

13th May 2020

Adapting

**“I reserve to myself, distinctly and unequivocally,
the right of adapting my conduct.”**

Robert Peel, from a speech in the House of Commons, 1829

I've worked with the church in the village of Athelstaneford in East Lothian for a couple of years and become very fond of the local folk. But I've also discovered distinctive local features. It's where the Scottish Saltire – the white diagonal cross on a blue background – originated. On the eve of a battle between the Picts and the invading Angles in 832AD, St Andrew (who was crucified on a diagonal cross) came to the Pictish king in a vision, promising victory. The next morning the Picts saw a white cross in the sky and attributed their ensuing victory to St Andrew. In the church-yard, there's an old, stone doocot (a dovecot) which has been adapted to house an exhibition on the history of the Saltire.

Athelstaneford Parish Kirk also has a connection with the author Nigel Tranter. In 2008 a permanent exhibition of his memorabilia was mounted in the church, including his old typewriter, a collection of manuscripts and books, and other personal items.

Half-way along the village street there's a red phone kiosk. When the phone box became redundant, the Athelstaneford folk decided it could be adapted for another use. So it's now called "The Book Nook", and acts as a book-exchange which benefits the whole village.

Adapting: a doocot for an exhibition; part of a church for Tranter memorabilia; a phone-box as a book-exchange. Resourceful, isn't it?

There's also lots of adapting going for all of us just now as we try to adjust different parts of our lives. So, when we get to a "new normal" and find things have changed, I hope our "spirit of adapting" will still be there, as we work out what's important and make sure everyone benefits.

Can we be as resourceful as the Athelstaneford folk have been? I hope so. For we'll certainly need to be!

A prayer for today

"O thou, who changest not, abide with me."

Make me resourceful, Lord, especially when I have to change and adapt! Amen.

An original reflection by © Tom Gordon

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