

# Unit

Lochgilphead/Inverara

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We welcomed Bishop Brian for a parish meeting, & enjoyed having Fr Francis with us for six weeks

## My soul in stillness waits

I am writing this reflection after just coming back from 26 degrees in the Canary Islands, to persistent precipitation and six degrees of Mid-Argyll.

One of things that struck me on my travels is how impatient everybody seems to be getting. Whether it is waiting to be served for a drink or a meal, or waiting to pick up baggage at the carousel, or waiting for transport. Nothing seems to be fast enough or quick enough, and I had to ask myself the question: what's all the hurry?

There is a lot of preparation goes into a holiday - getting flights and accommodation, travel times that suit, saving up to have a few euros while you're there. And then all of a sudden it's over. Your week or two have passed, and you have probably missed out on a huge percentage of it, as most of the time, you were too impatient to be in the present moment.

**All the best spiritual writers speak of living and being in the present moment, of being able to wait with patience, hope and trust that the Lord will come to us in his own time. These of course are the main themes of Advent but unfortunately stillness, silence and waiting are not high on our list of 'Must Do's'.**

The old adage that you only get out of something what you put in is certainly true in the Season of Advent. So I urge you in the time that is left before Christmas to try and give a little time to listening to where the voice of God is in your life. As the words of the Advent hymn say, 'For you alone, my soul in stillness waits, truly my trust is in you'. Let our prayer be one of faithful trust in the Lord Jesus' coming, so that the joy of the Christmas season may enlighten our hearts and our homes.

Wishing you all a peaceful and joyful Christmas,

Love and prayers, Fr. David

Fr. David



## Prisoners of Conscience –

We all recognise the woman in these photographs. Nazanin Zaghari-Ratcliffe has been in the news since her arrest in Tehran in 2016, but more recently, we have seen that the old World War II slogan 'Careless words cost lives' applies in the 21<sup>st</sup> century after Foreign Secretary Boris Johnson endangered Nazanin's situation in Iran.



Nazanin, a 38-year-old project manager with the Thomson Reuters Foundation, was arrested in April 2016 and has been in prison ever since. She had taken her daughter to spend time with her Iranian family. Instead, the charity worker was accused of plotting to topple the regime, which she denies, and later sentenced to five years in prison.

In November this year, Boris Johnson wrongly suggested that she had been in Iran teaching journalism students. This led to diplomatic tensions and Nazanin's husband Richard Ratcliffe says she is now near a nervous breakdown and has other major health problems.

Nazanin is one of the prisoners of conscience that we have been asked to send messages to this Christmas – and after all she has been through, it has been tempting to focus on this young mother separated from her little daughter.

But she is not alone. Around the world there are other prisoners of conscience who don't make headlines, whose stories are never told – except when Anna and Denise urge us to sign cards and we are jolted into thinking about others in Iranian jails, such as Hadi Asgari and Amin Afshar Naderi, who were both arrested in August 2016 and sentenced to 10 years in prison for 'violating national security and promoting Christianity'. Just like Nazanin, their health is suffering. Both went on hunger strike and Amin became seriously ill in solitary confinement for three months. Hadi's kidneys packed up and went untreated. Terrible enough to have a loved one imprisoned like this – Richard Ratcliffe is out of his mind with worry about Nazanin – but what if you were told to come and pick up your husband from jail, only to see him bundled into an unmarked van and driven off? That was the experience of Wang Hongwu when she thought her husband Yang Hua – serving time in a Chinese jail for his Christian beliefs – was to be released. Yang Hua has been tortured (his feet stamped on, his life threatened), and so far, no trial has been set and certainly no release date suggested.

It isn't all about religious persecution, and nor is it just about Christians being oppressed for their views. There are Muslims suffering the same kinds of imprisonment, torture and death threats.

A different kind of persecution, which leaves its victims equally vulnerable and threatened, is that of sufferers from albinism in Malawi. Superstition and ancient beliefs persist, and albinos like Annie Alfred are under threat of abduction, mutilation and murder – all for a genetic condition suffered by around 10,000 Malawians.

You've seen all of the names and many of you have signed the cards. Please don't let it stop there. Every one of these people needs to know the outside world is aware of their existence and organisations are lobbying to change their circumstances. Every one of them is given a little bit of hope to know someone is thinking and praying for them. Don't let our witness for the prisoners of conscience be just a Christmas thing – let's talk to Anna and Denise about making contact throughout the year.

*Marian Pallister*



# St Margaret's autumn, 2017 – Hellos, goodbyes, and community action



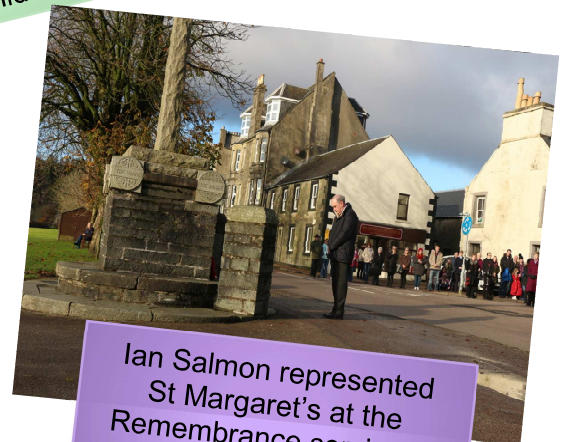
We welcomed Ethan Lekalake into the Church and wished him well for his seven-month visit to New Zealand. We look forward to seeing him again at St Margaret's in 2018

The people at SCIAF & Justice & Peace Scotland are still talking about the successful Lochgilphead screening of the Oscar Romero film 'The Claim' – a 'first' for St Margaret's J & P group.

MO-MA says the demand for food parcels has increased. They are grateful for St Margaret's continuing generous provision of cleaning materials & toiletries, but wonder if we can also help with **dried foods** for those moving on into permanent accommodation in Mid Argyll.



Justice and Peace Group:  
➤ Plans to form a school uniform bank for challenged families were taken forward – MO-MA will pilot the project.  
➤ 'Bake Share' wants everyone to reach out to those who are isolated & invite them to the next event on January 21 (bring baking!)  
➤ Donations of warm clothes for the homeless will be taken to the Simon Community



Ian Salmon represented St Margaret's at the Remembrance service in November

We had a hugely successful winter fayre – kitchen staff worked hard!

A new classroom block opens in January at St Columba's in Zambia. ZamScotEd says 'thank you' for all your support



Thanks to photographers Jan Hrdlicka & Fr Francis

**Putting faith into action**

- ✚ Don't miss the Justice & Peace Scotland weekly blog:  
<https://www.justiceandpeacescotland.org.uk/Blog.aspx>
- ✚ Have you visited the Justice & Peace Argyll & the Isles Facebook page? Don't just like – share and act!  
<https://www.facebook.com/JusticeandpeaceArgyllandIsles/>
- ✚ Listen to Radio Alba – Christian radio with regular contributions from Justice & Peace: <http://radioalba.org/>
- ✚ MO-MA has an on-going need for toiletries, household cleaning products & dried food. Box in the church porch.
- ✚ <https://www.sciaf.org.uk/> - SCIAF is working with CARITAS to aid Rohingya refugees. Can you help?
- ✚ LiturgyWorks Argyll and the Isles: <https://www.facebook.com/argyllandtheisles/?fref=hovercard> . Sign up for the two 2018 weekends at the Conforti Institute (May 4-6 & September 28-30).
- ✚ **Chrism Mass in Oban** – Wednesday March 21, 2018.

**Parish life (everyone's welcome – it's OUR parish!)**

St Margaret's Prayer Group: Every Wednesday at 7pm at St Margaret's.

St Margaret's Justice & Peace Group: First Tuesday of the month, parish house.

Bake Share – watch out for dates and invite a buddy who'd like a bit of company, fun, & good baking!

**LiturgyWorks**  
for argyll & the isles



*Jan – April 2018 (Year B) Rotas*  
*Relief Eucharistic Minister: Cecelia Rees*

Date	Eucharist Ministers	Readers	Date	Cleaners
<b>January</b>			<b>January</b>	
7	M Shaw & I Salmon	M Pallister	6	A McCartan
14	J & C McFadden	J McFadden	13	T Sinclair
21	D Berndt & M McCall	C Lamont	20	E Salmon
28	P Connor & P Singal	J Green	27	C McFadden
<b>February</b>			<b>February</b>	
4	M Shaw & I Salmon	B Robins	3	J Malcolm
11	J & C McFadden	M McCall	10	K Welsh
18	D Berndt & M McCall	Alec Fisher	17	A Cumming
25	P Connor & P Singal	R Ranger	24	K Goodchild
<b>March</b>			<b>March</b>	
4	M Shaw & I Salmon	A McCartan	3	A Martin
11	J & C McFadden	C Rees	10	M Mc Clay
18	D Berndt & M McCall	J Hrdlicka	17	D McLean
25	P Connor & P Singal	E Salmon	24	A McCartan
			28??	?
<b>April</b>			<b>April</b>	
1 E/S	M Shaw & I Salmon	M Pallister	7	T Sinclair
8	J & C McFadden	J McFadden	14	E Salmon
15	D Berndt & M McCall	C Lamont	21	C McFadden
22	P Connor & P Singal	J Green	28	J Malcolm
29	M Shaw & I Salmon	B Robins		

**Thomas Welch**

The parish & whole community will feel the loss of Tommy Welch for a long time to come. We learned so much from the loving faith of the whole Welch family. May his soul and the souls of all our departed loved ones rest in peace and rise in glory



**Fr Francis** – Thank you for your contribution to our parish – don't be a stranger!