

NEWCASTLE READER

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Courtesy of Sybille Loew

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EDITORIAL

Greetings once again from the members of the communications group! We are:



Olwyn Black,
Reader with PTO
at Gosforth St
Nicholas, the
group's minutes
secretary,



Gwyn McKenzie,
Chair of the
Communications
Group, writer for and
editor of Newcastle
Reader.



Chris Hudson,
Reader in the
Scremerston, Spittal
and Tweedmouth
Benefice, writer.



Louisa Fox,
Reader at Riding
Mill and eyes and
ears of Reader
matters in the west
of the diocese.



Gloria Bryant,
Editor and writer
and chair of the
Communications
Group.

We bring you with edition 22 of Newcastle Reader a variety of material which we hope you will enjoy and find interesting and informative. At a time of transition and change in the diocese, we are pleased to include a greeting from Bishop Helen-Anne, the Bishop of Newcastle. We also hear from Bishop Mark, Bishop of Berwick and new Warden of Readers. encouraging words to take us forward. Those of us who were present at the Annual Licensing of Readers were delighted to have both bishops with us for the first time. Many thanks, also, to all who have contributed to edition 22. The communications group is already planning editions 23 and 24. We intend to meet early in 2024 to do the forward planning, so if you have an article, paper or photographs which you would like to appear in one of those editions, or an idea as to how we might increase distribution (without adding to the cost of postage), please speak to one of the group or contact me at gcadman054@gmail.com

This magazine could not be produced without the support, generosity and skills of a number of people: our printers at Shiremoor Press, the staff at Church House, who assist with distribution, and our designer Jon Kirkwood, who always makes the magazine so good to look at. Many thanks also to Bishop Helen-Anne and Bishop Mark. Our thanks are also due to Bishop Stephen Platten who has been so supportive of the magazine and the communications group during his time as interim Warden and to Jan Porter, who at the annual meeting stood down as Secretary to the Executive Committee; she was ex officio a member of the communications group and an uncomplaining writer of some very interesting Just a Secs. Thank you to both Bishop Stephen and Jan! At the next meeting of the communications group, we look forward to welcoming as ex officio member our newly-appointed Secretary Frances Stride.

Gloria Bryant, Editor.

THE RT REVD HELEN-ANN HARTLEY, BISHOP OF NEWCASTLE



At the end of August, as part of my summer holidays, I headed northwards to the Scottish Highland village of Drumnadrochit.

Located on the banks of Loch Ness, this village is an important part of my own life story, with childhood visits to relatives firmly part of my memory bank. My aunt still lives there, and so I spent a few days staying with her and reconnecting with old haunts and other relatives living nearby. It had been quite a few years since I was in the village ('Drum' as the locals call it) and there was a lot to catch-up on. I made a point of visiting my grandparents' grave in the churchyard, and (you won't be surprised to hear this) fitted in a few runs in the forests, and particularly an uphill run to Divach Falls situated high up above the village itself (all good endurance training before the Great North Run!). I went to the relaunched 'Loch Ness Monster exhibition centre' with stirring commentary voiced by David Tennant (before you ask yes, I am a Nessie believer), and climbed the ramparts of Urquhart Castle with its stunning views across the Loch.

One of the most fun things I did that week was to have a long lunch with my aunt and several of her school friends who live in the village or who had returned to the Glen for their annual Summer break. Now heading into their 80s this was a lively group of ladies who embraced me as one of their own and listened to my story of becoming and being a bishop. It was a great privilege to spend time in their company, and we hope to do it again in the days of a post-Easter break. I share this with you really to remind myself (and all of us) that we are all part of bigger narratives and stories and that quite often it can be helpful to reconnect with these whatever stage in life we find ourselves in. There are times when I am 'Bishop Helen-Ann' and times when I am 'Helen-Ann'. And now I find myself with occasions when I am 'The Lord Bishop'. It was immensely significant to me that the very first licenses I signed as a member of the Lords Spiritual were the licenses of our new Readers who received them at the wonderful celebration service in Newcastle Cathedral at the end of

October. This service was a visible reminder of the strength and reach of lay ministry in our Diocese and how this is an integral part of what it means to be an ordered Church. The role and witness of Readers (or Licensed Lay Ministers as I prefer to call them) is to point the Church outwards in mission. Their role isn't simply one of liturgical leadership it is of mission and evangelism in the communities they serve. In his commentary on Mark's Gospel, the New Testament scholar Ernest Best when discussing Mark 10.45, 'The Son of Man came not to be served but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many' describes how service is not about the way things get done but the reality in itself. In other words, it is not leading in a serving manner. Service has its own authority and is the way and the end together. To me this says something important about character and attitude.

It is how we are with one another that enables the who we are to be reflected in the light of Christ in community. No licensed or authorised or ordained ministry is about 'me' it is about the one to whom I try to point other to: God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit! That remains at the core of our Diocesan life in this new season. As we renew our vision and strategy and tackle challenges with realism, this life of service really should enable us to be drawn by hope and not driven by fear. Fr Greg Sakowicz, Rector of Holy Name Roman Catholic Cathedral in Chicago comments that in challenging situations we can respond in one of three ways: we can run away, we can spectate, or we can commit. There is plenty in our world that speaks of fear, and I think in this context the Church is called to be the Church in committing to our engagement in God's world. Readers play an important role in this and that is why I rejoice that you are part of our life together in this wonderful Diocese of Newcastle!

Thank you for all that you do!

PHOTOGRAPH AFTER THE ANNUAL LICENSING 2023



The Right Reverend Helen-Ann Hartley, Bishop of Newcastle, accompanied by members of the clergy (from left to right, Revd Stephen Tranter, Diocesan Director of Ordinands and Vocations; Right Revd Mark Wroe, Bishop of Berwick and Warden of Readers; Right Revd Stephen Platten, former Bishop of Wakefield and Associate Bishop in the Diocese of Newcastle; Revd Dr David Bryan, Principal of Lindisfarne College of Theology) at the Annual Licensing of Readers on 28th October 2023 at St

Nicholas Cathedral, Newcastle upon Tyne. With them are those newly-licensed to Reader Ministry (from left to right, Ann Laing, Margaret Evans, Christine Stevenson and Sharon Williams, and also Sarah Howard who has moved to a new ministry in Newcastle Diocese from Peterborough.) The Readers will serve, respectively, at Cullercoats, St Paul; Monkseaton, St Mary; Acklington, Shilbottle and Warkworth; Morpeth; Alnwick St Michael.

COMINGS AND GOINGS

Jan Porter, Anne Morris and Sean Fugill are now Readers with PTO.

Vic Spong has retired and been granted the honorary title of Emeritus.

Congratulations to **Sean Fugill** who has served as a Reader for 25 years and to **Marjorie Wood** and **Janice Robinson** who have served for 30 years.

Welcome to **Sarah Howard** who has joined us from the Diocese of Peterborough.

At the Annual Meeting of Readers on 28th October 2023 **Kathryn Beale** was thanked for all she has been doing for Readers.

WHAT ARE YOU FOR?

THE RIGHT REVEREND MARK WROE IS BISHOP OF BERWICK AND WARDEN OF READERS



'What are you for?' It's a question I've been asked as a suffragan bishop, by a range of people including school children, civic dignitaries, and international visitors. One way of answering that question as the new Warden of Readers, is that now I am for the Ministry of Readers in our diocese.

To help me further explain what I am for, I have discerned three things that I believe God is calling me to be about as Bishop of Berwick, which are drawn from Luke 10:1-5:

1 After this the Lord appointed seventy others and sent them on ahead of him in pairs to every town and place where he himself intended to go. 2 He said to them, 'The harvest is plentiful, but the labourers are few; therefore ask the Lord of the harvest to send out labourers into his harvest. 3 Go on your way. See, I am sending you out like lambs into the midst of wolves. 4 Carry no purse, no bag, no sandals; and greet no one on the road. 5 Whatever house you enter, first say, "Peace to this house!"

This text was particularly significant for me around the time of my announcement as the next Bishop of Berwick three years ago. As I become Warden, I offer afresh to all those who are readers my three answers to the question: 'What are you for?'

Peace

Jesus instructs his followers to be about peace: to offer a greeting of 'peace' to each household they encounter. Peace in this context is 'shalom' – a deep and beautiful word which is both greeting and of blessing – a longing and hoping for peace and wellbeing, wholeness and harmony in people, communities, and creation. We are called to be those who bring peace and make peace. Ultimately, we are about the reconciling and renewing of all things in Christ: the good news of the gospel.

Readers are asked at their licensing: Will you promote unity, peace and love in the Church and in the world...? We continue to live in a broken and fractured world, wracked by anxiety and fear on every level and in every place. We are for

peace: so, let's use our gifts to speak peace and make peace.

Prayer

Jesus sets an overwhelming challenge before his disciples: 'The harvest is plentiful, but the labourers are few...' We are used to overwhelming challenges in the Church today, and they often seem to include having too few labourers. But in setting out the scale of the challenge, Jesus also offers a way through: 'ask the Lord of the harvest...' In other words, pray. When we don't know what else to do, or when the way ahead is unclear, or when the task feels overwhelming: pray. Pray to the God who calls and sends – it's his will which we are about in his world as his Church.

Readers are asked at their licensing: Will you be diligent in prayer...? This is the heart of our relating to God, which then must be at the heart of who we are and what we are about. In the face of our challenges, but also in facing towards the one who loves us, let's be a people of prayer.

Partnership

Jesus sends his followers 'ahead of him in pairs...' At the heart of our calling is a profound sense of partnership. First and foremost, it's partnership with God – we are called into relationship and sent to share in his work. But a close second is our partnership with our brothers and sisters in Christ. We forget at our peril that Jesus sent out disciples in twos – ministry is not a solo occupation. We are called into a variety of partnerships in ministry and my hope is that reader ministry offers a genuine example of the way lay and ordained can serve together for the sake of the gospel.

Readers are asked at their licensing: Will you work closely with your colleagues in ministry and encourage the gifts of others? It's not just a nice idea, it's what it means to be the Body of Christ – we are called into partnership because we are community for Jesus' sake. If we, as the Church of God, cannot share in our partnership in the gospel then what hope of relationship and reconciliation can we offer to the world?

What are we for? Peace. Prayer. Partnership. This is my commitment to you. I pray it might be one we share together.

JUST A SEC

JAN PORTER IS A READER WITH PTO AT
MONKSEATON, ST PETER.

It turned out to be a little bit more than "just a sec" and a little more than "just a few weeks." Bishop Mark Tanner phoned to ask if I would join our dear, and sadly now, late friend Sue Hart in "acting up" as Secretaries to the Readers' Board Executive Committee for a short while. There have been ups and downs, changes and chances, in the years that followed, including Covid! Overall, the experience has been a happy and interesting one. It has been a privilege to serve, but now I have reached the point where it is time to hand over to another. I can now confirm that Frances Stride, Reader at Hexham, will be taking over by the end of November. I know you will all wish to support her and will show her the patience and kindness you have extended to me. Frances will be introducing herself in the next edition of this magazine.

During the time since "the" phone call I have been able to work with many supportive and helpful clergy and lay people. I have met Readers from across the Diocese and Readers from across the country. I have heard inspirational speakers and visited exciting places. Gathering in the Annual Returns and working agreements has sometimes been frustrating but when they do arrive the many creative ways Readers find to undertake their ministry have been encouraging and refreshing to learn about.

After the testing times of lockdown and sad times caused by illness and bereavement and a variety of transitions, we have reached a place where our focus is on looking outwards to the communities where we exercise our ministries. Bishop Helen Ann has challenged us all to do this: "Seeking, Sharing and Sending." Our Warden, Bishop Mark, has asked Newcastle Readers to focus on "Partnership, Prayer, and Peace." There will be much work to do in carrying the Gospel to those who do not yet know about God's love for everyone that He has made. We are all charged with helping people at all ages and stages of life to discern what it is God calling them to undertake.

The Annual Returns this year show that Readers have heeded Bishop Stephen's call for Readers and their Incumbents, Area Deans and congregations to work closely together in their endeavours. The

desired conversations and planning meetings have taken place and evidence of this teamwork is apparent in the comments written down. There is now much more than a sentence and a signature and what is written is clear and constructive. People are sharing ideas with one another. There is a feeling of hopefulness and deep commitment even in these unsettled times with wars raging, poverty increasing, climate changing, and governments making slow progress towards solutions that serve the common good.

“ we have reached a place where our focus is on looking outwards to the communities where we exercise our ministries. ”

Some of our congregation in Monkseaton were talking about persevering and trusting after a recent Evening Prayer service. We had sung an uplifting hymn by the late Michael Forster. In Anglican Hymns Old and new it is Hymn 125. It is based on 1 Corinthians 12.4-11. We sang it to the joyful tune of "Crown Him With Many Crowns." The hymn draws from the Bible passage the call upon the Holy Spirit to come and inflame our hearts and homes with love and to transform us with wisdom. We ask, "to be freed to work again the miracles of love." The final verse asks the Holy Spirit to dance in our hearts and entrance our spirits so that our fears are allayed and we are well equipped to carry the message of God's love into the community. Readers demonstrate God's love through their actions both large and small. They strive to "love their neighbours as themselves. They continue to hope and dream through trials and tribulations and to help others see God working to bring good out of horrible circumstances. Verse Five of Hymn 125 requests:

**Give us the tongues to speak,
in every time and place,
to rich and poor, to strong and weak,
the Word of love and grace.
Enable us to hear
the words that others bring,
interpreting with open ear
The special song they sing.**

THE GOD WHO HEALS: REALLY?



CHRIS HUDSON IS A READER IN THE SCREMERSTON, SPITAL AND TWEEDMOUTH BENEFICE.

Do you pray for healing? For Jesus, healings were signs of God's kingdom breaking out afresh, making people whole. Now... I've got questions about this, having developed leukaemia (blood cancer) over the last year. What about you? Could God heal people today? In the Bible, one of the names God calls himself is JHWH Rophe: 'the one who heals you, repairs you, restores you' (eg Exodus 15.26). This is more than fixing broken bodies. It's about repairing and transforming the whole person, relationships, communities, and even the land itself. JHWH-Rophe remakes the whole world, starting with us. For Christians, this begins at the Cross, where we are healed by responding to Christ's work reconciling us with our Creator, beginning a long journey towards wholeness through this life and into the next; so, healing a sick body might not be God's greatest priority with us. What are we meant to do? James, an early Church leader, gives clear advice in his biblical letter.

Firstly, **every time of sickness or affliction is a time for prayer.** "Is any among you in trouble? Then that person should pray." (5.13) It's a difficult idea, but sickness may lead us into doing real business with God at the deepest spiritual level, learning to trust him, mend broken relationships, or deal with our troubled past.

Secondly, **turn to others for prayer support.** "Is anyone among you sick? Then that person should send for the elders of the church to pray over them." We may be too confused or distracted to pray for ourselves, but there is great strength in prayer support from those experienced in walking with God. "They should ask the elders to anoint them with olive oil in the name of the Lord." For centuries, Christians have used this to declare, 'You are not alone. We are with you, with God in this.'

Thirdly, **it takes the eye of faith to know God's will for the sick.** "The prayer offered by those who have faith will make the sick person well. The Lord

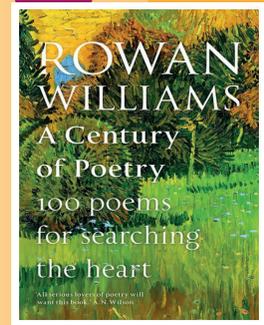
will heal them." Careful! If it is God's will, those who are praying will be enabled by the Holy Spirit to pray this specific prayer in faith: but if it is not, it will not be possible. Remember- it is not always God's will for physical healing to take place at the time we want. In the Bible, some people prayed for deliverance from sickness, and the answer was... No. Or not yet. Prayers for healing will not necessarily bring healing in the way we hope or expect. God's healing can come supernaturally; it can come by natural means, through rest, sleep, food, and change of air, as the body repairs itself. God uses doctors, nurses, pharmacists, medical technicians and therapists. It is not for the patient to decide how they might be healed.

Fourthly, **when we are sick, God wants to do business with us.** 'If they have sinned, they will be forgiven. So confess your sins to one another.' Why? Sometimes, sickness comes as the result of a lifestyle or bad decisions (Dear God, please heal my hangovers!) But it can also come from things done to us, environmental or spiritual factors over which we have had no control either now, or in the past, causing deep pain or resentment or brokenness. Times of sickness allow time for God to get 'under the hood' with us to uncover what's been going on- and do some sorting out. The best doctors, nurses and therapists know that real healing requires the personal engagement of the patient. Confession can play a powerful part in healing that repairs and restores us.

To conclude, **there is no limit to what the Lord can and may do in answer to fervent, persistent and believing prayer.** God does heal the sick, but His will is best and it might not be what we're wanting or demanding right now. But when we pray, he won't give us second-best. When we engage with JHWH Rophi, we come face to face not only with our own limitations, but also his powerful grace. So let's be open to praying persistently for people to be healed, and asking God for that to happen in accordance with his will. He will be at work, and we can be part of that.

AN HOUR WITH ROWAN WILLIAMS

AND A CENTURY OF POETRY – 100 POEMS FOR SEARCHING THE HEART (LONDON: SPCK 2023)



CANON RICHARD BRYANT IS AN HONORARY ASSOCIATE PRIEST AT NEWCASTLE, ST FRANCIS.

On Saturday 14 October Rowan Williams, former Archbishop of Canterbury, spoke at Berwick Baptist church about his anthology of poems written over the last 100 years. Gloria and I were among the attendees, and what follows is an impressionistic account of the experience, from someone who has struggled with verse from childhood onwards.

At school I did not enjoy having to read or write poetry, and I still struggle sometimes to make sense of the poems I do look at from time to time. However, exposure to verse in several different languages and across three millennia has led me to recognise that poetry is about evocation rather than making sense. So, Rowan's claim that poetry and religion draw on common themes and styles found at least one adherent.

Rowan's selection of 100 poems is not of religious poetry as such, but of poems which intersect with religious perspectives and challenges. His own description of them is that they explored the features and questions of people 'on the edge'. He sees good poetry as stretching our capacity for taking on board what can be said about particular subjects and experiences, and he believes that it invites the reader to go on working at them: good poetry does not make itself out to be the last word.

In his lecture Rowan selected ten poems from a variety of writers. Some had religious titles or themes, but some were completely secular in either or both respects. They were all short poems, and having read them to us he commented briefly on their content and outlook. One of the delights for me was to hear him recite *The Journey of the Magi* by TS Eliot and give typically Rowanesque emphasis and understatement to the haunting question Eliot poses just before the end:

**'...but set this down
This set this down
This: were we led all that way for
Birth or Death?'**

In perverse fashion I have started where Rowan ended, and he prepared the way for the end by taking us through John Betjeman's *Norfolk*, with its marking of unkept promises, and RS Thomas' *Sea-*

faring, in which the priest-poet (actually Thomas, but it could be Rowan as well) uses seascapes and bird-watching to explore the nature of prayer as waiting for something...

Rowan began his exploration of poets with a Jew and Muslim, a poignant association at a time of heightened tension in the Middle East. Yehuda Amichai wrote *The Ram*, to claim that the hero of the Binding of Isaac in Gen 22 was not Abraham or Isaac but the ram: after all, Isaac was rescued at the cost of the ram's life. He notes the irony of the ram's horn being used in public proclamation and warning, and he raises the challenging question: 'who is being volunteered by whom today?'. In her poem *Prayer* Imtiaz Dharker reflects on the array of footwear at the entrance to a mosque, noting the range of prints those shoes and sandals will have left around the world and wondering how they 'wash against the walls of God'. Behind this memorable poem is a question also about insiders and outsiders, for she writes as a woman who is excluded from these gatherings of men at the mosque. Rowan refers to her, intriguingly, as a 'Muslim Calvinist'!

James Wright in *Saint Judas* considers the relationship between guilt and hope. Yves Bonnefoy in *Noli me tangere* uses a snowflake as a way of getting inside the connotations of Jesus' words to Mary Magdalene outside the tomb. Euros Bowen in *Lazarus* takes us, not surprisingly, to the boundary of life and death, and in the process he opens up issues to do with memory and surprise (!). David Gwenallt Jones in *Sin* investigates the bloody aspects of partisan politics, and David Scott, another priest-poet, wrote an amusing poem on Canon John Fenton Theologian, himself a funny man, about the light and faith that were a feature of John's life and funeral.

I hope I have whetted your appetite to pick up or go back to these poems for yourself with a sense of anticipation. Rowan's commentaries on his collected poems are models of spiritual wrestling and as much of an evocation as the poems themselves.

INTRODUCTION TO THE CODEX SINAITICUS AND THE LINDISFARNE GOSPELS

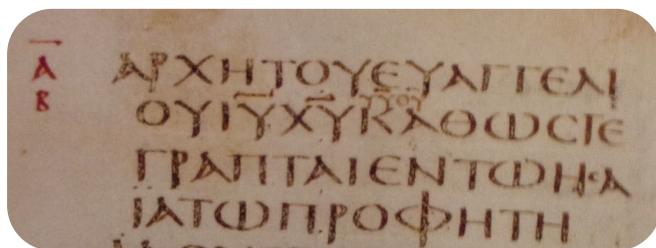
(PART 2) BY REVD DR DAVID BRYAN IS PRINCIPAL OF LINDISFARNE COLLEGE OF THEOLOGY



In the first excerpt from his 2022 talk on the Codex and the Lindisfarne Gospels, Dr Bryan outlined the history of the Codex's discovery in the 19th century, the scope of its contents and the character of its script. In this second part, he illustrates his comments on the appearance and theology of the text with reference to Mark's gospel, and he describes the origins of the Lindisfarne Gospels. In part three, he will outline the nature and impact of the Codex and the Lindisfarne Gospels.

St Mark in the Codex Sinaiticus

As noted in the last edition, corrections can be found all over the Codex. Some appear to be work done by different hands - and may have been done prior to the release of the Manuscript. Others are not so obviously 'official'. One of these is found in the opening words of St Mark's Gospel.¹



The text reads:

Ἀρχὴ τοῦ εὐαγγελίου Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ
καθὼς γέγραπται ἐν τῷ Ἠσαΐα τῷ προφήτῃ

'The Beginning of the Good News about Jesus Christ, even as it is written in the Prophet Isaiah.

These opening words are usually referred to by commentators of Mark as his 'title'². They serve as a clear overture for the message of the Gospel as a whole. The Codex however has a surprising omission of the words, 'Son of God', after 'Jesus Christ'. But this has clearly been corrected by someone. Above the **καθὼς** you can see the addition of the equivalent of **Υ(ΙΟ)Υ Θ(ΕΟ)Υ**, 'son of God.' The work is tidy - and brings the text in line with what we are used to reading in our NRSV Bibles: 'The Beginning of the Good News about Jesus Christ, the Son of God ...' However, this correction raises questions. Given that it does not look official, was it made when the readers in the monastery noticed that these two words, which they perhaps knew from other versions of Mark, were missing?

If the Codex did not originally include these words, does it mean that they were absent from the text that the scribe was copying? Joel Marcus seems to be spot on when he says, 'an intentional omission of such a ubiquitous and important epithet is improbable, and it is unlikely that a scribe freshly started on the transcription of a manuscript would be careless or tired enough to skip over these important words on the very first line of his text!'³

¹ My photograph, from the facsimile edition of Quire 76 Folio 2v (Mark 1:1).

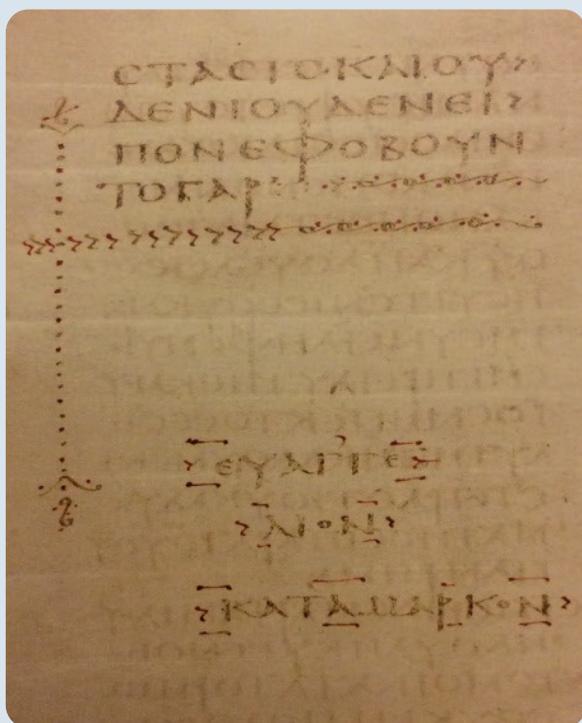
² For example, Adela Yarbro Collins, *Mark, Hermeneia Commentary* (Augsburg: Fortress Press, 2007), p. 130; Morna Hooker, *A Commentary on The Gospel according to St Mark*, *Black's NT Commentaries* (London: A. and C. Black, 1991), p. 33; Joel Marcus, *Mark 1-8, AB Commentary* (New York and London: Yale UP, 2000), p. 143.

³ Marcus, *Mark 1-8*, p. 141.

This is not a small point. If the original title of Mark included the words 'Son of God', then the reader was already informed by the author about Jesus' relationship to God before they have even started to read the gospel. Furthermore, when God speaks from heaven to Jesus at his baptism, saying, 'You are my Son, with you I am well pleased', the reader gets confirmation of the information given in the title from the highest source possible! However, if Mark's gospel had originally begun like the Codex before the correction, then the first time the reader discovers that Jesus is God's Son would be in the baptism narrative when Jesus himself appears to discover this as well! In that case then we perhaps need to face the uncomfortable possibility that Mark's Gospel may have envisaged that Jesus became the Son of God at his baptism and anointing with the Spirit in a way that was analogous to the adoption of the king as God's son in the Old Testament (Psalm 2: 7; 89: 20-27). The Codex could thus provide evidence that Mark proffered an adoptionistic understanding of Jesus' Sonship.

Before we turn to compare the Codex to the Lindisfarne Gospels, in the next issue, it is germane to leap to the end of Mark. All readers of the NRSV will know that there are various endings in the textual tradition for Mark. The short ending is found in Codex Sinaiticus, but also in Codex Vaticanus and a 12th century commentary of Matthew and Mark.⁴ It is very abrupt:

When the Sabbath was over, Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of James and Salome bought spices, so that they might go and anoint him. 2 And very early on the first day of the week, when the sun had risen, they went to the tomb. 3 They had been saying to one another, "Who will roll away the stone for us from the entrance to the tomb?" 4 When they looked up, they saw that the stone, which was very large, had already been rolled back. 5 As they entered the tomb, they saw a young man dressed in a white robe sitting on the right side, and they were alarmed. 6 But he said to them, "Do not be alarmed; you are looking for Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He has been raised; he is not here. Look, there is the place they laid him. 7 But go, tell his disciples and Peter that he is going ahead of you to Galilee; there you will see him, just as he told you." 8 So they went out and fled from the tomb, for terror and amazement had seized them, and they said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid (Mark 16: 1-8 NRSV).



Significantly, no one has yet encountered the risen Jesus! Given that it is so abrupt, it is not surprising that other endings are found among later manuscripts. Most of the specialists are agreed however that both the intermediate length and the longer ending are not the work of Mark. Rather, they are based on the endings found in Matthew, Luke and John. Before considering this in more detail, I think it is germane to look at the relevant page in Codex Sinaiticus.⁵

The text reads: **(στασις) και ουδενι ουδεν ειπον εφοβουν το γαρ.** (... and they said nothing to anyone for they were afraid.)

The elaborate decorative art that completes the line and then separates the text from the concluding postscript - **Ευαγ'γγελιον κατα μαρκον** (Gospel according to Mark) – leaves us in no doubt that this is where the scribes thought this gospel should end. This is the intended ending.

⁴ D.C. Parker, *The Living Text*, p. 125.

⁵ My photograph of Quire from the facsimile.

The majority of scholars think that Mark intended that his gospel should finish like this, though there are dissenters. Tom Wright, for example, argues that somewhere in the transmission of the gospel from the author's original text the final page was lost by accident.⁶ Among those who think the short ending is deliberate on Mark's part, I find the reflections of Lamar Williamson Jr especially attractive and thought-provoking:

... this unfinished story puts the ball in the reader's court. It puts us to work; we must decide how the story should come out ... Always he goes before us; always he beckons forward to a new appearance in Galilee of the nations, in the Galilee of our daily lives. We never know where and when we shall see him; we only know we cannot escape him.⁷

The beginning and ending of Mark in the Codex Sinaiticus make it anything but a safe book to read. It is challenging and disturbing and keeps alive the sense that Mark wrote a gospel that is perhaps fittingly described as the 'Lion' among the Gospels, as Richard Burridge has argued.⁸

The Lindisfarne Gospels

We turn the clock forwards from around 350 to the late 7th century to our islands following the collapse of Roman Empire and the end of Britannia. In some ways it is an irony that we are in the northeast of Britannia which was the context from which Constantine, whose 'peace' led to the burgeoning of book production that produced Codex Sinaiticus, had first been acclaimed as Emperor by his army in York (Eboracum). We are of course much further north on the Holy Island off the coast in the Kingdom of Northumbria in the fragmented world of Anglo-Saxon England.

The monastery on Holy Island or Lindisfarne was founded around 635. This came about as the outworking of a Christian mission that looks back

to Pope Gregory who famously sent Augustine to Kent in 601 to convert 'the Angles'. Arising from this mission Paulinus came north in 625 as chaplain to the Christian princess, Ethelberga of Kent, who to be the bride of King Edwin of Northumbria. Through the conversion of the King and the preaching of Paulinus there was a rapid growth of the Church. However, the death of Edwin in battle in 633 was a setback, and Paulinus and Ethelberga returned to Kent. In 635 King Oswald who succeeded Edwin, sought to re-establish the Christian faith in the Kingdom by inviting priests to come as missionaries from the Irish monastery on Iona. After an initial failed mission led by Bishop Cormac who did not connect with the local people, the community sent Aidan whose mission was very fruitful. By the time of his death on 651 the Christian faith was firmly established.

Lindisfarne was ideally suited for a monastic community. As an island cut off twice a day by the tides, it provided some security and some solitude. But equally it was not a backwater for it was sitting just a short distance away from the seat of Northumbrian power, with Bamburgh Castle just a few miles away and easily reached by boat. It was thus an ideal launching place for Christian missionaries and preachers to come and go within the kingdom of Northumbria.

“The beginning and ending of Mark in the Codex Sinaiticus make it anything but a safe book to read.”

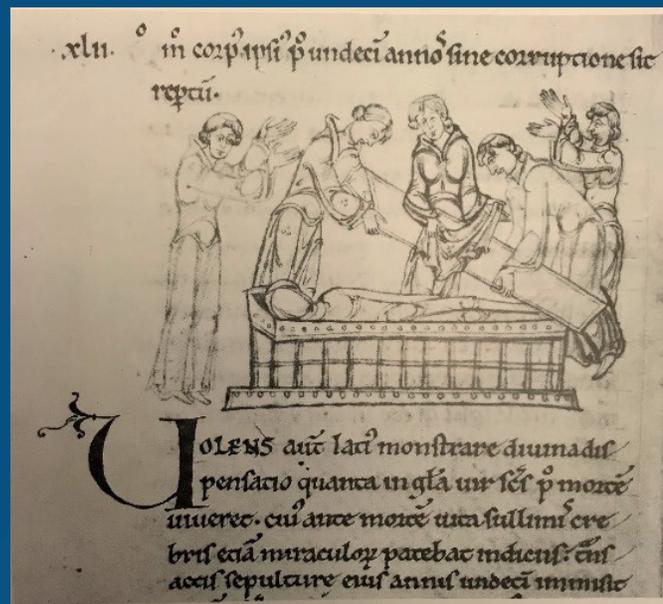
Following Aidan's death, the story of the community is dominated by the figure of Cuthbert. According to Bede (who died in 735), Cuthbert's conversion occurred while he was a shepherd in the Lammermuir Hills. Bede recounts that he saw a vision of Aidan's soul being transported to heaven. Cuthbert entered the monastery at Melrose, and thus began a fruitful life and ministry which is well known and included at two periods of life on Lindisfarne, once as a reformer, and then later returning for short period as Bishop.

⁶ Tom Wright, *Mark for Everyone* (London: SPCK, 2001), p.222.

⁷ Lamar Williamson Jr, *Mark, Interpretation Commentary* (Louisville: John Knox Press, 1983), p. 286.

⁸ Richard A. Burridge, *Four Gospels, One Jesus?* 2nd edition (London: SPCK, 2013), pp. 34-65.

Following his final Christmas with the community of monks on Lindisfarne, Cuthbert had resorted to the isolated island of Farne. He spent his final months in solitude and prayer and died on the 20th of March in 687 CE. Despite his wishes to be buried on the island, Cuthbert was buried in the monastic Church on Lindisfarne. Just eleven years later, his tomb was opened, and his body was found not to have decayed. No doubt with great excitement, it was 'translated' to a coffin above the floor of the church. In this period, this was effectively a 'canonization'. Thus, he became 'Saint Cuthbert' and the 'Cult of St Cuthbert' was born.⁹ When Cuthbert was 'translated' a beautiful, hand-sized copy of a Latin version of the Gospel according to St John was placed in his coffin with him. Alan Thacker highlights well both the opulence of this occasion and its significance:



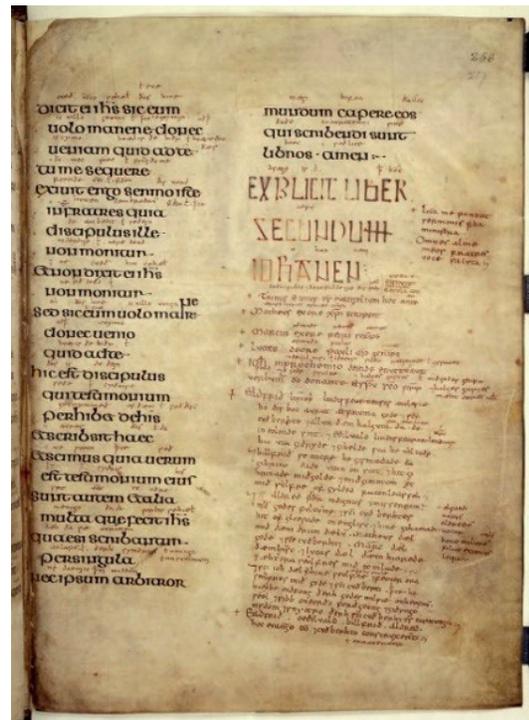
Whatever we make of Cuthbert's asceticism in life, in death he was honoured like an emperor. In 687 the saint himself ordered that his body was to be wrapped in a cloth given him by Abbess Verca, which he refused to wear while alive, presumably because it was too precious. He wished to be interred in a stone sarcophagus given by another high ecclesiastic, Abbot Cudda. The body itself was magnificently clothed. Its vestments included a white dalmatic comparable to those in which contemporary archbishops of Ravenna were buried, a chasuble of the treasured silk purpura, and an alb embroidered with gold thread. A golden fillet adorned the brow of the saint and at his breast hung the famous gold and garnet cross. The wooden coffin provided in 698 to house all this splendour, notwithstanding the barbaric power of the figures carved upon it, might well seem an unworthy casing; but it was probably covered by a rich fabric ...¹⁰

“Just eleven years later, his tomb was opened, and his body was found not to have decayed. No doubt with great excitement, it was ‘translated’ to a coffin above the floor of the church.”

⁹ Gerald Bonner, David Rollason and Clare Stancliffe eds, *St Cuthbert, His Cult and His Community* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 1989), p. xxi. Image from University College, Oxford MS 165, p. 118. Permission needed. (Also in Janet Backhouse, *The Lindisfarne Gospels*, p. 11.)

¹⁰ Thacker, in Gerald Bonner, et al, *St Cuthbert*, p. 105.

All this implies that the Lindisfarne community was wealthy and the home of a powerful religious cult, something underlined in the following century by the significant investment made in the production of the renowned Lindisfarne Gospels. Later, in the face of the threat posed by the Viking raiders of these northern shores, the community left the island of Lindisfarne early in the ninth century. They took the coffin with Cuthbert's body and everything in it, including the Gospel of John, the Lindisfarne Gospels and the head of King Oswald. After a journey over about 200 years and as complicated as the wilderness wanderings the children of Israel in the Book of Numbers, the community finally settled in Durham in 995. At this point let me introduce you to the colophon added to the Gospels by a 10th century priest and provost of a religious community based in Chester-le-Street called Aldred. This was the final station of the body of Cuthbert and all its sacred relics before it found its home in Durham. Aldred wrote:



Eadfrith bishop of the Lindisfarne Church, originally wrote this book, for God and for St Cuthbert and – jointly - for all the saints whose relics are in the Island. And Ethelwald, Bishop of the Lindisfarne islanders, impressed it on the outside and covered it – as he well knew how to do. And Billfrith, the anchorite, forged the ornaments which are on it, And, adorned with gold and with gems and also with gilded-over silver - pure metal. And Aldred, unworthy and most miserable priest, glossed it in English between the lines with the help of God and Saint Cuthbert. ¹¹

This account, which Janet Backhouse comments 'there is no reason to doubt'¹², certainly gives a full account of the history of the book. Eadfrith was a monk at Lindisfarne, or Holy Island, who became bishop in around 698 and remained incumbent until his death in around 722. He may have been the artist of the book's intricate illumination as well as its scribe. Equally he may have commissioned others in the community to carry out the work. Ethelwald is said to have been the binder and Billfrith the creator of what was originally a 'treasure' case or binding of jewels and precious metals. That has since disappeared to be replaced by a binding made by Smith, Nicholson and Co. of Lincolns Inn Fields in 1852-53.

“the community left the island of Lindisfarne early in the ninth century.”

¹¹ ET from Janet Backhouse, *The Lindisfarne Gospels* (London: Phaidon Press, 1981). Image of Folio 259 recto, from <https://www.bl.uk/collection-items/lindisfarne-gospels> (permission needed).
¹² Backhouse, p. 7.

HANDLING LOSS - A MEDITATION ON PSALM 105



CHRIS HUDSON IS A READER IN THE SCREMERSTON, SPITAL AND TWEEDMOUTH BENEFICE

Losing things is so frustrating! Keys. The mobile phone. The TV remote. Irritating, yes. Fury-making, possibly... but whatever's lost usually turns up... eventually, although some losses go deeper and affect our whole lives. Losses in relationships, family life, friendships, marriage- those losses can be deeply painful. We can face losses in employment and careers, or losses in our own selves: ageing, illness, accidents- or we might even face losses in established ways of doing things in church! The experience of Loss can lead us into false Nostalgia. 'I remember when, oh that was great then... Why can't it be like that now?' But in the great Bible story, Loss can mark the beginning of doing something new with God, something decisive that changes the world. When we explore Loss in scripture, there's a pattern.

Psalm 105 retells God calling one elderly childless couple out into the desert, to establish a new nation. Abraham and Sarah lost everything they knew, but in time had a child, Isaac, who in turn produced Jacob, a devious manipulator whose deceptions caught up with him- but his losses taught him to depend on God, not his wits, for survival. He became a man of vision. Once they all turned to God... Abraham, Isaac and Jacob's deep personal losses became the beginnings of God's Chosen People- the Jews.

We'll all know the story of Jacob's son Joseph who became Egypt's Prime Minister and saved his family from famine- but it took him a long time getting there. In prison, Joseph had to leave behind his sense of personal entitlement and rage at members of his own family. In time, his personal losses became a source of deliverance for others.

Moses went from living the life of a prince, to becoming a murderer fleeing into exile, before being called back to lead his people out of Egypt. But again, it took him a long time. Let's say... he had a lot of psychological baggage that needed putting down before God spoke to him out of a burning bush. But through all their personal losses, Jacob, Joseph and Moses learned to:

Look to the LORD and his strength;

seek his face always.

Remember the wonders he has done,

his miracles, and the judgments he pronounced... (Psalm 105)

That's the pattern. Hard experience and loss knocked off their rough edges, their pride, their arrogance or even their fear, before God called them to step out in faith and do something new. It took decades, but in cricketing terms, God plays a long game.

Jacob, Joseph, and Moses' lives all had their spectacular moments- Jacob had visions, Joseph had dreams, Moses witnessed 10 plagues and crossed the Red Sea... but behind all these high points were individual human losses- and personal decisions to:

Look to the LORD and his strength;

seek his face always.

Remember the wonders he has done,

his miracles, and the judgments he pronounced...

So what's it got to do with you and me? Deep personal losses can leave us frustrated and angry at the hand we've been dealt. Why me? It's not fair! But... there's a bigger story we can discover, bigger than our own personal stories. The Lord God can use people of any age who want to be part of his developing story that seeks to save the lost and the broken, and bring all humanity within his kingdom. But like Abraham, Jacob, Joseph, and Moses, there has to be a reckoning with loss, perhaps leaving some of our own smaller ambitions behind.

Where do we start? By asking in prayer... Lord, how could you use me with the time I have? Like Abraham, Jacob, Joseph and Moses, we can mourn the world we've lost, or we could be seeking out a new world with God. Our story becomes a part of his Bigger Story.

How? What new thing could God be calling us into? He is clearly interested in transforming the world, one life at a time. Whatever losses we've sustained in our own lives, they might provide a starting point for being or doing something new. Over to you...

MISSION: ON ANOTHER PATH (PART 2)

IAN FARRIMOND IS A READER IN THE PARISH OF HOLY TRINITY, NEWCASTLE.

In the previous edition, Ian Farrimond encouraged Readers newly-retired from their day job to consider overseas missionary work. Ian explored the myths which inhibit people from volunteering for this ministry. He explored three of those myths:

- 1) What do I have to offer?
- 2) Everyone will think I am mad
- 3) No one will want to support me. In part two Ian explores a further three myths and debunks them.

Myth 4 - I am not religious or special enough

This is not an issue - very few are. There is a misconception, I think, that missionaries are some kind of super-spiritual beings who hover around a few inches off the ground as they dispense God's love to others. This is far from the truth. All of our colleagues, and we had people from Germany, Holland, the UK, Australia, New Zealand, India, Ethiopia, the USA and Canada with us, were just 'ordinary' Christians who felt a call from God to go and try to make a difference in a very poor country.

After all, the first disciples that Jesus called were fishermen and tax collectors. They were not the religious élite or great scholars of Torah. When God called Gideon, he felt he was not good enough. He saw himself as the least one in the least tribe of Israel, yet God had great things in store for him and the people.

Being religious or special enough is not what is key here. Openness to God and willingness to answer His call is what is important Richard



'Rick' Yancey, an American fantasy and science fiction author, once wrote: "God doesn't call the equipped. God equips the called. And you have been called." Although not written in a Christian context, it is a very apt phrase for those being called to Christian missionary work. If God calls you, He will equip you and not leave you bereft as you do His work.

So, see, you are religious and special enough if you trust in Him!

Myth 5 - What will change at home while I am out?

Probably a lot! In the six or so months before we came back from Malawi in 2020, the UK went through a General Election and Brexit. In our church we had a new vicar. Within weeks of our return, the Covid-19 pandemic, and we went into lockdown and church went on-line. So, yes, plenty changed! What you also have to bear in mind is that the people you left behind will have changed, too. Children will have grown up, friends may have moved away. It is all part of getting on with life.

However, YOU will also have changed. When Lindsay and I came back, we found some of our priorities had changed. What had been important when we left in 2012 was no longer so important in 2020. You may, as we did, find it hard to talk about your experiences on the mission field, because it is divorced from the problems people face in everyday life. What is important to you may not be to them. Don't worry about this. Opportunities will arise, often unexpectedly, when

you find someone will ask a question or make a comment and you can talk to them about what life was like while you were overseas.

Myth 6 - It is too big a commitment

Jesus made a bigger one for us at Calvary. Yes, it is a big commitment, especially in later life. But if it's God's call then you can be certain He will make sure you have what you need.

We left it late because we wanted to see our daughters settled in their lives and this can be important. We also left it late because that was when we had the skills needed and that was when the post came up! It is a scary thing to do, as well. You are leaving behind a, possibly, comfortable and well-ordered life to step put into an alien culture amongst people with whom you have nothing in common apart from a desire to share God's word and, as in my case, share what God is doing with the wider world. I am certain that for Abram, Noah, Gideon, Andrew and Peter, Paul and many others down the ages, responding to God's call has seemed to be a big - no, huge - commitment, but they all responded and now it is our turn to take over the baton as the great crowd of witnesses as mentioned in Hebrews look on.

What should I do next?

These thoughts are very much based on a ten-year period in our lives; from finding the job to going through all of the processes needed before actually getting out to Malawi, to returning to the UK. I hope that it makes people think a little more about the possibility of going out to the mission field at any age, but certainly in later life.

I do need to add the following caveat: it was not all straightforward. Yes, there were some amazing highlights but there were also some troughs that needed to be weathered. Accidents, loss of faith, wondering what difference we were making. For Lindsay it was harder because she had no 'official job'. Yes, we worked well together but she was always supporting me and not working in her own right and that was difficult. In the last couple of years, she found a niche using her artistic skills.

So, what is your next step? The obvious one is to pray about it. Do you have a heart for a particular country, as we did? Do you think you have skills that may be of use? Pray and ask for guidance; talk to your family and friends, talk to your clergy and get them to pray as well. Do some research. A simple Google search for 'Christian Vocations' may not bring up the site

I found, but there will be other sites offering Christian jobs, Search the web for mission organisations working in the geographic area in which you are interested.

Going to the mission field is not, necessarily, a life sentence. Many organisations, as I mentioned before, offer short-term opportunities from three months to two years. Once that time is up, you can decide to go full-time or come home. We had friends in Malawi who came out, initially, for two years but then decided to move into full-time work once they had a feel for what was involved.



Ian and an interpreter training lay leaders (top)
Ian delivering communications training (bottom)

As a sidebar, I would highly recommend going with an organisation, because of the support you can get. We were incredibly blessed in that we had a real 'family' in our colleagues in Blantyre. They were there to celebrate our successes and help to pick us up when things went wrong (sometimes horribly so!).

If everything comes together, if you feel God is calling you and others do, too, if you can get everything sorted out and the finance in place, if that is how your organisation works, then maybe the only thing left is to embrace the Nike slogan: Just do it!

LAST WRITES

● GLORIA BRYANT IS A READER WITH PTO AT ST FRANCIS NEWCASTLE AND EDITOR OF THIS MAGAZINE.



Sybille Loew is an artist who has specialised in the field of object art since 1980 and she has also studied Catholic theology. The medium she uses for stiller Abtrag is embroidery. For the Vienna artwork Sybille has used light-coloured fabric

cut to resemble the identity tags which are tied to a dead person's toe and on them she has embroidered the name, date of death and age of every dead person it is possible to remember by name.² The names are embroidered in red twine and the age and date of death in black. There are to be two hundred of these labels attached to a

'Give graciously to all the living; do not withhold kindness even from the dead.' [Ecclesiasticus or Sirach 7:33]

Richard and I spent a week in Vienna in September. We attended Sunday Mass in the Roman Catholic Cathedral of St Stephen (Stefansdom) and the next day visited the Dom Museum, which houses the treasures belonging to the cathedral. A member of staff in the museum handed us a leaflet which publicised a forthcoming exhibition entitled **"Sterblich sein" (Being Mortal)** which will include an artwork entitled **'stiller Abtrag, 2023' (Silent Removal)** by a Munich-based artist called **Sybille Loew**. The title refers to a term used by many German funeral directors to describe funerals which take place without the presence of next of kin. When I read the leaflet, I was moved by the simple, beautiful but time-consuming way one person had chosen to honour the memory of people she did not know. Unfortunately, we were back home before the exhibition opened, but I was so interested that I googled Sybille Loew and then contacted her to ask her permission to use some photographs of her work in this article. She graciously agreed. The photographs show an earlier example of stiller Abtrag exhibited in the former Carmelite Church in Munich in 2007. There stiller Abtrag seems to have been inspired by a statistic from 2005 which revealed that 'one person dies every day in Munich without leaving any relatives behind to take care of their final affairs' and that 'one person per day is buried by name or anonymously as a "quiet burial", that is, without a ceremony, whose coffin or urn no one follows.'¹ The Vienna stiller Abtrag will draw attention to another issue: the more than one thousand Viennese people who died lonely or alone in 2022 without the company of a family member or friend to hold their hand in their last hours.

"The number of unattended funerals is likely to rise. Well in excess of 16 million people in the UK live alone."

high ceiling above the staircase in the museum with threads of varying lengths, threads symbolising the thread of life. Sybille Loew sums up her work in these words: "Embroidery is now considered an ancient craft and is a laborious activity. It takes time, but it also makes time visible. So, for me it is, on the one hand, a medium of appreciation; on the other hand, because of its provocative possibilities it is also a means of critically addressing social issues."

The social issues Sybille Loew has highlighted in both Munich and Vienna are not confined to the German-speaking world: they are very prevalent in the UK. The latest statistic that I could find online for people dying without next of kin in England is from 2020: 3000 people. I could not find any statistics for Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. What my research did reveal is that there are differences between England and Wales on the one hand and Scotland on the other as to who bears responsibility

¹ From website Sybille Loew Work (Sybille-loew.de/?page_id=80).

² Loew had access to the details of the 200 people she remembers by virtue of the Viennese Mortuary and Burial Act, according to the leaflet distributed by the Dom Museum and written for the exhibition with the support of the city of Vienna.



for arranging the burial or cremation of those who die without a next of kin. In Scotland, when a person dies without an obvious next of kin or a will, a small team from the national prosecution service, the *Ultimus Haeres* (Latin for 'last heir') Unit tries to find blood relatives, along with any assets that may be left. They do their utmost to piece together the life of the deceased person and arrange their funeral. In England and Wales, it is the local authority in which a person dies that has responsibility for ensuring a proper burial or cremation (abiding by the wish of the deceased, if known), but the local authority is not legally obliged to locate next of kin, or to provide a funeral service, though some do both. Throughout the UK the Public Health Act of 1984 ensures that the bodily remains of everyone are treated appropriately: the title of the measure, however, tells us it is about hygiene, not kindness. Surely society is withholding kindness from the dead when there is no funeral service with a minister of some kind to acknowledge the story of the dead person and no fellow humans to bid farewell to that person on their last journey.

The number of unattended funerals is likely to rise. Well in excess of 16 million people in the UK live alone. Increasingly there is a lack of extended family to ensure their safety and well-being. The model of a good neighbour now seems to be one who keeps himself to himself. We are also an ageing society and many of the elderly have outlived their family and friends. There are also, it seems, more marriage breakdowns, family estrangements and mental health problems than there used to be, and, sadly, some people just sink without trace in communities where people are busy and preoccupied with their own concerns. That there were 3000 people who died in England in 2020 without next of kin is a statistic that hides the number of people who died alone and lonely at home, in hospital or residential care, who have made provision for their funeral, who may have next of kin but do not have a loved one to comfort them when they die.

When reflecting on Sybille Loew's work, what came to mind was not only the verse from Ecclesiasticus (it struck me forcibly when Richard and I read it

recently during Morning Prayer) but also Jesus' parable of the sheep and goats which we find in Matthew's Gospel.³ The parable is within a section of the gospel dealing with end times and judgement. The parable of the sheep and goats, unlike the two parables which precede it, is a warning to all the nations as well as expressing what Jesus expects of his disciples. They will all be judged on their 'acts of mercy': "Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me." The six acts of mercy of the gospel all resonate with the words from Ecclesiasticus which demand that we 'give graciously to all the living'. In the 13th century, the church added the seventh act of mercy, the injunction to bury the dead. The Seven Acts of Mercy have inspired great art, including the paintings

of Pieter Bruegel the Elder and Caravaggio. Art, whatever the medium makes us think, makes us think deeply. I don't know if Sybille Loew was influenced directly by the seven acts of mercy, but through her embroidery, she reminds us all, believers or not, that our humanity obliges us to be generous to the living who are in need of protection and love when at their most vulnerable and to show respect and kindness to the dead by remembering those who have no one to remember them, whose name may not even be known, though they were certainly



The embroidered 'toe tags', courtesy of Sybille Loew



stiller Abtrag in exhibition, courtesy of Sybille Loew

known to God. They were members of God's family. They were individuals whose story will never be told.

'stiller Abtrag 2023' will be on display in the Dom Museum Vienna from 6th October 2023 to 25th August 2024

³ Matthew 25: 31-46