

Edinburgh Congregation Newsletter

Michaelmas 2019

There was a strikingly cool shift of season starting on September 1 this year. It seemed a clear marking of the transition to autumn from a rather unsettled summer. Unsettled not only in terms of the weather, but in world events of ecological, political and social dimensions.

In a recent sermon we heard about how our grief and helplessness at what humans are doing to the earth can best be channelled as an energy that shows our care and love for the earth directed to the place where we are. The way we look at a plant or tree, cultivate our garden, value the woods we walk through, can resonate throughout our planet as a healing force that benefits the whole. "Every act has a cosmic significance" according to Charles Eisenstein (and many others), and we can know this every time we celebrate the Act of Consecration of Man. The flowers on the altar, the small portions of bread and wine, are representative for the whole earth that is gradually on the way to becoming transformed ever more into the earth that will become a sun, the body of Christ.

There is no need to despair. Ultimately there is more hope!

A monthly study group that picks up this thought of Hope has had two sessions. We are trying to see current events in the light of a bigger, even spiritual, perspective; we are also striving not simply to say: "It'll be all right in the end", but to discover how we as humans can recognize a deep cause to be hopeful and, right now, be part of that change that wants to come.

Our lively August discussion ranged from the blight of plastic to climate change, politics and social issues. We spoke of practical differences we can make, and this also led naturally on to a congregational Sunday dialogue about prayer, which is a theme we are keen to develop in coming months.

Most in the congregation will have heard about the changes in our new chapel development plans. Our initially hoped-for setting (as laid out in the brochure everyone received) has been turned down by the City Council as inappropriate for Napier Road. They do not want to have a precedent set in building brand new structures in gardens. There were also issues with some trees. We have good cause to expect that re-siting our development in the lower garden close to Polwarth Terrace will be looked upon more favourably, as this road's buildings and layouts are much less uniform. Johannes Sloendregt visited recently and met with the congregation to outline a very nice alternative with community rooms on the western side of the property and the chapel well-visible from the road and doesn't involve the removal of any trees. These plans will be formally submitted in early October.

We would like to sincerely thank those who have generously contributed to our appeal to raise funds for the Chapel Building process. This has enabled us to begin the long journey towards the completion of our new space, and it is heart-warming to have experienced the substantial response. We have almost reached the target of the £45,000 required; there is approximately £5,000 still needed.

If there are a few people in the community who have not yet pledged or donated funding and would like to help us reach the goal, we would warmly invite you to take advantage of the new resolve that comes in autumn with Michaelmas and contact Gabriele Kuhn who is administering this appeal. In the service of Michael and the Christ Himself, we know that every deed working in the direction they point us in that we are able to take up has real consequences for the future.

On the Programme

We have a rich and varied Programme in the weeks from Michaelmas to Advent, including a number of rather intriguing talks. Bill Boyd will take a look at the nineteenth century, with an especially fascinating exploration the life of the author, journalist, diplomat and mystic Laurence Oliphant. This was a man who managed somehow to be present at many remarkable events and places when something was happening. He pushed boundaries, also in spiritual exploration, at a time when spiritual horizons were beginning to expand.

Another not-to-be-missed talk, a Friday evening one, on October 25, is by visiting speaker Terry Boardman. Terry is a regular contributor to *New View*, and will be addressing the thorny issue of Brexit (among many other questions) in the very month when it seems likely the UK will finally leave the EU. It should not surprise us that many factors and much history are relevant to this theme of *Britain and Europe in this Critical Century of Humanity's Egohood*. Terry will present a comprehensive background to the question and draw in certain aspects of esoteric Christianity as well as more readily graspable dynamics such as the pull between America and China, Europe's and Britain's roles, and questions of globalisation, identity politics and human responsibility for our planet. We truly live in a most special century and it is part of our task to enter into dialogue about issues of our time. This Terry will facilitate!

In November there will be a report-back from the Stroud Synod and new church, we will turn our thoughts to those who have died, and enjoy some lovely classical music played by the Polwarth String Quartet which previously performed the Mendelsohn Octet for us.

The Thursday morning Gospel Study continues as we deepen and make relevant each week's pericope, and for the time being the service time remains at 9:30. There was scarcely any feedback

over the summer to the question of the start time, and it does seem to be a time that people have adjusted well to.

There was mention in the summer Newsletter of the intention to begin celebrating the Act of Consecration of Man in German. This arose out of a wish expressed by a number of people in the congregation who have a connection to the German language. This possibility can be realized also because there happens to be a priest in Edinburgh (Peter) who has regularly celebrated *die Menschenweihehandlung* over 24 years. It is the original language that our renewed sacraments were given in and as such has some merit in being nurtured a little outside the German-speaking realms. The first celebration will be on Saturday 5 October at 9:30am and it may be that some will attend even without much knowledge of German, as this can be an interesting experience in itself! Next Whitsun we hope to experience another language at the altar.

Our oldest member, Connie (Constance) Cook, turned 105 on August 12! Just imagine she has lived through everything that happened from the First World War onwards ... such enormous changes! Connie receives communion regularly and is still quite strong in her body, even though she feels ready to go, and spends her days tucked up warmly in bed in the Lennox House care home.

A reminder that Peter`s day off is Monday, so all calls on that day will be picked up on the answering machine.

Also a reminder that the clocks will go back in the night before Sunday **27 October**. Remember, in the Fall they *fall* back, in the Spring they *spring* forward!

Talking of the fall, greetings from Paul Newton and Donna, who have settled well into their new lives near Spring Valley. Paul was inducted into the congregation on 18 August.

Peter Holman