

## APRIL 2022 NEWS FROM SEI

*This edition focusses upon issues of equality, diversity and inclusion at SEI. Theological Education Institutions (TEIs) across the UK are being encouraged to examine where their practice might reveal injustice in relation to gender, disability, race and class, and to develop more inclusive and expansive pedagogies. The Scottish Episcopal Institute is likewise involved in this examination of practice, as the following articles indicate.*

**Inclusion in the curriculum:** The Revd Dr Michael Hull, SEI's Inclusion Officer, speaking at the Staff Conference in March, detailed the ways in which *Common Awards* is working with TEIs to create learning environments that celebrate diversity and inclusion. The partnership aims 'to advance equality through inclusive practice and pedagogy, and encourage a culture of learning where students can feel as though they are not only included but truly *belong* within theological education institutes.' Dr Hull noted that one aspect of the encouragement of that culture was how SEI presents theological resources to the students. 'This is a continual undertaking, not something we can do once or just for one of our modules,' he said.



At the start of his talk he offered some helpful definitions, noting that while 'diversity' is a statement of fact referring to the qualities that differentiate people, 'inclusion' refers to the approaches that are meant to make people welcome. The idea of being 'inclusive' presumes the former; that we not only recognise that people have different gifts and qualities, but are openly hospitable to and receptive of those characteristics. 'An appreciation of diversity is not necessarily the same thing as being inclusive', he said.



Dr Hull (*left*) went on to outline how SEI is exploring ways of enabling its students to hear a variety of voices in their learning through the texts, videos and podcasts that Associate Tutors and core staff offer them. 'Our task', he said, 'is to help the students appreciate the credibility of those resources by giving them an expansive exploration of any materials we propose: by offering full names of the authors, not simply initials; by sharing an author's photograph or a brief biographical background; and by providing contextual information about the resources themselves'.

*Common Awards* has asked TEIs not to 'segregate' their bibliographies, as though some voices were normative and others simply variations on that theme; rather, everyone has a seat at the table. Diversity 'is the list of the people who are on the team, and inclusion is the people who actually take the field. It is not enough just to be on the team; you have to get into the game', said Dr Hull. Tutors, moreover, should be at pains to ensure that students feel included in this process of 'widening the field'; they should sense that discoveries from their own reading and research can contribute to this ongoing endeavour, helping to fill any lacunae in the resource list.

'It's not that there's anything wrong with the resources we are using now', Dr Hull said; 'rather it's about recognising the fact that we need to grow into the culture that we are being asked to embody and promote. If we pay attention to this endeavour, this will encourage a sense of belonging and allow students to really 'feel' that whatever qualities they may have in themselves or see in others are adequately represented in the voices they are asked to listen to in their theological education.'

*The Scottish Episcopal Church is working hard to support neuro-diverse candidates both through the discernment process prior to entering SEI, and also during the three years of further discernment that forms their initial ministerial training. Here Canons Ian Barcroft and Anne Tomlinson describe developments with candidates and students respectively.*

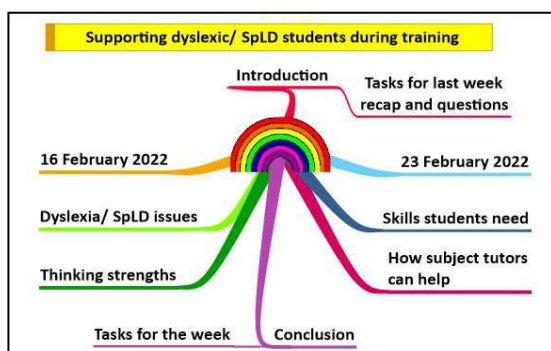


**Supporting neuro-diverse candidates:** In 2020 the SEC Discernment Team adopted the digital document ‘*Sitting with the Differently Abled in the SEC Discernment Process*’, created and introduced by the Revd Canon Lynsay Downs (right). This was welcomed at an online training in December 2020, in discussion with Professor Brian Brock of Aberdeen University who has an impressive academic interest in issues of disability and theology.

As well as an excellent training resource for our Team, this document seeks to reverse the common worldview: of imposed limitations placed upon those with neurodiversity by neurotypicals (those of us whose brains function in the way society expects). Those who exhibit patterns of Specific Learning Difference (SpLD) are encouraged to view the issue as the discerning of differing abilities rather than as impairment, privileging ‘participation’ as the core value at the heart of the eucharistic community.

Since then, I am pleased to report that candidates within the discernment process have been encouraged to discuss any issues that concern them about relating the effect of being neurodiverse. This has created opportunities for supportive interventions, such as assessment with *Dyslexia Scotland*. Such accompaniment enables further understanding of how candidates and potential students of SEI can be better equipped, not only in formation and training but also in public ministry, particularly through the encouragement of values that celebrate diversity and the acceptance of difference and the gifts that follow. Those trusted with the discernment of vocation are taking great care not to place the limitations of the neurotypical in the Church upon those who can be enabled rather than informed of a limiting disability.

**Ian Barcroft**



**Supporting neuro-diverse students (i):** Ministry Team and Common Awards ran two seminars at the end of February 2022 which were attended by SEI staff, the Provincial Director of Ordinands and two of the Discernment Team. The sessions were led by Dr Ginny Stacey, Support Tutor for Dyslexic Students at Oxford Brookes University, and author of a series of books: *Living Confidently with Specific Learning Differences*.

During the five-hour training, Dr Stacey covered an immense amount of ground, helping tutors to understand their own thinking preferences and consequent delivery styles, and to appreciate the barriers they inadvertently erect when teaching which make understanding even more difficult for students with an SpLD - dyslexia, dyspraxia and ADHD (Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder) in particular. The sessions were eye-opening, particularly when being made to experience in one’s own body a little of how it might feel to have a learning difference which impacts the processing of information and thus reading, writing, decoding and organization. It was humbling to listen to the voices of dyslexic individuals, both the speaker herself and other Common Awards staff. Humbling, too, to become aware of how unhelpful some standard teaching practices or expectations are, or how much struggle can go unnoticed by neuro-typicals because dyslexic individuals often adapt and conform to our imposed hegemonic expectations.

In resolving to improve SEI's pedagogical practice even further by paying attention to a wider range of learning styles, the language used when giving instructions, the nature and timing of assignments, the methods of presentation and feedback used, it was salutary to hear Dr Stacey's final statement: *'The approaches that are vital for dyslexic/SpLDs are good practice for all.'*

**Supporting neuro-diverse students (ii):** To ensure consistency of support during a candidate's selection and formation phases with the Scottish Episcopal Church, candidates with accessibility issues have access to an SpLD ombudsperson, an independent mentor from whom support can be accessed, confidentially and independently. SEI is blessed that the Revd Professor Annalu Waller, OBE, (*right*) currently serves as our 'Inclusion Chaplain'. Professor Waller is Professor of Human Communication Technologies at the University of Dundee and leads the Augmentative and Alternate Communication (AAC) Research Group at the University. She has worked in the field of AAC since 1985, designing communication systems for and with nonspeaking individuals.



Professor Waller, who trained at TISEC, has served as Honorary Team Priest at various churches in Dundee (Diocese of Brechin) and is currently the Honorary Anglican Chaplain within the University of Dundee's Chaplaincy Team. She brings this blend of experience and skills to her ombudsperson role at SEI, for which students and staff alike are deeply grateful.

**Anne Tomlinson**

*Common Awards is currently running a series of online seminars on issues of equality, diversity and inclusion which provide opportunities for TEI staff and students to engage with scholars and faith practitioners from around the world. The most recent in the series is described below.*

**'The Church and the Working Class: A Dialogue'**: Attended by over one hundred participants from TEIs across the UK and beyond, the webinar was led by three speakers: Dr Robert Myles, Senior Lecturer in New Testament at Wollaston Theological College, Perth, Australia, a scholar of the historical formation of the early Jesus movement; Dr Monica Jyotsna Melanchthon, Associate Professor of Old Testament at Pilgrim Theological College, Melbourne, a Dalit Womanist Theologian whose work focusses upon the intersections of class, caste and gender; and Dr Chris Shannahan, Associate Professor at the Centre for Trust, Peace and Social Relations, Coventry University, who has written extensively on Christian action on poverty, theology, racism and faith-based political activism. These three took us from hermeneutics, through a critical contextual account of how the first century Jesus movement was responding to economic and social upheaval in first century Palestine, to a reflection that integrated the challenges of contemporary action on poverty in Britain today with the prophetic call of the church.

Several students and curates attended the webinar; here two of the latter offer their reflections on the event. First, the **Revd Mike Blake**, Assistant Curate St Andrew's Alford, (Aberdeen and Orkney), who is currently working on a BA(Hons) dissertation on *'Discipleship of Working Class Men'*, contributes his reflections, followed by those of the **Revd Dr Lisa Curtice**, Regional Curate for the Renfrewshire Region (Glasgow and Galloway). In her working life, Lisa has had two abiding passions: social justice and supporting people in marginalised communities to make their voices heard. As a university researcher, she mentored community groups engaged in research, and continued to advocate for human rights and co-operation between sectors as the first CEO of the Scottish Commission for Learning Disabilities and as programme director for 'People Powered Health and Wellbeing' at the Health and Social Care Alliance Scotland.

'Three knowledgeable, passionate and informed speakers each gave us a ten-minute insight into the issue of working-class poverty from different perspectives. The challenge of appreciating that such folk form a distinct social class and are not simply a statistical or economic grouping; that contextual aspects have much to inform our 21st century perception of such subsistence work-groups when using scripture to shape our responses; and that the Church might change its approach from focussing on solving individual need to challenging the cultural tropes underpinning poverty – all these aspects were addressed, linked by the common thread of the need for social justice in our world. The presenters encouraged activism by their obvious commitment to the topic, and left one wishing to look deeper into how these viewpoints might enable focus upon and understanding of both global and local needs.



'For me, one aspect which struck me as being complementary to these approaches was how to awaken within such groups the awareness that Christ sits with them, and that they are as valued and loved by God as any other; that in God there is no distinction or segregation no matter how this might be imposed by the world. Time-constraints limited discussion at the webinar and this was frustrating; but the insights offered on the topics will inform my ongoing considerations of issues of poverty.'

**Mike Blake**



*"Ill-treating workers is not just business. In God's eyes it is sin";* such were the uncompromising words with which Archbishop Justin Welby and Bishop Rose Hudson-Wilkin denounced the summary sacking of 800 P&O workers. Clear-sighted clarity in speaking about social injustice comes from a committed understanding of Scripture and the confidence in the relevance of God's truth. As a deacon in Inverclyde, I have been struggling to work out how to support and encourage people to bring their experience of serving those in need through foodbanks and other social actions back into systematic reflection to the Biblical calling to challenge injustice as well as to serve 'the poor'.

'Listening to Dr Melancthon's exhortation to read the biblical text in ways that aid the poor, I was reminded of the late Rev Ian Fraser and his practice of engaging people in Scotland's communities in doing theology from the material of ordinary lives. I wonder, if like class analysis, we too often dismiss this approach as outdated when it seems all too relevant now.

'In my experience, lack of being heard is one of the greatest barriers to feeling part of society and believing that you can play a part in changing things. Yes, we now need a more nuanced approach to class struggle and are aware of multiple dimensions of disadvantage and the intersectional aspects of exclusion. But violence and injustice need to be named and a 'well-meaning disengagement', as Dr Chris Shannahan described it, is not an acceptable stance for a church that needs to be continually transformed through the experiences of those who are excluded from social benefits. I think we have a job of work to do to ask ourselves where those voices are, within and outside our congregations, and to find out what would support them to open up the Scriptures for us and take a lead in framing the church's response to structural inequalities and discrimination.'

**Lisa Curtice**

*In a post-colonial body of churches it is for each member church to explore, discern and inhabit its own point of view. But Anglican churches belong to a communion, which means they share a common ancestry and a family likeness, and meet with each other in a number of different settings on a regular basis. Here we describe a new resource from the Anglican Communion Office, more particularly the department responsible for Theological Education in the Anglican Communion Department (TEAC), and how that Office is helping us host a webinar with our sister TEI in Brazil.*

**Anglican Inclusivity:** *'Being Anglican: Learning from Global Perspectives'* is an accessible resource which reflects voices from the majority world rather than simply from the west or the global north, mirroring the breadth of Anglican experience from across the world today. It comprises a set of video testimonies from lay people and clergy from different continents, cultures and languages, accompanied by scholarly commentaries from academics and church leaders.



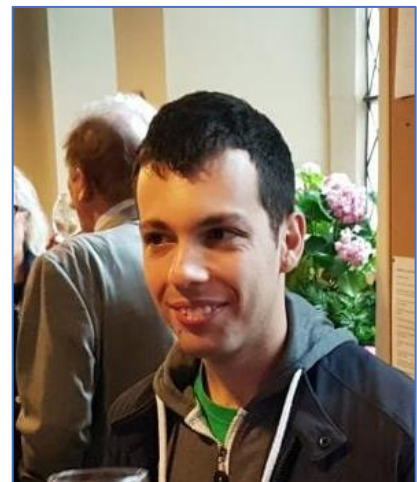
Using videos is a way of ensuring the inclusion of Anglicans who prefer to communicate through the spoken rather than the written word, and the accessibility of the study materials by as wide a range of people as possible. Accordingly a YouTube [channel](#) has been created which is free to viewers. English subtitles are included when the speaker uses a language other than English or when the audio is unclear; Spanish, Portuguese and French versions of the channel will be available shortly.



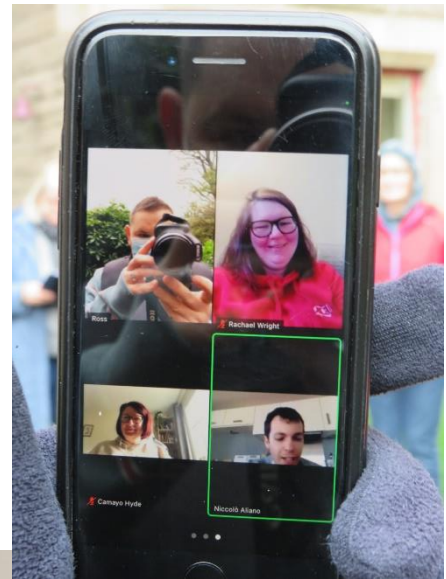
The series is accompanied by a [Guide Book](#) which provides questions for discussion and lists further resources for those who make use of the materials as part of an accredited course or self-study. Both channel and Guide Book belong to Part 2 of the larger TEAC project *'Being Anglican'*. The materials were gathered by a Working Group comprising the Revd Dr Stephen Spencer, (*above right*) Director of Theological Education, Prof. Kwok Pui Lan, the Revd Dr Muthuraj Swamy, the Revd. Dr Marcus Throup, and Prof. Paulo Ueti (*left*).

**Brazil webinar:** Professor Ueti, mentioned above, is TEAC's Assistant Director for Theological Education for Lusophone, Francophone and Spanish speaking regions. Based in Brazil, he also works part-time for the Anglican Alliance as Theological Advisor and Latin American Regional Director. He is a New Testament scholar and former professor of Spirituality and Biblical Hermeneutics at the Sao Boaventura Seminary in Brasilia, Brazil.

Professor Ueti is kindly helping SEI organise a webinar with the students and staff of the Brazilian theological institute with whom we are in partnership, Centro de Estudos Anglicanos in Porto Alegre. At this, to be held on Saturday 28 May, both sets of students will listen to each other speaking about how environmental issues impact upon their formation. Also involved in the organisation of that event is SEI's Student Chapter CEA representative, first year Mixed Mode student Niccolò Aliano, shown right. It is hoped this session may be the first of many similar opportunities to learn together.



**Being inclusive at the Residential Weekend.** Three students sadly could not be with us at the March Residential due to testing positive for Covid in the days leading up the weekend. However their peers decided that illness should not prevent them joining in the Stations of the Cross, held in the grounds of St Mary's Kinnoull on the Saturday lunchtime. And so it was arranged that a Zoom call be set up, as you see on the right. Other highlights included ....



**Eilidh Proudfoot's Bible readings**



**Godwin Chimara's preaching**



**Laura Symon's chocolate Guinness cake**



**Aidan Strange's social media class**



**Ferdinand von Prondzynski's' thurifer class**

Many thanks to Ross Stirling-Young for these photographs.

**Inclusive Liturgies:** A year ago, a group calling itself *Responding to the Sacred: Liturgy and Gender in Conversation*, published a series of conversations, [online](#). Eight speakers (six women and two men) in four sessions, talked about their experiences of the Church's liturgy, with an emphasis on questions of gender. The event concluded with a broadcast act of worship from St Mary's Cathedral in Edinburgh, in which there was an effort to open the liturgy up to less gendered imagery and language – for example, to avoid the routinised use of male terms such as 'Father' and 'King'.



*Alison Jasper*

The event succeeded in raising awareness of an on-going concern: profound social and cultural change in our society over the last century and a half is impacting on the way people perceive the relevance of the Church. The event was first commissioned by the SEC's Liturgy Committee, currently in the process of making changes to the existing liturgy that has now been in use for 40 years. Since the early 1980s when this was first published, women have made huge strides in the world of work and there has been a revolution in respect of our understanding of human sexuality and gender not to speak of the nature of mental health and wellbeing. There is wide acceptance that not all families have to have fathers and mothers, challenging stereotypes that have dictated our view of parenting, family and male authority for centuries. Changes of this significance can be unsettling, especially to those of us in an older demographic. But we know that they can also speak to the Gospel tasks of releasing the captives and bringing greater abundance of life. And there's no denying that the language people use, changes over time - whether we like it or not - or that the Church's liturgies have also changed, albeit rather slowly, in response to social and cultural change.

So now the group - renamed *Responding to the Sacred: Inclusive Liturgies* - has taken up a slightly different challenge in relation to the liturgy and is beginning to explore a wider inclusiveness. So, some people value the ways in which the architecture of church buildings underscores the fact that they are set apart for worship. Other people find it impossible to sit still, sometimes for long periods of time in cold buildings that are poorly lit. Acoustics that favour the resonance of beautiful choral or organ music, present real difficulties for the deaf or hard of hearing. Theological assumptions underpinning our liturgical practices can also seem exclusive. One of our *Responding to the Sacred* speakers, questioned why the liturgy needed to focus so heavily on eucharist as the bloody sacrifice of someone we love, underplaying the equally powerful implications of fruitfulness and thanksgiving. The formal, 'not everyday' terms of the existing liturgy speak to some of holy mystery and continuity with tradition that is sacred and comforting. This type of language is simply mystifying for others; a barrier to closer communion. And the implication that the price of inclusion in this Church is acceptance of the status quo, reduces it to a private gathering whose value is not always easy to gauge or defend as, increasingly, people appear to be getting on with their lives without it. It would seem we do have a problem.

Our new attempt to think about more inclusive liturgies – *Responding to the Sacred: Inclusive Liturgies* (R2S+) is already under way. We have put together an Advisory Group to come up with a more definitive plan and we hope to have something ready to share with everyone next year. We have the continued help of liturgists and theologians and rely on their scholarship, artistic and pastoral insights and professional expertise. But we are also inviting ideas, contributions and liturgies that draw on spiritual experience and expressions from outwith the usual suspects. We are consulting with people who are identified with different traditions and some who sit on the edges - in other words, some of those who find the liturgy of the SEC, to be exclusive and off-putting. We have a growing sense that what is needed is greater variety of liturgical practice on offer and a willingness to use it. But we sense too a need to look outwith the churches for insights clear enough to dissolve imagined barriers between 'insiders and outcasts'. Above all, we hope to continue the conversation and welcome any thoughts or comments you may have. [genandlit@gmail.com](mailto:genandlit@gmail.com)

**Alison Jasper**

*This term a new module entitled 'Theological Perspectives on Community Development and Community Organising' has been taught, exploring the theology and practice of these two concepts. Taught by Anne Tomlinson, the series has been enriched by the presence of various practitioners from across the Province and beyond – Nick Bowry, Chris Howson, Martin Johnstone and Ian Barcroft - offering case studies from their contexts. Moreover the student body has been augmented in numbers, wisdom and experience by seven Deacons from across the Province auditing the class. Here three of those - the Revd Peter Higson (St Andrews, Dunkeld and Dunblane), the Revd Ann Wren (Glasgow and Galloway) and the Revd Susan Ward (Edinburgh) - offer their reflections.*

**Deacons included:** When Vocational Deacons throughout the Province were given the opportunity to join SEI students studying - or in the Deacons' case, auditing - a new course being run by SEI, it sounded to me like a terrific way to spend dark winter evenings. Deacons, like all in licenced ministry in SEC, undertake to continue development or learning throughout their ministry. We never stop learning from each other, and the course from the SEI provided a more formal method of learning beyond our day-to-day interactions.

When I received the outline course materials, the subject looked as if it could be a bit dry and little more than common sense. That all changed when the teaching got underway; the presenters gave life to the subject, with theory being deeply interwoven with practical application from the presenter's direct experience.



Revd Deacon Peter Higson

Vocational Deacons could easily relate to the practical application of the theory, and the breakout discussion groups enabled more recent experiences to be shared between students and Deacons. The course provides a structured process to much of the work done, and aspiring to be done, by Deacons and others. A few weeks well spent as an enjoyable learning experience, and in this instance no essay to write.

**Peter Higson**



Revd Deacon Ann Wren, right

Recently I have been involved in SEI's new module, 'Theological Perspectives on Community Development and Organising'. It embodies a particularly useful mix of resources, introducing several theological models discerned over recent decades of Community Development alongside practical illustrations of how these models are lived out within community and church life. Ideally, there is a symbiotic exchange of gifting that leads to transformation of both the wider community and the congregational life and understanding of mission so clearly illustrated in Jesus' own ministry. In Week 8, the Course began to explore the interface of worship and community building, and this is just one illustration of how life and relationships can potentially change for both church and local community. A bonus has been the participation of Deacons involved in Community Building being alongside deacons-in-training, and there has been time for some personal reflection on such ministries in small group discussion.

In session 8, the focus was "Worship and Community Building," and we were given seven words to structure a new model for mission, one I would call 'Diaconal Church': 'Presence', 'Perseverance', 'Hospitality', 'Adaptability', 'Generosity', 'Participation', and 'Invitation'. If we are to live with these words, it will mean change both for each individual and each congregation in our understanding of faith expression, spirituality, and worship in today's world.

'In our age the road to holiness necessarily passes through the world of action.' (Dag Hammarskjöld, *Markings*). We embrace this path as working, growing, and loving action, not as an isolated private individual but as a community of gifted individuals together, for the task is too great to be borne by an individual. This course with all its diversity and possibility welcomes the Church to live in a new way and transform the community it seeks to serve. I would highly recommend this course to all clergy and laity involved or thinking about Community Building.

**Ann Wren**



Revd Deacon Susan Ward  
with Bishop John

Throughout the module there have been two words that have been repeated every week. The first one is 'listen'. Listen to your congregation, listen to your community, listen to the people who live on the margins and, most importantly, listen to God. We have heard about many projects that would not have been successful if those wanting to start them had not listened to what the people in the community wanted and needed.

The second one is 'faith'. Have faith in God, have faith that you will get the funding needed, have faith that the people will engage with the project, have faith that you can carry out what you are trying to achieve.

Throughout the module we heard about projects that were started from very little, and some that took time to get off the ground. One project, where people were invited to a barbecue but only three people came, didn't give up. The organisers looked at different areas in the community to have another barbecue and the second one was very successful and enabled lots of conversations to take place about what people wanted for their community. Every project that we heard about has enabled churches and their communities to come together and work together. They had listened to each other, prayed together and had faith that they were doing the work that God wanted them to do.

**Susan Ward**

**SEI Training Fund:** This month thanks are paid to the congregation of St Ninian's Pollokshields (Diocese of Glasgow and Galloway) for their kind donation, and to the Revd Sally Gorton from that same diocese for her kindness in remitting her deputising fees. As ever, we are deeply grateful for these kindnesses. This money goes directly to supporting those students training on the two full-time pathways, that is via New College or the Mixed Mode track. Thanks go likewise to Ross Jesmont, third year Mixed Mode ordinand, who raised £60.00 through the sale of theological books at the March Residential Weekend. Ross (*right*) is currently on placement at St Paul's and St George's, Diocese of Edinburgh, from whence this photo of a team meeting emanates. A caption competition is in order!



**St James Fund:** Last month's appeal in this *Newsletter* for donations to the St James Fund resulted in one extremely generous gift for which we are deeply grateful; the donor wishes to remain anonymous. The Fund - along with that for Lay Readers, the McQueen Fund - gives discretionary grants to those studying for public ministry in the SEC and in their first year of ministry, in order that they may access formational experiences they could not otherwise afford. The Funds are dependent on donations by individuals; some give by monthly Standing Order, others simply on occasion. If you can help students enhance their time at SEI in this way, then please do contact either the Principal [principal@scotland.anglican.org](mailto:principal@scotland.anglican.org) or the SEC Treasurer, Mr Malcolm Bett [treasurer@scotland.anglican.org](mailto:treasurer@scotland.anglican.org) who can direct you to ways of donating.