
And on this staircase, shadowed men once painted shadows. A fearful compulsion to deceive becomes survival's fashion.

The Hall of Worthies otherwise inspires.
Coercive homilies, the wall-painted heroes, a courage primer, impress me to whispers.
Yet grime removed from whitewashed centuries reveals disturbing certainty: the Centaur's stirrup tassels, bridle and whorled cuirass; the orchestrated plumes of the manhorse.
Though his panache, moustachioed, appears as pose, Judas Maccabaeus thunders out his opera of mane and war-cries.

Not Owen. No name named. No face unmasked.
Eschewing image, his masterclass of tact declined to demonstrate his secret craft in whatever Red Room or Spit Shaft the ladders of his flesh-walled bones were racked.
Quarry. Illusionist. Architect.
Who, baffle to bombast or rhetoric, crafted to good effect these covered tracks.
And, tabernacle for hunted eucharists, shaped and kept his sacred secrets.

John McPartlin

NOTEBOOK

Glasgow memorial

Thanks to Gerard Millrine for contacting *Open House* about the notice in the December/January edition which announced that a new memorial to conscientious objectors is to be erected in Princes Street Gardens, Edinburgh. It was reported to be the first in Scotland.

Gerard pointed out that there is a memorial plaque near the Peoples Palace in Glasgow Green dedicated to those who opposed World War One and fought for social justice. It was erected in 2015 to coincide with the centenary of the International Women's Peace Congress.

The Glasgow Green memorial commemorates groups like the Women's Peace Brigade which originated in Glasgow. It counted Mary Barbour, Agnes Dollan and Helen Crawford among its ranks. Helen Crawford was sentenced to a month's imprisonment in Duke St prison for smashing the windows of recruitment offices. She was released after eight days of hunger strike. Glasgow Green was the site of many anti-war demonstrations.

The text on the Glasgow plaque reads:

In memory of those who opposed World War One in order to challenge the purpose of the war and the waste of lives.

They also campaigned for social and economic justice and against the exploitation of those who lived in the city during the war.



Celtic connections

The work of Donegal writer Patrick MacGill (1889-1963), who was described by historian Bernard Aspinwall as the 'first lay critic within the church', was featured in a new work performed at Celtic Connections in Glasgow this year.

Composer and musician Gráinne Brady drew on MacGill's thinly disguised autobiographical novel, *Children of the Dead End*, for the first of a three part project entitled *Beyond: The Story of an Irish Immigrant*, which is about the history and legacy of mass Irish immigration to Scotland. *The Road Across the Hills* charts MacGill's departure from Donegal aged 14, and his journey from Ulster to Scotland. He worked on farms before moving north to become a navy on the great hydroelectric schemes of the Highlands. In words and music, it reflects the hardship and suffering the immigrants faced, and MacGill's growing preoccupation with the plight of those who toiled in the mud to build a society from which they were excluded. MacGill was critical of what he saw as the church's failure to challenge the system.

The Road Across the Hills is performed by a nine piece ensemble which is led by Gráinne Brady on the fiddle, interwoven with excerpts from MacGill's

writing. There are eleven ‘sets’ which recall the life of immigrants from evictions in Gweedore in the late 19th century (a haunting piece called ‘No More’) to a powerful evocation of bleak winters in Kinlochleven and a final, moving lament for Norah, the author’s childhood sweetheart, who died in poverty in a Glasgow slum.

The Road Across the Hills is available on CD.



WEE BOXES for Lent

Lent begins on 6th March this year and SCIAF is already promoting its WEE BOX for 2019 to schools around Scotland. This year’s focus is on Uganda and the work the charity does in helping families and young people grow fruit and vegetables.

We are all invited to help make a big change by filling our WEE BOXes during Lent, by sharing what we have with those who are often hungry.

WEE BOXes will be distributed to parishes or you can contact sciaf@sciaf.org.uk.

The church in the public square

Bishop Nolan’s letter on political engagement, which was written for this year’s day of prayer for peace on 6th January, was widely welcomed. It urged Christians to put their faith into action by getting involved in politics.

The April meeting of the Glasgow Newman circle will provide a glimpse of what this looks like in practice when Lord John McFall draws on a political career spanning over 30 years for a reflection of ‘The church in the public square’.

He was elected to the House of Commons in 1987 as MP for Dumbarton. He served as a Labour whip and a junior minister in Northern Ireland, and became chair



Lord McFall.

of the treasury select committee from 2001-2005. He joined the House of Lords in 2010, where he currently serves as Senior Deputy Speaker.

The meeting is due to take place on Thursday 25th April at 7.30pm in The Ogilvie Centre, Rose Street, Glasgow.

New book

The first collection of theologian Elizabeth Templeton’s work has been published by Birlinn. Entitled *In Your Knowing is Your Loving*, it groups together a selection of her writings and sermons. Each section is introduced by a well-known religious commentator, including Richard Holloway and former Archbishop of Canterbury Rowan Williams.

There will be a review in the next edition of *Open House*.



Australia 2020

The first Synod in the Australian Catholic Church for over 80 years could point the way for local churches across the world. The Australia 2020 Synod is known as a Plenary Council because its decisions will become binding for the Church in Australia.

Announcing the synod in 2016, Bishop Mark Coleridge of Brisbane said that church and society are going through a time of profound cultural change. I think we have to accept, he said, that Christianity as the common religion with a mass following is over. How do we deal with this situation?

On its website the Plenary Council also acknowledges that Royal Commission into institutional child abuse in Australia requires a ‘deep and considered response’.

Frank Brennan SJ, writing in the online magazine *Eureka Street* (www.eurekastreet.com.au) reflected the hopes of many in the Australian church when he wrote: ‘What we need is a listening and inclusive Church — a Plenary Council at which the clergy and the laity have a proper place at the table, at which the voices of the ‘rusted-on’ and the ‘cheesed-off’ Catholics are heard and at which the bishops are respectfully listening as much as speaking.’

The process began last year with the ‘Listening and Dialogue’ phase of the plenary council, which comes to an end on Ash Wednesday. People were asked to share their views on the question: ‘What do you think God is asking of us in Australia at this time?’ Resources were provided to help groups with discussion, and by November, over 30,000 submissions had been submitted. They will form the basis for plenary council meetings planned for late 2020 and the middle of 2021.

One of the groups which responded is the ‘Piazza House Church’ in Ashbury. Taking their cue from Pope Francis, who told priests in 2017 to tie on an apron and kneel before the experience of their community, they call themselves ‘Women of the Apron’ – adding the caveat that the apron is a ‘symbol of service and hospitality, not servitude’.

They are seeking a new paradigm of church, ‘from an authoritarian, hierarchical, patriarchal model to a communion of communities engaged in dialogue, discernment and decision around both ecclesial and social concerns. A faith community embedded in, reaching out to, and challenging the wider Australian community as Jesus did in his time and society. A faith community focused on mission, not maintenance’.

They ask that the synod process affirms the mission of the baptised, and share their thoughts on a range of issues from formation for the priesthood to revisiting *Humanae Vitae*. They express the hope that there will be an opportunity to discuss the documents drawn up in the light of the initial consultations before they are debated and voted on in the Plenary Council.

For more information about the development of the process, see plenarycouncil.catholic.org.au.



LETTERS

The Editor of Open House email : editor@openhousescotland.co.uk

All correspondence, including email, must give full postal address and telephone number.

Christianity in Action

I was at the Edinburgh Newman Circle Meeting when we were enthralled by three extraordinary stories of how to love our neighbour. The contributions were from: the *Communities of L'Arche, Pregnancy Counselling and Care, Scotland* and *St. Catharine's Project for the Homeless*. The contexts were all different, but the common theme was the moving and overwhelming dispensation of Christian love and grace, freely given without judgement or expectation.

However, the contribution from Anthea Donaghue of *Pregnancy Counselling and Care*, which you printed in your last issue, raises questions about the decision of the Edinburgh Archdiocese to withdraw financial support from this organisation, which clearly has been of enormous value both to the community and to professionals in the Health Service.

I was shocked, confused and frankly ashamed of the actions of Archbishop Cushley and his pastoral adviser the Vicar Episcopal for Marriage and Families.

My concerns are these: How could the Archbishop send such an *Ad Clerum* withdrawing his support without talking first to those involved in the organisation?

How can he make such judgements using such simplistic criteria? He shows no understanding of the nature of counselling, or of the professionalism of the organisation, and he undermines the personal integrity of the good Catholics involved.

The story of the phone call with the Vicar Episcopal listening in, is unbelievable. It smacks of entrapment, and a misuse of power worthy of any totalitarian state. The Church authorities were clearly looking for evidence to justify a decision.

The attitude of the Archdiocese is in stark contrast to that of all three speakers whose demonstration of the love of Christ was totally unconditional.

It is clear that the Archbishop is keen

to emphasise Church teaching on abortion and has proved this in public. However, the pastoral support and care of women in deep crisis is a different activity which in no way undermines the principle and is pro-life in a deeper and wider sense than a pro-birth stance.

I am deeply angry and concerned because, as a woman with four children and seven grandchildren, some of these issues are part of my own life story. My first pregnancy ended in a spontaneous abortion (as many women experience) and I found myself in hospital in a ward beside mothers who had just given birth. I could have done with such a counselling service at that time. Many years later, as an elderly pregnant mother, I refused tests which would have presented the possibility of abortion being offered in case of handicap.

Women are naturally pro-life; we are, after all, life-bearers. Women who appeal for help over any of these issues should be provided with help, not judgement.

Christ reached out to all: handicapped, criminals, sinners. We all, including archbishops, fall short of the law. Let us not be parsimonious with love and grace.

Lyn Cronin, Edinburgh

Asking the wrong questions?

I went to Sunday Mass recently in Glasgow city centre and was shocked to see how empty the pews were. The church seems to be paralysed in the face of decline – what happened to the consultation carried out in the archdiocese a few years ago?

I still have my leaflet, which was called 'This Affects You'. We were told that the number of diocesan priests in the Archdiocese of Glasgow had fallen from 285 in 1977 to 85 in 2014 – a drop of 70 percent. We were invited to meetings where we were given data about our local parishes and asked to suggest which of them should stay open, and which could be closed. In our parish we thought these were the wrong questions. Instead of focusing

on the dwindling number of priests we thought we should have been asked to consider the contribution of lay people to the life of the parish, and how it could be supported and developed. Many people were angry because there seemed to be no acknowledgement of the importance of local history and the work that had gone into building the church and the parish community.

As far as I know, there has been no feedback from that consultation beyond vague encouragement to share resources with neighbouring parishes. I wonder if there were other parishes like ours who answered the consultation questions but made it clear we thought they were the wrong ones. Was this not what the archdiocese wanted to hear?

Jim Cullen, Glasgow

A difficult conversation

Thank you to Sister Isabel Smyth for her helpful article on the challenge of talking about anti-semitism, especially in the light of the Labour Party's problems with the subject. Like many people, I deplore anti-semitism but I find the policies of the State of Israel in relation to Palestinians to be deeply unjust.

Mary Sweeney, Glasgow

Letters and contributions

If you have any comment on articles which appear in this edition of *Open House*, please consider writing a letter for publication in the next edition. Send it to the editor by Friday 29th March. We'd love to hear from you.

If you would like to contribute an article or a review, send it before 29th March by email to editor@openhousescotland.co.uk, or post it to the address on the back page.

BOOKS

Heroic Failure: Brexit and the Politics of Pain

Fintan O'Toole

Head of Zeus, 2018

In his perceptive and wide-ranging analysis of the chaos which is Brexit, the Irish historian and political commentator Fintan O'Toole asks how a great nation brought itself to the point of 'such wilful self-harm'. When your neighbour is going mad, he says, it's only reasonable to want to understand the source of their distress.

He locates it in the emergence of an incoherent English nationalism fuelled by a fantasy ('we won the war') and characterised by self-pity which combines a sense of superiority with a sense of grievance (the losers prospered). Brexit is essentially an English problem, he argues. The strange sense of imaginary oppression that underlines it has been stoked up by the reactionary Right who seek a deregulated world in which the very rich can prosper. They will not suffer the consequences, however: 'Brexit is those who feel they have nothing to lose led by those who will lose nothing either way'.

Self-pity, O'Toole observes, is a form of self-regard. The more highly we think of ourselves, the sorrier we feel for ourselves when we do not get what we believe we deserve. When the war ended, invaded countries grew in economic strength while Britain floundered. Membership of



the Common Market was grudgingly accepted in 1973 as a remedy for its economic ills. As Brexiteers were to suggest, the once great empire was on the way to becoming a colony of Europe, and the sense of imaginary oppression grew.

O'Toole provides plenty of entertaining evidence from popular culture to support his argument, from the bondage of *Fifty Shades of Grey* to the capers of Michael Caine in *The Italian Job* where the gang ends up suspended over a cliff. He also draws extensively on the world of politics. Secretary of state for trade and industry Nicholas Ridley told the *Spectator* in 1990, for example, that the European Monetary System was 'all a German racket designed to take over the whole of Europe... I'm not against giving up sovereignty in principle, but not to this lot. You might as well give it to Adolf Hitler frankly'.

The fantasy of a 'plucky little nation with its own deep traditions that had been annexed by a European superstate' was ramped up by leading Brexiteers and amplified by a hysterical press. O'Toole recalls the largely forgotten episode of mad cow disease. It had its roots in 1981, when the Thatcher government dropped proposals for tight controls over the processing of animal protein. As a result, BSE – mad cow disease – entered the human food chain. The Germans, frustrated at the slow response of the EU to the crisis, imposed a unilateral ban on the import of British beef. Tory agriculture minister John Gummer defiantly force-fed his four year old daughter Cordelia a beefburger in front of television cameras.

The war of Cordelia's burger ran for more than a decade in the media under headlines like 'Kohl's beef

blitzkrieg'. *The Times* reported that while the German football team at Euro 96 imported their own beef, the Football Association displayed a 'healthy Dunkirk spirit' by serving Scotch beef. The *Sun* proclaimed that the beef ban was forcing us 'to fight to save our traditions and freedoms'. The Leave.EU campaign financed by Aaron Banks ran images of Chelsea Pensioners with the slogan 'Freedom and democracy. Let's not give it up'. Banks claimed to have received a donation from a Second World War veteran who recalled that the French and Belgians 'who we saved' in 1940 were known as 'surrender monkeys'. O'Toole notes drily that he must have been a far seeing visionary, or perhaps just a fan of *The Simpsons*, who coined the term 'surrender monkey' in 1995.

Heroic Failure is informed by sharp historical and political analysis of Britain and the European Union. It swings from the comic to the tragic, highlights the mendacity and opportunism of leading Brexiteers, and charts the correlation between a growing sense of English identity and voting to leave the EU. This new English nationalism, O'Toole argues, is an opportunity. It does not have to be a vehicle for the completion of the neoliberal capture of English society or for the 'feckless self-interest of a bunch of chancers'. He challenges the English radical, socialist and liberal traditions to inspire a more positive sense of national belonging than that which emerges from Brexit. In one of the world's great cultures, he suggests, there is 'surely enough wit and energy and creativity and humour to infuse Englishness with hope and joy instead of pain and self-pity'.

Mary Cullen

OPEN HOUSE ON THE WEB

The *Open House* website on www.openhousescotland.co.uk has back copies of previous editions and extracts from the current edition.

FILM

Mary Queen of Scots (2018)

Director: Josie Rourke

Starring: Saoirse Ronan, Margot Robbie, Jack Lowden.

Mary Queen of Scots and Elizabeth Queen of England never met – despite the final scene in this film. They are, however, buried next to each other in the Lady Chapel of Westminster Abbey where the inscription describes them as ‘partners in throne and grace’. It was Mary’s son, James VI of Scotland and I of England who placed his mother there. He was outraged that a sovereign could be executed. The canopy over Mary is noticeably bigger than the one over Elizabeth.

In the film Mary (Saoirse Ronan) is bigger than Elizabeth (Margot Robbie). She is younger, more beautiful and, critically, willing and able to bear an heir. Although born in Linlithgow she shouldn’t have been in Scotland at all having been educated in France and married to the Dauphin. With his premature

death she was Queen of France for only a year. Unwilling to be reduced to the status of Dowager she chose to return to Scotland where she had been queen since the death of James V while she was a week old.

The film is directed by Josie Rourke, the first from St Patrick’s School, Eccles to go to Cambridge University and the first woman director of a London theatre (The Donmar Warehouse). This is her debut film. Unsurprisingly it is politically correct with black actors playing prominent roles. It also seeks to show how women survive in a male world, Mary by becoming a mother, Elizabeth, as she says, by playing the man. The Four Marys have their place (without Mary Carmichael, the subject of a Russian tale of infanticide).

Mary’s Catholicism and Elizabeth’s Protestantism are played out in sectarian terms. Recent historical research suggests that, certainly in their time, there weren’t such clear cut divisions. Mary’s threat to Elizabeth was political for she was her immediate heir. She was executed allegedly for conspiring to validate her claim but vindicated by her son’s succession. The sectarian emphasis might be off putting but



by and large the film succeeds in playing out the drama of two women able to outmanoeuvre their male courtiers.

She married the Catholic Henry Darnley (*Martin Compston*) for dynastic reasons. After his murder she was taken by force by the Earl of Bothwell. But, against some odds, she stuck resolutely to her Catholic faith, opposing the English backed John Knox (a heavily bearded *David Tennant*). Her final words were ‘in my end is my beginning’. This has proved to be true. Along with Bonnie Prince Charlie she is a most ironic icon, a vision of the Scotland that could have been. Her end might still turn out to be the beginning of a Scotland once again differentiating itself from England.

There is a Marie Stuart Society with an excellent website. It erected a statue of her in 2015 at Linlithgow Palace. Her most famous portrait, taken shortly before what it describes as her ‘martyrdom’, is in the Blairs College museum, Aberdeen. There has not as yet, however, been an attempt to place her among the saints.



Left to right, Margot Robbie, Saoirse Ronan and Director, Josie Rourke.

Norman Barry

TELEVISION

Father Brown BBC 1

The seventh series of *Father Brown* has just ended on BBC 1 and there is talk of a further series. It is based on the writings of G.K. Chesterton, a distinguished Catholic journalist, critic, broadcaster and author of some 80 books. He is best remembered for his Fr Brown stories. He wrote as many as 53 of them between 1910 and 1936. The country priest in his shapeless cassock and black hat with his ever present large umbrella had strong insight into human behaviour which helped him solve many crimes. The author may have been a little surprised at some of the real life developments from his stories.

Alec Guinness, for example, played Fr Brown in the highly successful film of that name in 1954. After shooting in France one day, he was walking back to his hotel still clad in his film cassock and hat when a little boy fell in beside him, took his hand and chatted to him in French all the way back addressing him as *mon pere*.

Guinness felt the child's trust was valuable and important especially as his own young son was suffering from polio. He converted to Catholicism, just as Chesterton did after writing his early Fr Brown stories.

The TV version of *Father Brown* began in 2013. Although he travelled widely in the stories, the series is confined to a Cotswold village named Kembleford. And although the original stories are set in the 1920's and 30's, the series is set in the early 1950's when many are still suffering from the aftermath of the Second World War.

Fr Brown (the bespectacled, thoughtful Mark Williams) is the parish priest of St Mary's who loves, understands and forgives people, even those whose crimes he exposes after careful thought, often to the frustration of the small moustachioed local police Inspector Mallory (Jack Dean). Fr Brown confides in and bounces his theories off the parish secretary Mrs Mc Carthy (Sorcha Cusack) and local aristocrat Lady Buntly Windermere (Emer Kenny).

The series is an enjoyable watch and shows no sign of running down. It is likely that the stories may have heavily influenced other writers. *Grantchester* (ITV) for example, is also set in an English village in the 1950s with a crime solving vicar at its centre.

Lewis Cameron



Mark Williams in the title role of the Roman Catholic priest who solves crimes in a picturesque Cotswald village.

MUSIC

BREABACH

Frenzy Of The Meeting

Breabach Records, BRE005CD

This is the sixth album from the Glasgow-based Scottish Highland folk group Breabach:



comprising Megan Henderson (fiddle, vocals, harmonium), James Lindsay (double-bass, moog, electric guitar), Calum MacCrimmon (bagpipes, whistle, bouzouki, vocals), James Duncan Mackenzie (bagpipes, wooden flute, whistle) and Ewan Robertson (acoustic & electric guitar, vocals, cajon).

Apart from a handful of Scottish Gaelic traditional tunes and songs, this album contains mostly self-composed tunes and songs by the band. *The Oban Ball* is a 19th century traditional bagpipe melody, followed by the syncopated rhythmic, muscular pipe-tune *Thunderstorm On Thunder Bay*, composed by James Duncan Mackenzie.

Western Isle Dance opens with a zesty, uplifting, whistle-led traditional tune from the Canna House Collection, and segues into a lovely lilting, poignant composition by James Lindsay, with a melody full of Aberdeenshire elegance, and with richly-textured harmonies on the strings. *Winter Winds* is an Americana-flavoured song by Calum MacCrimmon: both melody and vocal delivery are a wee bit reminiscent of Kris Drever. *Frenzy Of The Meeting* is an original and

engaging combination of traditional 19th century Gaelic Ceòl Mòr and a thrilling, darkly-swirling, Scandinavian-sounding fiddle composition by Megan Henderson. It is my favourite track on the album.

Produced in collaboration with Eamon Doorley (of Danú and the Julie Fowlis Band) the production and arrangements on this album take Breabach's sound into a lush, more polished sonic landscape after the multicultural eclecticism of their previous album *Astar*.
www.breabach.com

DAVEY & DYER

Dynamite Quay

(Cornish Nos Lowen Dance Music)
Dalla Records, DACD08

Neil Davey (bouzouki and fiddle) and Jen Dyer (viola) are leading stalwarts

of the Cornish traditional music scene, and both are members of the famous, trailblazing Cornish folk group Dalla.



The deep, gristy tone of Dyer's viola is a perfect fit to the antiquity of some of these tunes. And Davey's bouzouki is well suited to the complex rhythms of some of the Cornish dances.

The duo perform the broad repertoire of Cornish music here, both new and old, recently-composed or found in manuscripts: ranging from stonking jigs, reels and polkas, to the rhythmically-complex, almost Balkan-sounding Cornish five-step dances. The album also includes some beautiful slower pieces like *The Holy Well* (an old traditional tune collected in Camborne in 1913), and the surging-yearning melody *An Oula (The Owl)*, and the wistful, willowy composition *Elsie's Harmonium*.

If you don't know Cornish music, you'll find that listening to this music is like recognising a stranger that you've never met. The loping rhythm of the Cornish 'Nos Lowen' dance tunes recalls the Fest Noz dance nights of Brittany. And lovers of Welsh and early English music will detect tantalisingly familiar qualities in some of these tunes, like the *Karol Korev (Beer Carol)* with its very old melody associated with the carol *When God First Created Man*. Or try the frenetic *Old Nameless* tune from the 1808 manuscript of John Old, 'Dancing Master of Par', or the foot-stomping *Not Too Young To Marry Yet* from the 1858 tune book of Michael Harris of St. Dennis. www.tonyow.co.uk/dynamite-quay

TALISK Beyond

Talisk Records,
Talisk02CD

This is the 2nd album from



Talisk, the Glasgow-based, award-winning trio of Mohsen Amini (concertina), Hayley Keenan (fiddle) and Graeme Armstrong (guitar). They have toured widely, appearing at Denmark's Tønder festival, Celtic Colours in Cape Breton, and UK folk festivals such as Cambridge, Cropredy and Celtic Connections.

Talisk's travels have inspired the music on this album, which is almost entirely composed by members of the band. These compositions evoke Talisk's emotional engagement with the places they've been. These are tone-poems that use traditional musical idioms to conjure and capture the memory of a particular place at a particular time.

Let me pick out a few highlights. *Rations* is a darkly sonorous, powerfully rhythmic composition that brings to mind the work of Basque diatonic accordionist Kepa Junkera. *Crooked Water Valley* was composed after being on tour in the US with the folk-band We Banjo 3. It combines Scottish, Americana and classical influences, with dramatic shifts in tone and tempo and a lush violin/viola strings accompaniment (provided by Greg Lawson, principal 2nd violinist, BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra), making this piece a mini-travelogue in its own right. *Serbian Dreams* creates a trance-like atmosphere through eerie fiddle and hypnotic phrases on concertina and guitar, against a pensive wash of richly-textured strings accompaniment. *Montreal* is an autumnal intertwining of fiddle, concertina and guitar that builds into a joyous, effervescent jig, painting in music the powerful emotions of the real-life family reunion that inspired it. www.talisk.co.uk

YR HWNTWS

Y Tribanwr – 70 o Dribannau
Traddodiadol

Sain Records, SAIN SCD2797

Since their first (vinyl!) album in 1982, Yr Hwntws have been

researching old Welsh manuscripts and songbooks to collect and perform the traditional



Triban Morgannwg verses, songs and tunes of Glamorgan and Gwent. These catchy but ancient *triban* songs preserve the old folk culture of South Wales, and they are sung in the archaic Welsh dialect of Gwent: 'Gwenhwysig'. These witty, sung verses carry stories of village life, folk humour and folk wisdom, all infused with a touch of bardic poetry. The old poets and singers used the *tribannau* as a means of conveying stories about ordinary people: so these songs are alternately funny, poetic, sad, irreverent and punchy. (The accompanying booklet contains the full lyrics, English translations, and fascinating scholarly notes on the songs).

This, Yr Hwntws' 3rd album, is a collection of over seventy *tribannau*, arranged to traditional tunes by Nia Lynn and Bernie KilBride, and performed with rustic gusto by the current Yr Hwntws line-up of Gregg Lynn (vocals, guitar), Nia Lynn (vocals, percussion), Bernie KilBride (fiddle), Imogen O'Rourke (vocals, flute, whistle), Dan B. James (guitar, mandocello) and Dean Ryan (double bass, bass guitar).

Some of these songs are very old indeed. For example, *Di-ofal Yw'r Aderyn (Carefree Is The Bird)* echoes the 14th century bird poems of Dafydd Ap Gwilym and the religious teachings of the medieval Welsh friars: 'Consider the birds of the air. They neither sow, nor reap, nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them'. www.sainwales.com

Paul Matheson

Reviewers

Lewis Cameron
is a retired sheriff

Mary Cullen
is editor of *Open House*.

Paul Matheson
is a music reviewer and an equality and diversity officer with the police.

Norman Barry
is the long time film reviewer of *Open House*.

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Moments in time



We leave the bus just after the Wallace Monument at the stop for Logie Kirk. This is the start of the Hillfoots Way, which runs along

the base of the Ochils to Dollar and Muckhart. It used to be called the Kings' Highway as it was the route from Cambuskenneth Priory to Falkland Palace, avoiding the boggy low ground along the Forth. The weather is dry but cloudy and the tops of the hills are obscured by mist.

The path leaves the road to Sheriffmuir, site of the battle in 1715, near the church, which a plaque informs us has been the site of Christian worship since the 13th century. We cross a field and enter a beautiful wood before crossing an area of pasture grazed by Highland cattle. A distinctive laughing call ahead denotes the presence of a green woodpecker, not a common bird in Scotland; we look carefully amongst the scattered trees on the hillside but do not see it. The path now takes us amongst some ornamental trees and here we spot a tree creeper climbing up the trunk of a tall tree then flying to the foot of another.

We enter the old village of Blairlogie, an attractive collection of old cottages, one of which has been converted into a reading room. The track continues along the base of the hills until we find a signpost pointing in to the hill path to Menstrie. We had not expected to climb any hills today but decide that we had better take this route. The path climbs steeply, then turns left up some steps cut into the hillside. On a clear day, there would be a good view from here, but all

we can see is the village of Menstrie far below. We meet a walker, who tells us that he has climbed Dumyat, the prominent peak at the western end of the Ochils and asks us the way to Menstrie. We have never been here before but suggest a path down a steep grassy slope which goes in the right direction. We follow more slowly and find at the bottom a notice-board giving information on an ancient wood and the old mill, which used to power the first industry here. The area has recently been landscaped and features an interesting metal sculpture of a man with the head of a fox.

We find a café called the Old Forge and enjoy some sweet potato and sweetcorn soup before investigating the nearby Menstrie castle. This is a large intact structure in the middle of a housing estate. It was built in 1560 and one of the first owners, Sir William Alexander, was an advisor to King James VI and tried to found the colony of Nova Scotia in the early 17th century. After becoming derelict and facing demolition, the castle was restored by Clackmannanshire Council in the early 1960's and used as council flats with a courtyard of new houses built behind. This is an unusual use of an old castle, many of which are converted into luxury dwellings, but it was successful in ensuring its survival.

Tim Rhead

Tim Rhead is a pastoral assistant in the Episcopal Church.

OPEN HOUSE

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Open House is published six times a year. We welcome letters and contributions, which should be sent to the editor by the last Friday of the month before publication. Articles should be no more than 1200 words long, and reviews no more than 800 words. Letters and articles may be edited or held over for future editions.

The opinions and ideas expressed by all our contributors are their own and not accepted as those of Open House.

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Contributions for the next edition

Thank you to all our subscribers and contributors to this edition of *Open House*.

The next edition (April/May) will be published in the second week of April and the deadline for letters and articles is **Friday, 29th March**.

Open House exists to promote comment and debate on a wide range of issues from a faith perspective in Scotland and we would encourage our readers to let us know what they think about the views, opinions and reviews we carry. Letters and contributions are always welcome and we would be interested in your suggestions for topics or events we might cover in the future.

Submissions, letters, ideas for features and notice of upcoming events should be sent to the editor at editor@openhousescotland.co.uk, or by post at the address above. We look forward to hearing from you.

