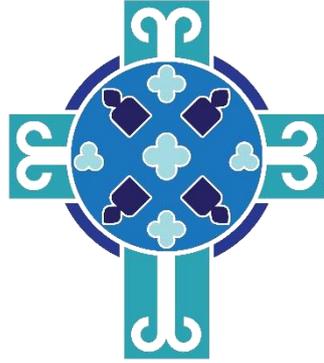


EMCOUNTER



The Magazine of Inverurie West
Parish Church

MARCH 2025



Scottish Charity SC016907

REFLECTION

In a letter dated April 5 1903, Rilke addresses a young poet's anxieties about his future. He encourages him to embrace uncertainty as part of life and advises patience, suggesting that answers will come with time and introspection.



“I beg you, to have patience with everything unresolved in your heart and to try to love the questions themselves as if they were locked rooms or books written in a very foreign language. Don't search for the answers, which could not be given to you now, because you would not be able to live them. And the point is to live everything. Live the questions now. Perhaps then, someday far in the future, you will gradually, without even noticing it, live your way into the answer.”

Rainer Maria Rilke, [Letters to a Young Poet](#)

(Submitted by Linda Duncan)

From the West Manse



Decisions. Decisions

On March 5 it will be Ash Wednesday, the traditional beginning of the season of Lent, which lasts 40 days (excluding Sundays). Lent is supposed to be a season of penitence and purpose, where we voluntarily undertake some discipline to help us focus on God and prepare for Easter.

One of the most common disciplines is fasting, or doing without something we normally value or enjoy. Giving up a personal pleasure for Lent is sometimes known as a Lenten Sacrifice.

These days people sometimes choose to take on a task or commitment as their ‘sacrifice’ or Lenten discipline as an alternative to giving up something material. What matters is that the discipline is intentional, that it involves some level of sacrifice or restraint, and that it helps us to focus on our relationship with God.

In some traditions there are rules for fasting - like no meat eaten on the Fridays of Lent. In the Church of Scotland the practice of fasting is more often varied and tends to be taken on an individual and voluntary basis.

This leaves people like me with the question each year, ‘*what shall I fast from this time?*’

I’ve made different choices in different years, with varying degrees of success. Some years I’ve ‘*gone public*’ with my choice. There are advantages to this - not least that it helps keep me accountable. Other years I’ve chosen to commit to something privately, without fanfare. This too has advantages because it reduces the chance that

my fasting becomes something to take pride in, even to show off about.

It's also perfectly reasonable to make a fasting choice alongside a friend, partner or with a group, and once or twice I've done that and benefitted from the reminder that I fast as part of a community, not just as an individual.

But as of writing, I still haven't decided what my fast will consist of this year. It's very, very, very tempting to fast from reading or watching the news. I certainly wouldn't blame anyone who makes that choice, whether as a discipline or for their own mental health.

But I'm not sure it is the right choice for me, as a church leader at this critical time in global history.

Because of this I was very grateful when a friend posted up a prayer by Rabbi Irwin Keller written in 2022 called '**Before reading the news**'. Our Encounter team has since discovered Rabbi Keller's companion prayer '**After reading the news**' as well as another heartbreakingly poignant prayer '**Prayer before turning on the news**' written by Hila Ratzabi and published in 2022. With the kind permission of the authors we have featured these in this Encounter. I hope they will be of use to some of you who, like me, feel you can't turn away, even briefly, but also feel the need to be reminded of God's sheltering wings as we go through the daily ritual of witness.

It is a challenge to "*witness the wounds of the world without being wounded myself*" as Rabbi Keller writes. Some wounds we cannot help but take on, of course. That's not necessarily a bad thing, if it prompts us, as Keller also says, to '*lift up the work of our hands*' and become active for peace, for justice, for our planet and our communities.

Keller writes on his website that the goal of his framing prayers is to help us “*come away from reading the news not incapacitated by dread and despair, but instead feeling moved, strong, loving, and resolute.*”

Whatever you choose to do or not do this Lent; whatever form your service, or fast, or discipline takes; if it leaves you “*moved, strong, loving and resolute*” you will be well resourced for the tasks at hand and well prepared for the joy of resurrection when it comes.

Every blessing
Rhona

Lent Study & Podcast

For our Lent study this year we are going to be following the theme/materials on Sanctuary First’s website “*Beginning to Flourish*”.



Here’s a couple of links you might want to look at/listen to especially if you are planning to join us, but you also might enjoy following them on your own.

James Cathcart and Albert Bogle have done a podcast series looking at the theme which you can listen to at <https://www.sanctuaryfirst.org.uk/news/listen-to-our-new-series-beginning-to-flourish-pod> or find on Spotify.

James has also put together a trailer on Facebook if you just want a taste!

<https://www.facebook.com/SanctuaryFirst/videos/1350555842>



THE GUILD

The February meeting was all about memories. With the family's permission, we were able to listen to a recording of the late Dorothy Susdorf (a guild member). The song was recorded when Dorothy was 23 in 1958. She sang 'O Mio Babbino Caro.'

Our speaker for the afternoon was the Reverend Iain Telfer telling us all about "Simba", *Simpsons Memory Box Appeal*, a Scottish charity supporting parents and families who have lost a baby before or after birth, and supplying memory boxes. A very emotive and thought-provoking talk. Thoroughly appreciated by all.

Next meeting March 10th. Speaker Patricia Ware. 'The Gospels in an eggshell.'

Margaret Harrow.



CHRISTIAN AID

A short reminder that the Christian Aid local group is still looking for a treasurer. Contact Sheila Rennie for details (☎ 01467 623156).

FABRIC CONVENOR/ADMINISTRATOR

The Fabric Team has met and discussed how to move forward since Jim Lyle's retirement. They've agreed that what they could really use is someone to take on the administrative role of carrying out the computer filing under the guidance of the Fabric Team. If you might be able to help, or to find out more, please do get in touch with Rhona or one of the Fabric Team.





ACORN CENTRE UPDATE

After a very difficult January, plagued by bad weather and economic uncertainty, it was a relief to get to February and have something to look forward to. Ron & Joyce Petrie joined us for our sharing platter on Valentine's Day which they happily devoured. Extra Mature Cheddar, Honey Roast Ayrshire Ham and Pork, Duck & Orange Pate served with Salad,



Homemade Chutney, Homemade Oatcakes and Sourdough bread – yum!



With Lent fast approaching, we will be offering sweet and savoury pancakes or crêpes on Tuesday 4th March, and from 7th March we'll begin "Fish Pie Friday" with the return of one of our most popular dishes throughout March and April.



And don't forget Mother's Day on Sunday 30th March. We have gift vouchers available in various designs.



And finally, did you know that we are now open from 9am? Now you have an extra hour in the day to take advantage of our Early Bird Special for only £3 for a sausage-filled roll and tea or filter coffee included. What better way to start your day!

THOUGHTS ON CONSUMING THE NEWS

Written in 2022 by Irwin Keller, rabbi, teacher, writer and self-styled ‘hope-monger’, who says “ *Ultimately, the goal of this protective ritual frame is to come away from reading the news, not incapacitated by dread and despair, but instead feeling moved, strong, loving, and resolute.*” Reproduced here with his permission.

BEFORE reading the news

Elohai neshamah shenatata bi tehorah hi.

My God, the soul you have placed in me is pure and vulnerable. I am afraid that looking at today’s news will be painful. Encircle me in a robe of light so that I can witness the wounds of the world without being wounded myself. Let me learn what I need to know in order to be of my greatest use, without being overwhelmed by despair. I feel your protective light now as I open myself to the world’s suffering and the world’s joys.

AFTER reading the news

Ribono shel Olam, I am Yours, and all that is in this world is Yours. Today I have read stories and seen images, but my knowledge is incomplete. I don’t know how it all connects. But I know I am connected to everyone; I take joy in their joy; I suffer with their suffering. If there is no role for me to play today then let my learning leave me wiser and better prepared. If there is a role for me to play, let clarity rise up in me to see it, even if that role is a humble one. *Uma’aseh yadeynu konenehu*. Lift up the work of my hands, in anything they might do for peace, for justice, for the wholeness of our planet, or for the betterment of my community. Just as you turned the curse of Balaam into a blessing, so may all my actions accrue to the good.

PRAYER BEFORE TURNING ON THE NEWS

by Hila Ratzabi

I sit before the TV screen
remote control in hand.
I want it to stay this way.
This dark, quiet room
without a world in it.
This nothing, this sweet
nothing. The fire truck
toy on the shelf beneath the TV,
look how it saves
no one. In this room
there is nothing
burning. Dear God, it is
possible. You are the one
with wings. Shelter us.
Let something have been fixed
today:
The deal among the nations signed,
the guns, all of them, taken away,
a woman believed,
a man contrite. A border
covered in dust. God,
I need to know what happened
to those who tried to cross.

What happened after the storm
and earthquake and fire.
I can't be everywhere at once,
but you can. How can I convince
you
we are worthy of miracles?
How much longer can I delay
the inevitable knowing,
the daily ritual of witness?
At least bear it with me,
dear God. Come sit
on the couch, put your feet up,
I'm making tea. Tell me
how this will end.
Tell me if there is a chance.
Or maybe we can bargain for
peace?
Trade for redemption?
Give me something,
anything, before I let
the messengers into my room.
I will not look away.
Promise me
you won't either.

This poem is republished by permission of the author from [*There Are Still Woods*](#) (June Road Press, 2022). Hila Ratzabi was born in Rehovot, Israel, and raised in Queens, New York. Her poetry collection *There Are Still Woods* won a gold Nautilus Book Award and was a finalist for a National Indie Excellence Award. Her poetry has been published widely in literary journals. She holds an MFA in Poetry from Sarah Lawrence College and lives outside Chicago.

RETIREMENT OF SESSION CLERKS

One of the things that made the decision to come to the West church to serve so easy was an instinct that told me, that in Mark and Gillian Paterson, I would have the best Session Clerks a newly ordained minister could possibly want.

The last eight years have proven my instincts were correct.



Quietly, cheerfully, and efficiently they have been at the heart of so much of what we do here. I genuinely think there is almost nothing they don't know about this place and our people. I've lost count of the times I've depended on Mark's encyclopaedic knowledge of the

workings of the Church of Scotland, not to mention his infallible memory for names. And while Mark might take on the forward facing role he has always been emphatic that Gillian does the lion's share of the work!

You might be entertained (and surprised) to know that the only thing a Session Clerk absolutely has to do, according to Church Law, is assist the minister in drawing up the Kirk Session agenda, ensure the meeting is called properly, take minutes, and follow up on correspondence.

It doesn't mention: organising communion preparation and tidy up; keeping track of pastoral needs and important dates for the

Sunday flower delivery; running the Fairtrade shop; serving as a duty officer; organising welcome teams and hospitality; arranging the distribution of the church magazine; helping with Safeguarding; or any of the other many, many things Mark & Gillian have done as a matter of course - including being a sounding board for the minister's thoughts and plans, worries or concerns. All of this has been offered with care and discretion, good humour and kindness.

As one fellow elder put it, "Mark and Gillian always go the extra mile". They have now served in the session clerk role for ten years and are ready to step down. They will be retiring from the role at the end of this month. Fortunately, they are not actually going anywhere, so we will have their continued support on the Kirk Session as they serve the West in both familiar and new ways. I know our new session clerk Morag Mitchell is delighted we aren't losing all their experience and wisdom. We'll also have the ongoing pleasure of their company and friendship, and we won't lose out on Gillian's baking!

The Church of Scotland website says that being a congregational office bearer is '*a privilege not a prize*' and I have certainly been privileged to work alongside Mark and Gillian. Like the servant in Jesus' parable of the talents, they have been faithful when entrusted with 'a few things' (or in their case considerably more than a few things) They have more than earned a 'well done, good and faithful servants' and a wee bit of rest, as we journey on together here at the West.

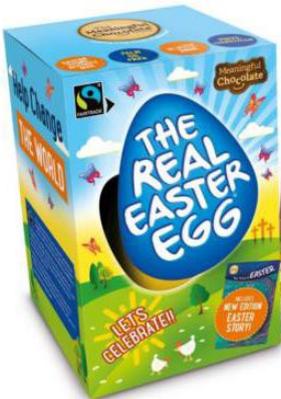
Thanks for making my own job so much easier than it could have been, Mark & Gillian, and for your ongoing friendship and support.

Rhona



UBUNTU

As Easter approaches do check out the Fair Trade Easter Eggs and gifts available in Ubuntu. As the season of hope and renewal, it is a perfect time to choose Fair Trade. The gifts will not only bring joy to the recipient but will support fair wages, sustainable practices, and the gift of hope for Fair Trade farmers and artisans around the world.



A section of fairly traded Easter eggs, from the **Meaningful Chocolate Company**, is now available in Ubuntu. The range includes milk and dark chocolate eggs, and a fun pack for an Easter egg hunt. The chocolate shells are made with cocoa from cooperatives in the Ivory Coast, the Dominican Republic, Peru,

Panama and Ecuador. The sugar comes from cooperatives in Paraguay and Belize, and the chocolate is blended using a Belgian recipe.



The Meaningful Chocolate Company give a donation of the profits to their farmers and an extra Fairtrade Premium cash payment. Choosing a Fairtrade egg means standing with farmers for fairness and equality. The farmers receive a fair price for their sugar and cocoa and the extra Fairtrade Premium can be used to invest in their community, buying everything from schoolbooks to solar panels and providing fresh water supplies.



Church Calendar/Ways of connecting – March 2025

Sunday services continue at the usual time of 11 am. If you are worshipping from home, you can connect as usual via the West church website and YouTube channels.



- | | |
|---------------------------|--|
| Sunday 2 Mar | 11am Morning Worship.
Hospitality time after the service. |
| Wednesdays
5 Mar-9 Apr | 7.30 pm Lent bible study via Zoom.
All welcome. Contact Rhona for the link. |
| Sunday 9 Mar | 11 am Morning Worship.
Hospitality time after the service. |
| Monday 10 Mar | 2 pm Guild meeting with Patricia Ware – ‘The Gospels in an egg-shell.’ |
| Tuesday 11 Mar | 7.30 pm Kirk session meeting in Acorn Centre. |
| Sunday 16 Mar | 11 am Morning Worship.
Hospitality time after the service. |
| Sunday 23 Mar | 11 am Morning Worship.
Hospitality time after the service |
| Sunday 30 Mar | 11 am Morning Worship.
Hospitality time after the service |
| Sunday 6 April | 10 am Morning Worship, with and at St Andrew’s.* |

Encounter If you have any material for Encounter
email encounter@inveruriewestchurch.org by
Wed 26 March.

* Please note, Rhona is on holiday for the first week of April, so the first Sunday in April we will be worshipping at and with St Andrew's at 10 am.

Children are welcome at all services. Most weeks we offer Junior Church for children who wish to go downstairs partway through the service. Activities and toys can also be found in our 'play as you worship' box in the sanctuary.

The prayer group continues to meet regularly on a Thursday morning. Prayer requests can be sent to olive.duncan@hotmail.co.uk or duncan.linda1@btinternet.com

Social/Fundraising Team updates



As mentioned last month, our 'unused/once used' table will be available until 30 March with items which you can pick up for a donation to church funds. We also mentioned that **Larry Young** is running a quiz for us on **Friday 21st March**. Nibbles/snacks will be provided, BYOB and there will be a raffle too. Quiz tickets (from the Acorn Centre at £5 each) are selling well so get yours soon! Teams of up to 4 but please let me know if you don't have a team and we can match you up with others.

Advance notice.

Fetternear Hall is now booked on Saturday 30 August for the Bennachie Bike Ride. Plenty time to get 'race fit'!



APPEALS

As with reading the news it can be overwhelming to receive and consider responding to the many appeals for help or monetary donations to a wide range of very worthwhile causes. In relation to this the following passage from [Luke 3:10-11](#) may be helpful: *"And the crowds asked him, "What then shall we do?" And he answered them, "Whoever has two tunics is to share with him who has none, and whoever has food is to do likewise." The following two local appeals speak directly to this.*

GIVE OR LEND A BIKE

Jackie from Friends of Amal writes:

We have arranged some cycling lessons for families during the Spring holiday but some folks don't have bikes. We are on the waiting list for cycles from 'The Bikery' in Huntly but may not be able to get any from this source until Summer time.

If anyone has an old bike they no longer use we would be very happy to give it a new home! Or if you would be able to lend us a bike to allow the families to take the lessons that would be equally wonderful. We are looking for bikes to suit all ages.

Thank you in anticipation and hope.

Contact Jackie at: friendsofalamalproject@gmail.com

CAN YOU HELP MAKE A DIFFERENCE?

As you will be aware we (Westhill Community Church), alongside Kingshill Parish Church, are looking to support the male asylum seekers housed in our community with clothing. Currently we are looking for the following items:

LIGHTLY USED MEN'S CLOTHING

- Cosy, waterproof jackets (S, M, L)
- Jumpers, sweatshirts and fleeces (S, M, L)
- Joggers and trousers (S, M, L)
- Shoes and trainers (size 6-12)
- **New** underwear and **New** socks (S, M, L)
- **Suitcases, holdalls and backpacks**



Donations can be dropped off at:

WESTHILL COMMUNITY CHURCH on:

Tuesday, Wednesdays, Thursdays, Fridays and Saturdays from 10am – 3pm

KINGSHILL CHURCH on:

Mondays, Wednesdays, Fridays 9 - 12 noon

If you have any questions or need your donations picked up, please contact Sandra McGregor on

sandramcgregor@westhillcommunitychurch.org

WHO'S WHO AT THE WEST

Minister	Rev Rhona Cathcart r.cathcart@inveruriewestchurch.org	620285
Session Clerks	Mark and Gillian Paterson sessionclerk@inveruriewestchurch.org	625675
Church and Acorn Centre Administration	Judith Will admin@inveruriewestchurch.org	670850
Church Officer	A team approach will be implemented.	
Rollkeeper	Chris Gardner rollkeeper@inveruriewestchurch.org	07791 630495
Life & Work	Irene Jamieson irenejamieson@live.co.uk	
Safeguarding Co-ordinators	Valerie Napier Gail Buchan	623279 622145
Transport Co-ordinator	Linda Mathers	622586
Acorn Centre Management Team	Laura Gray lauragray25@btinternet.com	620658
Environmental Matters Team	Joy Doorghen doorghens@outlook.com	620823
Fabric Team		
Finance Team	Alan Sharp sharp3@btinternet.com	
Treasurer	Alison Blair treasurer@inveruriewestchurch.org	620677
Committed Giving Envelopes	Cindy Farquhar Cindyfarquhar25@yahoo.com	
Gift Aid	Mandy Aitken mandyaitken@sky.com	07532 487788
Junior Church Team	Biff Barrow biff.barrow@tiscali.co.uk	623096
Pastoral Care Team	Rev Rhona Cathcart r.cathcart@inveruriewestchurch.org	620285
Social/Fundraising Team	Joyce Petrie joycepetrie21@hotmail.com	620932

CONGREGATIONAL ROLL

Deaths:

Mr Charles Middleton (District 39) on 26th January 2025

Funerals:

Mr Wilson Ferguson (District 4) on 11th February 2025

Mr Tom Snowling (District 21) on 27th February 2025

Baptism:

Kolby Harper Gordon on 9th February 2025

Please advise the Roll Keeper of any change of address:
rollkeeper@inveruriewestchurch.org

FLOWER CALENDAR – MARCH

Convener – Margaret Sangster

2nd March The Barbers

9th March Dorothy Duncan

16th March Janet Duncan

23rd March The Barbers

30th March Irene Jamieson and Linda Mathers



ENCOUNTER ONLINE – Currently we are producing and distributing Encounter online and in print. If you have not already provided details of your e-mail and would like to ensure you receive the online version, please contact the Session Clerk (01467 625675).

