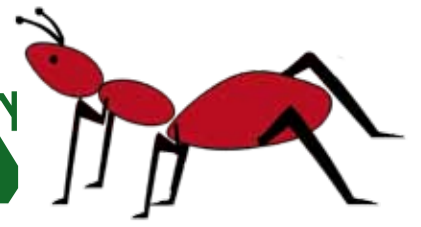


Augustine's New Times



"Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people" Luke 2.10

£1 Suggested Donation

All Change!



I remember travelling a lot on trains when I was a child. My country of origin, Cuba, was one of the first countries in all Latin America to build a railway, the second in America only after the United States, starting all the way back in 1837. At that time, Cuba was the world's largest sugar producer, and its early railways were designed not with passengers in mind, but to transport sugarcane to the mills, and refined sugar to the ports. I still remember steam trains and how my grandmother would ensure the carriage windows were closed before we entered a tunnel to prevent the smoke entering the compartment. I remember the arrival of diesel trains, then the bigger locomotives, and I remember excitedly looking at the countryside whizz past and the faces of fellow travellers in the compartment,

oblivious to the changing scenery outside, sleeping, snoring, or reading the paper. I remember, too, arriving at stations and hearing the guard call out whilst walking the corridors to change trains. There was something exciting about that call for it signified there was more to come: we were to move on to the next stage of our journey.

We have started the Season of Advent and the call is "All Change". We notice the colour of hangings and cloths has become purple; we notice a new set of coloured candles mounted in our advent wreath; we hear new words in the Eucharistic Liturgy; there is much talk of darkness and light; and hymns are flavoured with words like expected, wait, Emmanuel, prophet, hope, exultation, judgement. They all signify to us that we are on a journey; the landscape - like on that train journey- is changing. But again, like some of my fellow passengers, we can sleep through the changes or we can be alive to them.

Advent is the signal to change; to seek again, - perhaps for the first time - the meaning of the coming of God into human history and even into our own lives. The "All Change" call of Advent becomes a wonderful opportunity for fresh discovery of all that it means to follow Jesus. Perhaps the next four weeks sermons and homilies and the upcoming new Advent reflections on mid-week will help us glimpse anew the landscape of Advent and start an exciting journey with God. We can go forward over the next few weeks encouraged by God's promise of salvation, release and freedom, knowing that good will triumph and whatever darkness whatever fears may envelop us now, they soon will pass. Let us hear the call this Advent: "All Change". I wish you all a Holy Advent and Joyous Christmas.



'Wait Till I Tell You.....'

Janette welcomes Winter - even a winter of discontent would be better than the turmoil we've survived this autumn.

FRIENDS' FRIGHT NIGHT FINDS A BOOSTER!

It was Hallowe'en and there were eight witches assembled in the coven - Sandra, Janette, Fran, Roberta, Chrissie, Cathy, Ghislaine and Maggie when Margaret Swan as the Black Swan joined them from out of the Leven. Some, false-faced and scary, well fitted the famous Glasgow warning 'I widnae like tae go hame tae hur wi' a broken pey!' But the biggest fright was reserved for the wee man who saw our Hall lights on and thought he'd arrived at the venue for his Covid booster. Well, how would you feel if you started rolling up your sleeve to a witch? He's still in recovery!

There was 'Dookin' for Apples' with sanitised forks and guising for all. Sandra brought her own immaculately attired partner for 'Shriekly Come Dancing' Pity he looked so deflated by the end of the evening - but that's the drama of being in the dance off! Yes, Hallowe'en was well celebrated at St. Aug's and 'The Lost Broomstick' was discovered amongst the humungous collection of scaffolding necessitated by the collapse of our high gutters. Now if you really want a fright - read the bill for this!

'IT WIS JIST LIKE BEIN' IN BENIDORM'

In November Friends re-enacted their past summers in Benidorm throwing themselves into the action in Spanish or Tourist gear to relive their exploits when chasing the local waiters along those beaches. And Spanish costume is difficult to obtain in Dumbarton - do the ladies of Spain really wear flamenco dresses to catch the bus to the supermarket? We had guests that night that had crossed the Clyde, if not the Med., to be with us. There were several varieties of Paella and Sangria - with and without alcohol. We had to keep drinking to tell the difference! Happily, no one fell over and even with the Spanish karaoke to improve our knowledge of the culture, Y Viva Espana was the only song recognizable. All would not have been possible without the hard work of Heller and Montse. Over £500 was raised for St. Augustine's funds and we all went home, maybe not with a suntan, but having had a great wee night!

A SPEECH TO REMEMBER.

Don't worry, Boris, it may have seemed all about fluffed lines, awkward pauses and shuffling papers but it was memorable - even in Peppa Pig World. But then you didn't have the advantage of delivering your early oratorical attempts down in St. Aug's old hall at the November Birthday Parties of the A.Y.P.A (or youth group). As President you could be performing from a top table in front of over one hundred guests ready to get stuck into the sandwiches. Oh, I know Eton was OK, but the wit and projection needed to hold the interest of the youth of both diocese and town was a challenge and these welcoming speeches were handwritten and held in hot, trembling hands.

The Birthday Party was a highlight in Dumbarton's social calendar. It meant a new frock, a cut and set (blow dries had never been heard of) and the chance of being elected as the Birthday Party Queen - that was a girls' only contest! How did we manage without nail extensions and fake tans? But many matches were made and if you hadn't had a walk round the boilers by 9pm you were having a bad night. We made friends with contemporaries from as far afield as Paisley and King's Park who had travelled on the Erskine Ferry. So exotic! Everyone complimented the speech, the dancing began and the rest is history.



Thoughts and Ramblings on First Advent Sunday

Following Heller's sermon about joy and laughter in Advent I spent a happy afternoon watching 'Nativity' (for the umpteenth time). It is silly, completely unrealistic but endearing and full of hope and joy - with a few hiccups along the way. My thoughts turned to another production I saw at the Old Atheneum, Glasgow 24 years ago - also in Advent (or very close).

'Jesus My Boy' was a play with just one actor (Tom Conti) and told the story of Jesus from Joseph's perspective. We know so little about Joseph but get the impression that although he had questions he was pretty compliant and supportive to his young fiancée. This was a very different pair - a very feisty Mary and a sceptical Joseph. This created some hilarious exchanges especially around the packing for the journey (with Conti playing both parts).

For me the most poignant part of the play was when Joseph talks about spending time with Jesus at bed time, when he remembered his own father, also a carpenter, and the smell of him. He looked at Jesus and decided it did not matter how he was conceived, he Joseph could be a father to him.

The crucifixion still has Joseph unsure about who exactly his son is but he is very very aware that he is really really special.

No doubt there are those who would consider all this somewhat blasphemous but it was a play and did not pretend to be true.

Tom Conti stayed to do a question and answer session and it was very well received.

For me it was both thought provoking and a good pre Christmas night out. There was talk of it being filmed for tv but I don't think that ever happened.



Heller

Janette

Pauline

And is it true? and is it true?
This most tremendous tale of all,
Seen in a stained-glass window's hue,
A Baby in an ox's stall?
The Maker of the stars and sea
Become a Child on earth for me?

And is it true? For if it is,
No loving fingers tying strings
Around those tissueed fripperies,
The sweet and silly Christmas things,
Bath salts and inexpensive scent
And hideous tie so kindly meant.

No love that in a family dwells,
No carolling in frosty air,
Nor all the steeple-shaking bells
Can with this single Truth compare -
That God was man in Palestine
And lives today in Bread and Wine.

John Betjeman, Christmas, 1954

Lay Ministry Day

A very grand title for a Diocesan 'do', open to everyone, lasting two and a half hours on Zoom! Despite a feeling for foreboding about something that could have been very boring (and preparing myself to do something else whilst still zooming), I was surprised that I actually enjoyed it and my only distraction was hanging out the washing during the half hour 'comfort' break. Much of that was due to being organised into various groups of 4 in on-line 'rooms' that allowed discussion and reflection. Discussion centred around how churches and individuals are doing during and after lockdown. There was agreement that Zoom services and events didn't suit everyone, especially the technically isolated. Yet, attendance at this event by folk living in the depths of Galloway was only possible because of internet technology. Some commented on the silence that can be achieved in sacred places, with intentional/deliberate silence on Zoom being more difficult to achieve. There was also concern about the mental health impact of isolation and its effect on the confidence of individuals. One thing we all agreed on - the absence of wine at communion needed to be resolved. After some reflection on Mark 4, 35-41 (when Jesus stills the waves), the quote I came away from the screen with was from Theresa of Avila, "It's not possible to fall out of the arms of God, only into them".

Fran

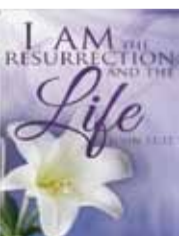
Saying Welcome..., and Saying Goodbye



Through Baptism we said welcome to **Emily Carlyne Boyce**, on October 24th. We give thanks to God for the new life in Christ offered to Emily.

And we said Goodbye to: **Margaret McNair and Irene Woodbridge**

We give thanks for their lives as we leave them in the care of Jesus our Lord.



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Layout/Design: Montse Aparicio

Keep Calm and Sing the Carols!

There's a real determination amongst folk this year to make this a great, big bumper Christmas, after last year's Covid enforced restricted one. No stone will be left unturned to ensure that we do not miss a present, an undelivered package or an unavailable seasonable 'must'. Christmas 2021 must not fall short of a perfect celebration!

Are we getting into a 'right stushie' before a Christmas card has even been written? Are we missing the real magic of Christmas? Friends of St. Augustine's will make it easy for you to include one essential festive ingredient on Sunday 19th December with Carols by Candlelight round the Christmas Tree beginning at 6pm. This will be an informal event and it's in the Church. Wear your Santa Hat and Mistletoe Mask (you could get lucky!) and enjoy your favourite carols, readings and memories – in just the right atmosphere to banish the busy retail world for a while. There will be light seasonable refreshments and everyone is invited to come along. There's always the rest of the week for that last minute shopping and menu planning. Thank you to all who have paid their Friends' subscriptions. To those who haven't – please consider paying the Treasurer soon. Then we can all look forward to a programme of social events during 2022.



Margaret and Janette Friends' Executive

Digital Church

Mock-up of what St Augustine's might look like with our new screens and presentation system.



What are we doing?

Installing large TV screens to be visible to the congregation and other users of the church building and the large hall.

Why are we doing this?

Recognising that we had to do things differently if we want to grow and remain relevant in the community, we successfully applied for some grant funding through the Adapt and Thrive Communities Recovery fund. The aim of this fund was to help charitable organisations to get back on their feet financially after the impact of lockdown and other recent restrictions. Our bid to the fund focused on making both the church and hall more suited to "blended" meetings both for community and congregational use. In the church our aim is to make our services more accessible and the building more versatile; the Digital Church improvements will not only make it easier to follow the service liturgy, but will give newcomers and visitors an easier transition to our ways of worship. This will avoid the need for separate service sheets and liturgy booklets, saving paper and preparation time. It will also provide a new capability that may prove attractive to other users of the building, for example to hold interactive meetings and services using audio visual presentations including video conferencing facilities. We have already experimented with Zoom during services including funerals and baptisms, allowing those who can't attend in person to participate in church events. We hope to grow this capability over the next few months to widen the outreach to our community and beyond.



John Wiggins

Forgotten Saints & Martyrs

Blessed Ivan Sleziuk - feast day 2nd December

Ivan Sleziuk was born on January 14, 1896 in the village of Zhyvachiv, Ivano-Frankivsk District, Austrian Empire. In 1923 he was ordained to the priesthood. Little is known about his involvement in WW2; however, some say he used his position to help injured soldiers from both sides. What is known for certain is that in April of 1945 Bishop Blessed Gregory Khomyshyn ordained him as his coadjutor with right of succession. Just 2 months later, on June 2, 1945, the now Bishop Ivan was arrested and deported for ten years to the labour camps in Vorkuta, Russia. After his release on November 15, 1954, he returned to Ivano-Frankivsk. During this time the Soviet Union persecuted Christians in a ruthless fashion but Bishop Ivan kept faith alive in kitchens and living rooms. In 1962, he was arrested again and imprisoned for five years in a camp of strict regimen. After his release on November 30, 1968, he had to go often to the KGB for regular "talks" during which they would torture him in the hopes of forcing him to recant. Ivan's last visit with the KGB was two weeks before his death, which occurred on December 2, 1973, in Ivano-Frankivsk.



We think of persecution and martyrdom as something belonging to antiquity but the persecution of Christians has never ceased, only moved from place to place. Today in some parts of Africa and the Middle East Christians live in fear; the lucky ones flee to the shores of Europe seeking refuge from religious persecution. When we celebrate Christmas this year let us not forget our persecuted brothers and sisters for whom the celebration will be hushed and tinged with fear.



The Elephant in the Church



Vestry members of St Augustine's and a few members of the congregation attended the Loch Lomond Away Day on Saturday 25th September at the Loch Lomond Waterfront, in Balmaha.

For a day, we all stepped outside our normal church context to think "outside the box", to share ideas, and to try to discern what God is calling us as a church to do.

The first part of the timetable involved reflection about the way we are, how other see us, our vision as congregation and the mission we were already undertaking. This led naturally into a discussion about how we could get better at mission, welcome and integration, evaluating what we have done so far and how we might develop.

The second part of the day was aimed at identifying the Elephant in the Church, addressing our current challenges. It got people thinking, and showed St Augustine's in a positive light: all peoples' views were respected.

Our facilitator was Anthea Clark. In response to our 2021 Away Day we will:

1. Become an invitational church: meaning we will be proactive and creative in our inviting others to our events, activities, and services, not leaving it to others.
2. Make provision for children by having children's activity packs in readiness for any child that may come with their family.
3. Become a prayerful church with regular prayers seeking blessing from God with numerical growth.
4. Make an opportunity in 2022 to explore experimental Services tailored to our specific situation/needs.

Guttered!: a saga



End of August: upper roof guttering sagging off east side of church, contractors contacted for costings to fix it...BUT...

Saturday 4th September: a section of the high gutters fell into the lane; thank God no-one was walking there. Barbara and Janette heard the crash, a passer by reported what had happened. Police blocked off access to the lane. Drone pictures taken showed fallen gutter and yet more sagging guttering.

9th September: cherry picker inspection by contractor to assess the extent of the damage of the high guttering and the damage to the roof and guttering below.

23rd September: scaffolding erected – on hire – and work commenced to remove further damaged guttering and make safe that which remained in place.

Decision made to use lower guttering to replace what had fallen from the high roof, taking advantage of scaffolding already in place. Work completed and most of scaffolding removed, then possible to repair lower roof slates.

Cause of collapse of high guttering...

...the failure of the fixings. During the restoration in 2003, 2" mild steel screws, instead of galvanised or stainless steel, were used. They have now rusted; this could not be seen when gutters inspected and cleaned earlier this year. Remaining fixings have now been replaced with 3" stainless steel screws.

What now?

Site meeting being held with the loss adjusters on Wednesday 30th November to see what the insurance company will cover. Likely to be as little as possible! Once known fund raising probable.

Costs being sought for replacing the lower guttering. The use of aluminium rather than cast iron being explored, with information from the Diocesan Property Committee.

What next?

We know that west side guttering will now need to be checked.

Costs so far: £25,268

Costs to come: replacement of low guttering about £4,500 - £5,000

Unknown cost to come: inspection and probable replacement of fixings of guttering at both high and low levels on west side of church.

Fran and the team

(Janette, Barbara, Margaret K. and Keller)

Back to the Future!???



How wonderful to be back in the days when we can hold our special events! How about that Halloween Night? Wow...We were overrun by numerous ugly witches and other horrors.

It sure was a well-attended fun night. Great food, fun games like dookin for apples, a wee play, and competition for best costume. Plus music and a dancing dummy! What a laugh!

Then the swinging Spanish Night. Great music, great food (tasty paella in abundance), flowing sangria. All served by those busy bees, the waitresses! Then a bit of karaoke! And again prize for best Spanish outfit.

Well, who wouldn't enjoy all that?. Of course, there's Saturday's coffee morning enjoyed by the Friends of St Augustine's with sales table and tombola on the side. I must say I enjoy the toasted fruit loaf.

This is all organised by our hard-working ladies.

By the time this issue is out we will have enjoyed the Christmas Coffee Morning with prizes galore. Hope I win something! What more do we want?

Issy

