

# New College Magazine 2022



Cover image: Lord Lyon's seal, by Andrej Zeman

## EDITOR'S NOTE

Welcome to this year's edition of the New College magazine. Last year, our 175th, was a busy one for us. A year of high-profile events culminating in the outstanding Winter Tales book festival (see page 14) brought together friends of the School from near and far. This year promises to be no less exciting, with a range of new faculty appointments bringing their own dynamism to our community's world class scholarship – including Prof. Rachel Muers, our new Chair of Divinity.



Prospective students often ask what they might do with a degree from the School of Divinity. This year, we are pleased to bring you two interviews with former

students on their time on the Mound and careers thereafter: the award-winning journalist Will Lyons (The Wall Street Journal and The Sunday Times), and Dr Joseph Morrow, the current Lord Lyon King of Arms. We hope their stories inspire you.

As ever, we are glad to celebrate all the successes of our alumni community, and are always pleased to hear from former students about developments in their own lives.

*Dr James Eglinton*

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## **2022 News**

### **COP 26**

Last year the School organised a series of initiatives to mark the UN Climate Change Conference in Glasgow.

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This included an Interfaith Pilgrimage, the Alexandra Duff Lecture, and the creation of two banners, each 22 meters long, that were suspended from the towers of the College.

Forty faith and community groups, as well as students and staff contributed patches to the design on the theme of Creation Care.

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## **Principal's Medal**

In November 2021, Dr Sara Parvis and Dr Emma Wild-Wood were joint winners of a Principal's Medal - an award that recognises their exceptional efforts in



providing pastoral care to students during the pandemic, and in shaping a welcoming community for the School's postgraduate students.

## **Sam Nwokoro**

PhD student Sam Nwokoro won Student Tutor of the Year in the 2021 Edinburgh University Students' Association Awards. The students who nominated Sam praised his ability to create "an extremely open, non-judgmental atmosphere where everyone felt comfortable expressing their opinions."

## **Helen Bond FRSE**

Our Head of School Prof. Helen Bond has been appointed to the Fellowship of the Royal Society of Edinburgh - a significant honour that recognises the broad social impact of her academic work.

## **Shaw Scholarships**

As a result of a generous legacy donated by our former Dean and Principal Rev. Prof. Bill Shaw, we have recently launched two fully-funded PhD scholarships - fees and maintenance - to start in the coming academic year.

## **Schools Outreach**

This year has seen the relaunch of our Schools Outreach Programme coordinated by Dr Linden Bicket. Dr Paul Fuller has been appointed to promote the Edinburgh Buddhist Studies Network within schools. Alongside a team from the Universities of Edinburgh and Glasgow, and the Scottish Jewish Archives Centre, Dr Hannah Holtschneider has developed Points of Arrival - a teaching resource on immigrants and refugees who came to Scotland to escape poverty, persecution and war.

## **Loyalty**

Prof. Mona Siddiqui and Dr Nathanael Vette have been awarded a grant by the Issachar Fund for a two-year project on 'Loyalty and Fidelity: Christian and Muslim Perspectives' - an award that will enable international workshops and publications exploring these themes. Alongside this, the School has continued to partner with the Issachar Fund and Edinburgh College of Art in awarding the Issachar Fund Art Prize. This year's prize, on the theme of loyalty, was won by

Yunji Zhang, a current MSc student at ECA.

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## 60 SECOND INTERVIEW



**Dr Suzanna Millar is Chancellor's Fellow in Hebrew Bible/Old Testament. She is the author of *Genre and Openness in Proverbs 10:1-22:16* (SBL Press, 2020).**

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Where are you from and how has it shaped you?

I'm from Darlington. It's a friendly place and showed me the value of community.

What kind of student were you?

A very busy one, especially with extra-curricular things. I did a lot of ballet and contemporary dance.

What's the biggest misconception about your field?

That the Bible doesn't have anything to say in our age. I think its influence on our society was formative, and the issues it raises remain pertinent.



Why did you write a book about Proverbs?

I was fascinated by how much meaning and ambiguity there could be in single-line pithy proverbs.

Tell us about someone who has influenced your career.

My doctoral supervisor, Katharine Dell. She believed in my potential when I didn't see it myself. She trusted me and gave me opportunities.

How would you like to be remembered?

As someone who helps students grow, takes part in scholarly dialogue, and listens to voices that aren't usually heard.

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## NOTABLE RETIREMENTS



### STEWART J. BROWN AND SUSAN HARDMAN MOORE

This summer marks the retirements of two distinguished members of the New College community. Prof. Stewart J. Brown, Chair of Ecclesiastical History, will step down after more than 34 years of service, as will Prof. Susan Hardman Moore, whose first years at the School - from 1987 to 1992 - were as John Laing

Lecturer in the History and Theology of the Reformation. Following a period at King's College London, she returned to Edinburgh in 2000, and was appointed Professor of Early Modern Religion in 2013.

Both Professors have served the school in a variety of leadership roles - Prof. Brown as Head of School, and (for 23 years) as Vice-Convenor of the prestigious Gifford Lectureships Committee; and Prof. Hardman Moore as Principal of New College.

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They have both made a wonderful contribution to the  
School over many years.

Head of School Prof. Helen Bond: “They have both made a wonderful contribution to the School over many years.

We will miss seeing them on a daily basis, although we are glad that they are keen to continue their association with us. They've both assured me that they won't be strangers. We will hold them to that promise.”

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**WILL LYONS**



## RAISE YOUR GLASSES

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New College students follow many different career paths. We caught up with Will Lyons (MA Religious Studies with History, 1999), award-winning wine writer for *The Wall Street Journal* and *The Sunday Times*, to talk about his years on the Mound.

“What attracted to me to Edinburgh was its wonderful broad course - ethics, theology, comparative religion, and modern history. I came up in 1995 and hadn’t really visited before, but had enjoyed history and religious studies at school and wanted to continue studying them.”

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“It’s a world class university in a beautiful city but my focus was the course.” School was fun but not particularly intellectual. Yet I was fortunate to have friends and teachers who genuinely inspired me. Simon Gathercole, now Professor of New Testament at Cambridge was a huge influence.

“At New College, I loved the eclectic mix of students from all walks of life, and from all over the world. Rainy Hall and the library became part of my life. We enjoyed lunch there and believe it or not it was where I learned to send my first email!

“Compared to other faculties, New College was very diverse. Marcella Althaus Reid was my tutor and New College inspired me to knuckle down and work hard. The library and tutorial discussions gave me an understanding of how humanity ticks. As you go into journalism, that helps.

“Frank Whaling’s lectures on comparative religion were a highlight. His class was like a global journey through religions across the ages. I met Kate, now my wife, during one of his lectures!

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“Jolyon Mitchell’s media ethics courses were very lively too. But it could be rigorous. Michael Northcott’s feedback on my essays was exacting and he certainly helped me develop my style as a writer. How did Will move from New College to The Sunday Times? “I joined the University Wine Society, and ended up becoming its president. I also started writing for the student newspaper. After graduation, I became a wine merchant before taking a postgrad qualification in journalism in Cardiff.

“I started at The Scotsman, moved to The Wall Street Journal in London and am now at The Sunday Times. His advice to those considering a degree in theology or religious studies?

“University is a period of reflection and intellectual growth. You can learn skills for the workforce quickly afterwards. But my studies gave me a hinterland of understanding humanity, and that is invaluable.

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## **RACHEL MUERS**





## DRIVING TRADITION FORWARD

**T**his summer, Rachel Muers will take up the oldest professorial chair at the University of Edinburgh – the Chair of Divinity, established in 1620 as part of a drive to turn what was the Town’s College into the University of Edinburgh. An outstanding theologian, Muers will make history as both the first Quaker, and the first woman, to hold the post in its 402 year history.

“It’s an august line to step into. It feels a bit odd, but I’ve been doing things that feel a bit odd for a long time!” Muers’ engagement with theology began when reading Bonhoeffer’s Letters from Prison as a 16 year old. “I thought it was amazing! I was enthusiastic about lots of disciplines, but in theology I found one discipline that contained them all. I fell in love with the richness of the subject in its ability to ask the biggest questions in the company of people who have lived across two millennia.”

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In my own work, I look at emerging questions of societal import, and ask ‘what does theology have to say in response?’ Society poses profound questions to the theological tradition, and they call for theological responses that are both critical and constructive.

“When the chair was first created, its incumbent was expected to make students “dispute” once a week – a way of testing out ideas through lively debate rooted in Medieval academic culture.

Muers’ own approach to teaching drives that tradition forward: “As a teacher, I am persistently interested in trying to help students think about thinkers whose assumptions are different to their own. In my classes, we always ask why someone thought as they did. They had reasons, and it’s important we understand them. Theology and Religious Studies are so important because they have the ability to train that kind of intellectual empathy, which is more important than ever in the contemporary world. In theology, we do that all the time.”

What excites Muers about coming to Edinburgh? “Apart from that Edinburgh itself is a beautiful city, New College is a theological community with a great

reputation. It brings together individual scholars in a community where ideas cross-fertilise. It has a strength of tradition, but that tradition also looks outwards - for example, in thinking about Christianity globally, and in theology's responsibilities within the academy and society.

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## THE LORD LYON



## WORKING BETWEEN WORLDS

As part of our 175 celebrations, New College was granted a Coat of Arms - an initiative suggested by our alumnus the Lord Lyon, Dr Joseph Morrow. The Lord Lyon's own story is an unusual one, combining a high-profile career in law with church work in challenging social settings.

"I grew up in Fife, in an Episcopalian family. There wasn't a certificate in religious studies at my high school, but through a supportive teacher I was able to do the Cambridge O-level in religious studies. Growing up, I felt ambivalent about

ministry. I had impostor syndrome: how could someone from my background be a priest? But I chose to start a degree in theology.

“It wasn’t a popular move with my family, who thought I was cut out for medicine, law, or accountancy. I’m very single-minded, though, and I’m still like that. I have lost none of my enthusiasm!

“Coming to New College was quite an experience. I had worked as a parcel boy in a town in Fife. There was a lot of great thinking on theology and society in Edinburgh. That caught my imagination.

“In the late 1970s, New College was primarily young, male, and focused on vocational training for ministry. I used to arrive in the quad on a motorbike and park behind John Knox.



“The environment was quite relaxed. Some of my friends from those days have gone on to do remarkable things. After New College, I was ordained in Dundee Cathedral. I spent 9 years in a working class congregation there.

“The church was between two 15 storey tower blocks in a disheartened community. It was a great time. We formed a community centre. I learned to look at theology in a different way, from the experience of people in the community. At the same time, I was studying law part-time.

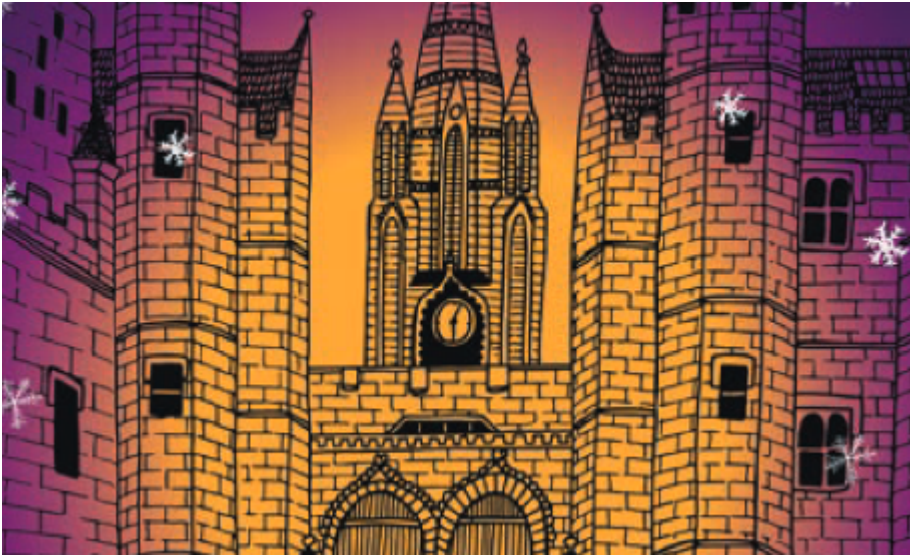
“I qualified, and ended up working in mental health law, before going to the bar as an advocate. Those steps were all shaped by the rigour of my theological training. J. B. Torrance’s teaching on grace and law was a formative influence on my thinking on mental health law as restorative and therapeutic. Working between the church and the law was exhilarating.

“New College now is a very open place. The staff and students come from all over

the world. It's a diverse and equal place for anyone to come and study."

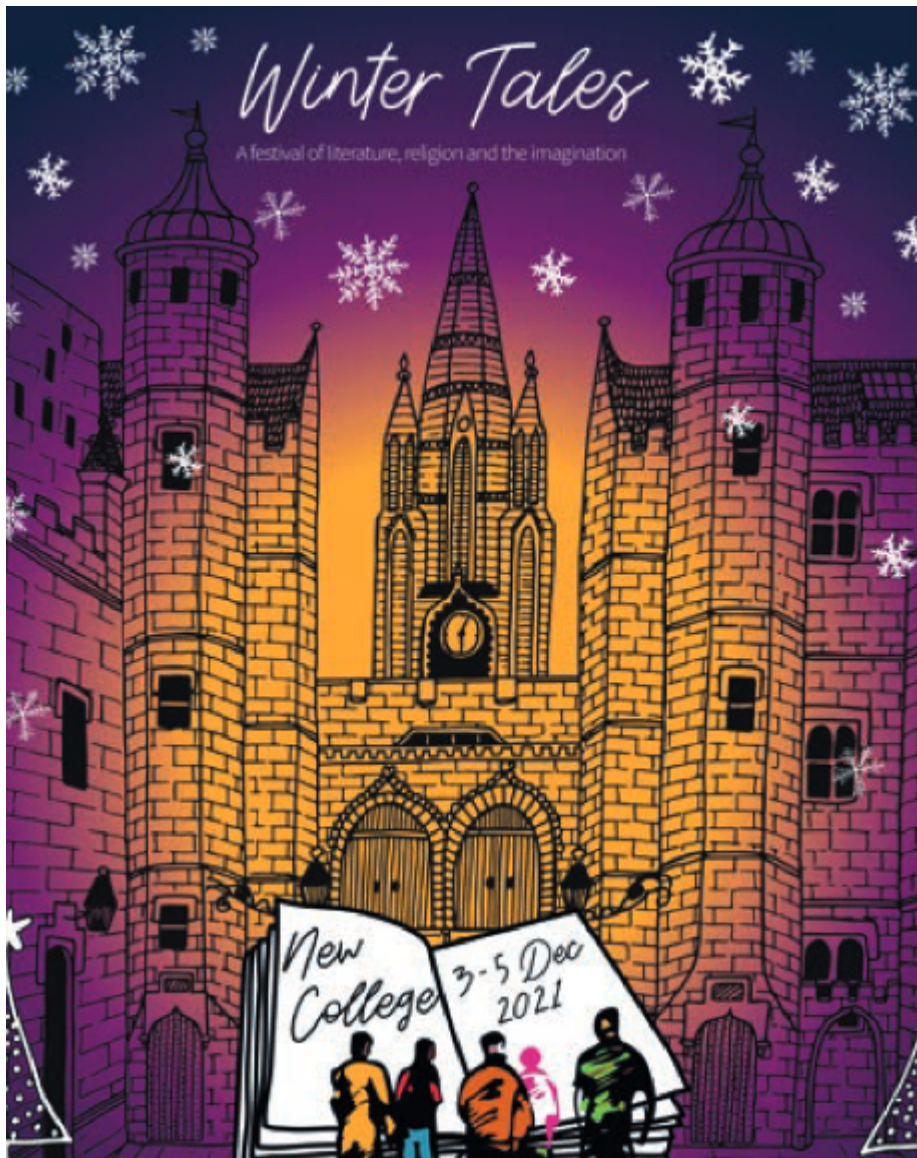
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## WINTER TALES



“ Winter Tales was an exciting innovation for the School of Divinity, bringing novelists, poets and storytellers together with readers of all ages.





At the end last year, our 175th anniversary celebrations came to a close with the inaugural Winter Tales festival of Literature, Religion, and the Imagination - a weekend-long event led by Prof. Jolyon Mitchell and Dr Alison Jack that saw a stellar cast of authors address audiences in the Assembly Hall, including the Costa Book Award winner Francis Spufford, Marina Warner, and New College alumnus Miles Jupp. Dr Jack hopes that the event will be the first of many. "Winter Tales was an exciting innovation for the School of Divinity, bringing novelists, poets and storytellers together with readers of all ages. Writers such as Val McDermid,





Sally Magnusson and Robert Harris held us spellbound as they spoke about the complex relationship between religion and literature in their novels. “Plans for the New College Festival of Books and Belief this November are well underway, building on the success of Winter Tales. I’m looking forward to it already!”

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## Alumni update 2022



Catch up with our alumni community and their achievements in 2022.

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## NEW STAFF

[Dr Caleb Froelich](#) is a Postdoctoral Research Associate for the Understanding the Spiritual through the Creative Arts project, where he is conducting research on the Fringe Festival. His doctorate was taken at the University of St Andrews.

[Dr Paul Fuller](#) is Teaching Fellow in Buddhist Studies. An Edinburgh graduate (MA 1995), he has previously taught at universities in Asia, Australia, and the United Kingdom.

[Prof Rachel Muers](#) is Chair of Divinity. A graduate of Cambridge University, she was most recently Professor of Theology at the University of Leeds.

[Dr Salam Rassi](#) is Lecturer in Islam and Christian- Muslim Relations. He joins having completed a British Academy Fellowship at the University of Oxford.

[Dr Bethany Sollereeder](#) is Lecturer in Science and Religion. She was previously Postdoctoral Research Fellow in Science and Religion at the University of Oxford.

[Dr Ximian \(Simeon\) Xu](#) is the Kenneth and Isabel Morrison Postdoctoral Research Fellow in Theology and the Ethics of Artificial Intelligence, working jointly between the School of Divinity and the Edinburgh Futures Institute. He holds three degrees from Edinburgh (MDiv 2013, MTh 2017, PhD 2020).

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## READING MATTERS

### A SELECTION OF RECENT BOOKS BY ACADEMIC STAFF



*Naomi Appleton (ed)*, Narrative Visions and Visual Narratives in Indian Buddhism (Sheffield: Equinox, 2022).

*Helen Bond and Joan Taylor*, Women Remembered: Jesus' Female Disciples (London: Hodder, 2022).

*Alexander Chow and Easten Law (eds)*, Ecclesial Diversity in Chinese Christianity (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2021).

*Paul Fuller*, An Introduction to Engaged Buddhism (London: Bloomsbury, 2021).

*Mark Harris and Hilary Marlow (eds)*, The Oxford Handbook of the Bible and Ecology (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2022).

*Matthew Novenson*, Paul, Then and Now (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2022).

*Matthew Novenson and Barry Matlock (eds)*, The Oxford Handbook of Pauline Studies (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2022).

*Joshua Ralston and Ulrich Schmiedel (eds)*, The Spirit of Populism: Political Theologies in Polarized Times (Leiden: Brill, 2021).

*Ulrich Schmiedel*, Terror und Theologie (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2021).

*Mona Siddiqui*, Human Struggle: Christian and Muslim Perspectives (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021).

*Emma Wild-Wood (ed and tr)*, with George Mpanga, The Archive of a Ugandan Missionary: Writings by and about Revd Apolo Kivebulaya (1890s-1950s) (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2022).

*Nathanael Vette*, Writing with Scripture: Scripturalized Narrative in the Gospel of Mark (London: T&T Clark, 2022).

*Ximian Xu*, Theology as the Science of God: Herman Bavinck's Wetenschappelijke Theology for the Modern World (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2022).