



MARGARET BEAUFORT  
ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER

Lent Term 2022

Dear Friends,

Just as we thought that better times were on the horizon with case numbers of Covid on the decline and the possibility of some semblance of a return to ‘normality’ so, the brutal Russian invasion of Ukraine, a peaceful, sovereign country on European soil. This, as we all know, is a human tragedy on a scale not witnessed since the end of the Second World War which has led to the deaths of innocent men, women and children and the displacement of those fortunate enough to have escaped with their lives. Poignantly, poetry has proved to be a ‘go to’ genre of literature during these deeply distressing times. Odesa-born Ilya Kaminsky’s *Deaf Republic* and the Ukrainian poet, Taras Shevchenko’s *Will and Testament* bear a (re-)visit.

In this edition of the MBA Newsletter, we continue delving into the life and image of our name’s sake, Lady Margaret Beaufort. We do so through the second and final half of Professor Richard Rex’s excellent and highly readable study, *The King’s Mother* and via an interview with Christine Slottved Kimbriel, Senior Painting Conservator at the Hamilton Kerr Institute who is working on the conservation and restoration of a historically significant full-length portrait of Lady Margaret owned by St John’s College.

We also look at interfaith relations and the Margaret Beaufort Institute through the lens of Dr Edward Kessler, MBE who is Founder President of the Woolf Institute. In common with MBIT, the Woolf (formerly known as the Centre for Jewish & Christian Relations) started life as a pioneering institute which has gone on to achieve national and international recognition for the work it does to help bridge the divide between the religions. Elsewhere, Anthony Purvis, who is an active member on the Board of the Thomas Merton Society of the UK & Ireland, reflects on the MBIT study day on the 22nd January on two stellar prophets of the C20th, namely, Thomas Merton and Abraham Joshua Heschel.

New publications are also highlighted in this edition. MBIT’s former Cardinal Hume scholar, Melanie-Prejean Sullivan’s recent book (with cover illustration by MBIT alumna Sr Pavlina Kasparova) along with a history of the Cambridge Theological Federation by Mary Tanner and Ian Randall are showcased.

Continuing our ‘Letters from’ series, we hear from two MBIT alumnae. Sr Edel Bhati, writing from her native Kenya and Maria Stec, CV writing from her native Poland share their thoughts on aspects of their lives post-MBIT with us. And as a lovely finale to this edition of the newsletter, we have a poem (*To a Leveret*) by Dame Laurentia Johns, OSB, a Benedictine nun at Stanbrook Abbey in N. Yorks whom, as many of you will remember, contributed an excellent and memorable talk for our first MBA study day on ethical leadership & management.

For now, we move through Lent 2022 with our hearts in our mouths but with the knowledge that ultimately, good *will* prevail.

With warm good wishes,

Susanne

Susanne Jennings  
President of the Margaret Beaufort Association

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## The King's Mother: Piety, Politics, and Philanthropy in the Life of Lady Margaret Beaufort by Professor Richard Rex

### PART II

#### The King's Mother or the 'Red Queen'?

##### Philanthropy and piety

The determining event in Margaret's political career was her early marriage to Edmund Tudor and its outcome, the birth of her only son. Piety and philanthropy were both quite common factors in the lives of aristocratic or royal ladies in the later Middle Ages, but in Margaret's personal journey there was a second decisive moment, in 1495: her meeting with a young Cambridge academic, the Senior Proctor and Fellow of Michaelhouse, John Fisher.



The attraction, it seems, was instantaneous and reciprocal. Fisher was a striking man, as described by one who had known him:

He was tall and comely, exceeding the common or middle sort of men ... six foot in height ... very slender and lean, straight backed, big jointed, and strongly sinewed. His hair by nature black ... his eyes ... neither full black nor full grey, but of a mixed colour...; his forehead smooth and large ... Not only of his equals, but even of his superiors, he was both honoured and feared.

A few years later, Lady Margaret recalled that she had recognised in him her future 'chief trusty counsellor' since 'the first time I saw you'. <sup>1</sup> She in turn was diminutive but forceful, with a brilliant and expensive taste in fashion. No doubt Fisher was star-struck at first. As their friendship grew she became one of the most important people in his life. He was, he later acknowledged, 'as behoden to her as to my own mother'. <sup>2</sup>

Until the mid-1490s, both Margaret's piety and her philanthropy had moved along very familiar channels. Together with the queen, Elizabeth, she had in 1491 encouraged Caxton to publish a short prayer book, the Fifteen Oes of St Bridget of Sweden. One of the few remarkable features in this little collection is the prayer to 'Blessed King Henry', which turns out to be the hymn still sung today at the founder's obit in King's College: 'Rex Henricus sis amicus nobis in angustia.' – 'King Henry, be a friend to us in our need.' Besides showing us, though, that Margaret was fully involved in the incipient and wildly popular cult of 'Good King Henry', it tells us little. <sup>3</sup>

[1] SJCA, C7.11, Thin Red Book, fo. 47r. For Fisher's physique and physiognomy, see *Vie du bienheureux martyr Jean Fisher*, ed. F. van Ortroy (Brussels, 1893), 355–56.

[2] Early Statutes of the College of St John the Evangelist, ed. J. E. B. Mayor (Cambridge, 1859), 242.

[3] O Jhesu endles swetnes of louying soules ([Westminster]: Caxton, [1490?]. STC 20195), sig. C4v–C5r for the Henry prayer, and C6v for the royal patronage of the edition.

## Philanthropy

It is surely no coincidence that the first signs of Lady Margaret's plan to found theology lectureships at Oxford and Cambridge came soon after she met Fisher. For in letters patent of 10 December 1496 (reiterated in letters of 1 March 1497), Henry VII licensed her to make permanent endowments to support these lectureships.<sup>4</sup> The ensuing process took quite some time. The founding deeds were not sealed until 8 September 1502. In the meantime, Lady Margaret began to fund lecturers at both Oxford and Cambridge out of current account expenditure — 'soft money', we might say today. The Cambridge university accounts for 1498–99 report 'expenses towards the King's Mother regarding the foundation of the lecture', and that same year saw payments to lecturers at both universities recorded in her household accounts. Once the<sup>5</sup> professorships had been properly endowed, in 1502, the first incumbent in Cambridge was none other than John Fisher, newly promoted as a Doctor of Divinity.

The Lady Margaret Preachership, which followed her professorship by a couple of years, was for Cambridge only. On 7 February 1504 Henry VII licensed Margaret to make the foundation, and the founding deed was sealed on 30 October that year, with an endowment worth £10 a year, vested in the royal foundation at Westminster Abbey. The terms of the deal were that a preacher was to be appointed every three years, with the duty of giving six sermons a year at a range of places. One sermon each year had to be given at Paul's Cross. For the rest, the preacher was free to preach as he saw fit at Bassingbourne, Boston, Bourne, Cheshunt, Deeping St James and Deeping St Andrew, Maxey, Orwell, Swineshead, and Ware – all of them places with which Margaret was associated as a landowner or patron. Lady Margaret's generosity towards Cambridge became ever more marked and extravagant. Not long after her meeting with Fisher, she became involved in the manoeuvres that led to the foundation of Jesus College. Over the next decade, she financed the refoundation of God's House as Christ's College and started to plan for the transformation of St John's Hospital into St John's College, a project accomplished only after her death. But these things are so well known in Cambridge as to require little further comment on this occasion.

There is perhaps more interest in looking at what her philanthropy reveals in turn about its underpinnings in her piety. Her deep commitment to the canonisation of her cousin, King Henry VI, is one common thread. Another is her personal engagement in the cult of the Holy Name of Jesus. As I have argued elsewhere, it seems to have been Margaret who first turned Henry VII's attention towards Westminster Abbey. She endowed an obit there at the altar of St Edward the Confessor in 1496. It was only two years later that Henry VII began preparing for the translation – which never actually took effect – of the body of Henry VI from Windsor to Westminster, where he started to build the Lady Chapel as its shrine and as a family mausoleum. Lady Margaret was fully involved in the royal foundations at Westminster and was closely associated with the abbot who presided over the construction of the Lady Chapel, John Islip, abbot from 1500 until his death in 1532. At much the same time, Islip was busy about his own memorial chapel, a project which his long tenure enabled him to bring to a triumphant conclusion. The chapel decoration, much of which survived the iconoclasm of the Reformation, is rich not only with his personal symbolism, his name and his heraldic rebus, but also with one particular devotional icon, the Name of Jesus, IHS, which has given his chantry chapel the alternative name of the Jesus Chapel.

[4] See *Calendar of Patent Rolls ... Henry VII. Vol. II. A.D. 1494-1509* (London, 1916), p. 79 for the later letters. The earlier letters are not calendared but are mentioned in the opening words of the founding charter (see below, note 5). See also Jones & Underwood, *The King's Mother*, pp. 206–8.

[5] Grace Book, Part I, p. 120. Jones & Underwood, *The King's Mother*, p. 208.

It is tempting to see in this some reflection of his connection with Lady Margaret. For she was recognised by the pope himself as the ‘patron’ of the newly emerging feast of the Holy Name in England.<sup>6</sup> Late medieval Christianity was, one might almost say, obsessed with Jesus. Any more so than Christianity at any other time, you might wonder? Well, yes – and in particular, obsessed with Jesus (more than with Christ), with Jesus in his humanity, in his suffering, in his individuality. This tendency in late medieval piety, which was expressed in every art form from music and poetry to architecture, wove elaborate meditations on his sacred body (*Corpus Christi*) and its ‘five wounds’, on his ‘precious blood’ and its ‘seven sheddings’, on the stations of the cross, on his scourging at the pillar, on his crown of thorns, on the cross itself – and even on his holy name. The cult of the holy name, Jesus, Saviour, was encapsulated in one of the world’s oldest logos, the IHS monogram, actually derived from the Greek spelling of Jesus, but widely taken in the Latin world as an acronym – *Iesus Hominum Salvator* – *Jesus, Humanity’s Saviour*.

This cult of the holy name was the very latest thing in devotional fashion, though fashion in those far-off days moved slowly. It had spread from Italy and entered England in the later fourteenth century. By 1500 it was a leitmotif in the circle of scholarly clerics with which Lady Margaret surrounded herself, and it spread rapidly thanks to their work. It was one of her household clergy, Henry Hornby, Master of Peterhouse in Cambridge, who wrote the unofficial order of service that devotees used in celebrating the feast day of the Name of Jesus, which was not yet an official church festival, but a private devotion.<sup>7</sup> The first college that she founded, Christ’s, was described by Fisher in her memorial sermon as erected ‘to the honour of the name of Christ Jesus’.<sup>8</sup> And her legacies to the college included ‘two altar cloths of crimson cloth of gold tissue paled with blue velvet embroidered with portcullises and Jesus’, and ‘a chasuble with two tunicles with a cope of crimson cloth of gold orphried with blue velvet embroidered with portcullises and Jesus’.<sup>9</sup> The cult was strong among the friends of Fisher. His friend from university, John Colet, famous as the founder of St Paul’s School, was also the legislator of the Confraternity of the Holy Name of Jesus based in St Paul’s Cathedral. One of their mutual friends, William Melton, Chancellor of York, whose own will bequeaths a picture which, he relates, once belonged to Colet, asked for prayers at the altar of the Name of Jesus in York Minster. So when we find that Islip’s chantry is a chapel dedicated to the name of Jesus, and liberally decorated with the IHS rebus, it is not fanciful to detect traces of his connection with Lady Margaret’s circle and its devotional currents.

Fisher’s influence on Lady Margaret as her spiritual director is surely equally evident in her decision, late in life, to commit herself to a vow of chastity. What was particularly noteworthy about this was that this vow was first made during the lifetime of her third husband, in 1499. Of course it required his permission, or consent. But this was most unusual for a woman who was neither a nun nor a widow, which is probably why, following the death of her husband on 29 July 1504, it was reinforced by a second vow, now taken before John Fisher himself. Such vows had to be registered before bishops, and it was only in 1504 that Fisher was nominated Bishop of Rochester on 24 November 1504, so her vow was presumably made some time after that, in 1504 or 1505.

[6] Jones and Underwood, *The King’s Mother*, p. 176.

[7] R. W. Pfaff, *New Liturgical Feasts in Later Medieval England* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1970), pp. 69–83, esp. 82–83. Pfaff notes that ‘England led the way in the liturgical celebration of the Holy Name’ (p. 77, note 7), and that Lady Margaret’s patronage was important in this (p. 83).

[8] Fisher, *A mornynge remembraunce*, sig. B5v.

[9] Cooper, *Lady Margaret*, p. 131.

This vowed chastity in turn helps explain a truly extraordinary privilege that Lady Margaret acquired, a papal dispensation enabling her, though a woman, to enter the premises of male religious orders, even those of the notoriously strict Carthusians. This dispensation was secured in May 1504 at the same time as a sheaf of papal bulls relating to the royal foundations at Westminster and was plainly designed, in particular, to give her access to the abbey precincts in order to check up on the progress of her family's devotional investments.<sup>10</sup> The privilege was highly unusual, but Lady Margaret was someone who tended to get her way. She evidently wanted access to the devotional heart of the kingdom, to be able to get right inside such engines of prayer as the Charterhouses at London and Sheen, and the Observant Franciscans at Greenwich and Richmond (all of which were remembered in her will).

### John Fisher and the cause for canonisation

Four weeks to the day from her death, on 27 July 1509, John Fisher preached his memorial sermon. We know the 'month's mind' was that day because he took as his text the gospel for the feast of St Martha, which was celebrated in his native York Province on that day. St Martha was not commemorated in Sarum missals, so Fisher was trampling on strict propriety in the interests of effective preaching: his sermon draws an elaborate parallel between Martha and Margaret as true servants of the Lord. Much of what we know of Lady Margaret's person and character comes from that sermon, or was preserved thanks to Fisher's dedication to her memory. Indeed, we know that, besides this sermon, he composed a full-scale life of his patroness. Sadly, it was already lost by the reign of Queen Mary.<sup>11</sup> For a man like John Fisher to have written an account of someone's life, though, would not have been an exercise in what we call *biography*. It must surely have been *hagiography* – the life of a saint. Certainly, his sermon of 1509 reads like the first shot in a campaign for canonisation. A few months previously, he had preached the funeral sermon for Henry VII. When we compare his account of the king with his account of the King's Mother, we find an intriguing contrast. He praised her life: he praised Henry's death. Margaret is likened to Martha, a scriptural saint. Henry, less flatteringly, is likened to Manasses, a king of ancient Judah who, 'after many great abominations and outrages', nevertheless ultimately secured God's forgiveness through bitter repentance. For Fisher, Henry was an object lesson in the possibility of repentance; Margaret, an object lesson in the hope of the resurrection.<sup>12</sup> John Fisher, I am sure, expected Lady Margaret's tomb at Westminster to become as much a focus of miracles and pilgrimage as that of her cousin, Good King Henry.

The memorial sermon delivered a month after Lady Margaret's death by John Fisher portrays her as the focus of general respect and admiration:

All England for her death had cause of weeping. The poor creatures that were wont to receive her alms, to whom she was always piteous and merciful. The students of both the universities, to whom she was as a mother. All the learned men of England, to whom she was a very patroness.<sup>13</sup> All good priests and clerks, to whom she was a true defendress. All the noblemen and women, to whom she was a mirror and example of honour. All the common people of this realm, for whom she was in their causes a common mediatrix and took right great displeasure [i.e., trouble] for them. And generally the whole realm has cause to complain and to mourn her death.

[10] *Calendar of Papal Registers. Papal Letters*, Vol. XVIII, 1503–1513, no. 120, pp. 154–56, granting various spiritual privileges to Henry VII and his mother, 20 May 1504. She had to be accompanied by half a dozen respectable matrons – in other words, her ladies-in-waiting.

[11] Henry Parker, Lord Morley, 'Miracles of the Sacrament', BL Add. MS 12060, fol. 20v: I do assure Your Highness that Doctor Fisher, then Bishop of Rochester, being her ghostly father, showed me not long before his death that he had written her life'.

[12] Richard Rex, *The Theology of John Fisher* (Cambridge: CUP, 1991), pp. 41–43.

[13] Fisher, *A mornynge remembraunce*, sig. B2r.

By means of her benefactions she sought primarily to preserve her memory in the rather more specialised sense which that phrase held in late medieval England. She hoped that, in return for her prodigious generosity, the university would ‘remember her’ in prayers and masses ever afterwards offered for the repose of her soul. In fact, as John Fisher as good as said, she probably had little need of our prayers. Many years after her death he wrote: ‘I freely admit that once she had adopted me both as her confessor and her moral and spiritual guide, I learned more of what leads to an upright life from her rare virtues than I ever taught her in return.’<sup>14</sup> The masses and prayers for her soul would be finally outlawed and silenced by her own great-grand-daughter. But her memory, in the sense in which the later Tudors and we ourselves use the phrase, was and is secure.

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[14] M.K. Jones and M. Underwood, *The King’s Mother*, p. 249, translating from John Fisher, *De Veritate Corporis et Sanguinis Christi in Eucharistia*, dedication, in his *Opera Omnia*, p. 747.

## Restoring Lady Margaret Beaufort's Image: '*Her real face had been in hiding*' ~ An Interview with Christine Slottved Kimbriel by Susanne Jennings

Seven miles south of Cambridge, in the historic village of Whittlesford, lies a mid-18th century riverside house replete with converted mill buildings. This is home to the Hamilton Kerr Institute [HKI] which, for those unfamiliar with its name and purpose, is a department of the Fitzwilliam Museum. Its focus is essentially twofold: the conservation of easel paintings which is undertaken by a small team of highly skilled conservators, and the training of future conservators. The HKI is a fascinating labyrinth of spaces that include a big, open kitchen where staff, students and interns gather throughout the day; a graceful, high-ceilinged, and well-stocked library; several archives (including the Cotman watercolour archive); offices; a scientific laboratory, and vast studio spaces which hum with industrial-sized de-humidifiers. There are studios for restoration of works damaged (causes range from poor handling, incorrect 'cradling' (a means of support applied to secure the panels of a painting prior to being transported; ill-applied cradling can harm a painting by pulling and straining it) and, in a number of cases, having been historically subjected to over-zealous cleaning and the use of harsh products (this can seriously damage the original 'skin' or the uppermost layer, of a painting); for panel treatment and the relining of canvases; and for photography. It is not uncommon for conservators to be working on, say, a Van Dyck and a Rubens at any one time painted on huge panels or canvases, the elegant, often ornate frames for which have been temporarily stored along a narrow corridor in specially constructed wooden racks. On a previous visit to the HKI in late summer, I had been given an early glimpse of a full-length portrait of Lady Margaret Beaufort which had been sent for detailed analysis and restoration. It was late winter before I was to see the portrait again and have the chance to speak at length with Christine Slottved Kimbriel, Senior Painting Conservator (Teaching & Research), ACR at the Hamilton Kerr Institute.



Fig. 1. Christine Slottved Kimbriel, Senior Painting Conservator at the Hamilton Kerr Institute.  
The painting measures (h) 196.3 cm x (w) 137.3 x (d) 5.5 cm.

We met in the vast studio where the portrait is currently positioned, with the wintry, early afternoon sun penetrating the space and catching Lady Margaret's pale, abstracted face. The portrait, which had hung in the Master's Lodge at St John's College, has been the subject of considerable attention since 2019 when research, backed up by documentary evidence, revealed it to have been an original work by Meynnart Wewyck (Wewyck, an artist from the Netherlands was active in Henry VII's court and reputed to have been his favourite painter) and painted earlier than had been originally thought.<sup>1</sup> It is a commanding work of art both on account of its size and its subject. The portrait communicates the identity and substance of its subject through symbols of power and piety. It also has the distinction of being the earliest full-length portrait of an Englishwoman, and a single individual, in the United Kingdom.<sup>2</sup>

A History of Art graduate at the University of Aarhus, Christine went on to complete a postgraduate degree in Conservation-Restoration Science from the School of Conservation at the Royal Danish Academy of Fine Arts in Copenhagen. This was followed by a two-year internship in the conservation of easel paintings at the HKI, whereupon she was appointed Paintings Conservator and Assistant to the Director. A person of deep intelligence, professional rigour, and expertise, she has a special interest in artistic practices of the Tudor and Stuart periods.

In common with other specialist work environments, conservators are privy to a terminology that can require decoding for the layperson. As a highly skilled practitioner and teacher of the conservation and restoration of immensely valuable works of art, Christine outlined several of the processes employed in the dating, provenance, origins, and previous versions of a work beneath one or more 'over-paintings'. The portrait of Lady Margaret Beaufort, as a case in point, had been painted on to oak panels with its earlier dating revealed by a technique called *dendrochronology* (tree-ring analysis). Other scientifically facilitated investigations included *x-ray fluorescence spectroscopy* (to provide a paint analysis) and *infrared reflectography* (to contribute images of what lay beneath the top layer of paint).



Fig. 2. Carbon-based under drawing of Lady Margaret Beaufort revealed by infrared reflectography.  
©Hamilton Kerr Institute

[1] See Andrew Chen & Charlotte Bolland, *Burlington Magazine*, vol. 157, no.1339, 2014, pp. 640-49 for a comprehensive account of the discovery of the portrait's true painter and earlier dating.

[2] Cited on <https://www.joh.cam.ac.uk/painting-mother-king-henry-vii-revealed-oldest-large-scale-portrait-english-woman>.

Our discussion took place beneath the portrait and, as the afternoon wore on, I learned that the painting had endured significant trauma; rather like Lady Margaret herself, it had been subjected to misinterpretation (in this case, through incorrect dating and ascription of artist) and had suffered a kind of revisionism as evidenced in the overpainting. Commissioned after the death of Lady Margaret by Bishop John Fisher, her confessor, close confidant, and executor of her estate, it had been hurriedly wrested from the walls of the Bishop's Palace following John Fisher's execution under the orders of Henry VIII through his refusal to acknowledge him as Head of the Church [of England]. Fearful that the portrait, along with the rest of Fisher's property, would be seized and consigned to an uncertain fate by the king's men, 'the situation would have been one of great chaos'. Christine speculated as to where the portrait may have hung and thought it likely that it had either been on the walls of John Fisher's private chapel or the dining hall, 'owing to its proportions and perspective'. Promised by Fisher to St John's College, in honour of Lady Margaret Beaufort's position as its Foundress, it would eventually be carted from London – a process involving further damage owing to the means used to secure it – to Cambridge. According to a catalogue of paintings in the College's possession, it was later to be 'found in bad state, but no essential part injured, about 1874, in a store-room of the Third Court'.<sup>3</sup>



Fig. 3. The portrait in early stages of cleaning at the HKI.<sup>4</sup>

[3] Alexander Freeman, 'Catalogue of the Pictures belonging to St John's College', *The Eagle*, vol. 12, no.65, c.1881, p.4.

[4] The small pieces of transparent paper on Lady Margaret's black gown are called 'facing' and are intended to aid safe handling of the painting in vulnerable areas.

Conservation work on a portrait of this age is a lengthy process. Seeing a conservator in an adjacent corner labouring at a painting suggested something of the contemplative or meditative, but this impression was amended by Christine. ‘Yes, there can appear to be an element of the meditative, but you *must* be alert and awake. I enjoy the process hugely though it can be very hard on the eyes owing to the concentrated nature of the work.’ It is also, by definition, high-jeopardy work. Not only does it demand great skill and concentration, but it also puts the conservator in contact with potentially hazardous material ranging from specialist cleaning solvents to the composition of the paint in use at the time. The portrait of Lady Margaret Beaufort, for example, includes vermillion (vermilion, Christine pointed out, is HgS = mercury sulphide) and white paint containing highly toxic levels of lead. She has dedicated ‘hundreds of hours (with many more to go)’ to the removal of non-original material on the portrait. Cleaning (in conservator terminology, also referred to as a *campaign*) is a slow and complex process comprised of one or more *campaigns* and has been ‘labour-intensive, though I was assisted by a student’.

Christine has derived huge satisfaction from working on the portrait, not least because it has yielded fascinating information. Close inspection of the portrait revealed that Lady Margaret’s ‘real face had been in hiding’: overpainting had made her face appear tauter, her eyes more deep-set and her mouth pursed tight. Studying the two sets of outlines might cause one to wonder if the mouth may have originally been slightly more generous and less unsmiling (Lady Margaret was, apparently, not without humour). This instance of artistic licence may have accorded more closely to a particular image of Lady Margaret that was in favour at the time, namely, that of the pious, regal, and sombre vowess.



Fig. 4. ‘Her real face had been in hiding’. Note the drawing in of face, mouth, and repositioning of eyes.

Also uncovered was that beneath the black bottom half of the painting lay a tiled floor and that what appeared as a ‘red blob’ above LMB’s head was, in fact, ‘a vermillion petalled Lancastrian rose ... a hovering rose’. Formerly obscured colours rendered visible by means of polar and non-polar solvents in liquid or gelled form revealed that the background contained more blue (in this case, azurite) than what had appeared to be a ‘rather dirty, matte green [consisting of] large particles’. Also of interest was that the sober black-and-gold frame hid a bright red-and-green barber-striped pattern which may have been mirrored in the stained-glass window in the background of the painting.

Together, we studied the figure of Lady Margaret Beaufort herself. Dressed in black (likely to have been wool – black gowns were costly at the time, a sign of wealth and status<sup>5</sup>), wearing a widow’s coif and surrounded by the emblems of her regal standing (including the Tudor rose and Beaufort portcullis) and faith (evidenced in her attire, position of prayer indicated by her folded hands and open missal or Book of Hours). Christine looked thoughtful. ‘She never looks at you. Instead, she is elevated and staring into the distance ... she is inaccessible in her space, missing communication.’



Fig. 5. The emblematic composition of the portrait replete with portcullis . Note overpainted frame: from light-hearted ‘candy-striped’ bright red and green to sober black and gold.

Photos (save the b&w HKI image): ©Susanne Jennings. Printed here by kind permission of St John’s College, Cambridge

[5] Rings were also associated with wealth and status (note the three rings on Lady Margaret’s hands folded in prayer depicted in the portrait).

## Genuine Dialogue by Dr Edward Kessler, MBE

[Editor's Note: The Woolf Institute and the Margaret Beaufort Institute were once neighbours at Wesley House and later, when the Woolf took up temporary office accommodation at Lady Margaret House before moving into their permanent site on the Westminster campus. Like MBIT, the Woolf began life in Cambridge as a pioneering institute that continually looks outward. Here, Dr Kessler sets out the relationship between MBIT and the Woolf and outlines his institute's promotion of the necessity for authentic dialogue in the face of an increasingly fragile world.]



In 1998, one year after the Margaret Beaufort Institute of Theology opened its doors, the Woolf Institute was founded by Revd Dr Martin Forward (at that time, Academic Dean of Wesley House) and myself. Initially called the Centre for Jewish-Christian Relations, the Institute was elected (and remains) an Associate Member of the Cambridge Theological Federation and has benefitted from the encouragement of the Margaret Beaufort Institute of Theology and the other Houses of the CTF, from conception to the present day. I have fond memories of Sr Bridget offering advice to me about tactics for managing the ecumenical challenge and since then, I have appreciated the friendship expressed by MBIT Principals (and staff) towards their “elder brother”. For our part, Roman Catholic students and staff have always been welcome at the Woolf Institute. From a focus on teaching and dialogue in Jewish-Christian Relations, the Institute’s activities have widened to include all aspects of Jewish-Christian-Muslim relations, as well as the encounter with wider society, through teaching, research and outreach.

At the Woolf Institute, we believe education is not free of contention, for the pursuit of knowledge and understanding bring dilemmas that need resolving, and actions that need evaluating, and choices to be made. Education is therefore not value free or neutral, for it is about transmitting and receiving the values that are the beliefs of those whose examples with which we are presented which affect how we make our choices.

Like MBIT, the Woolf Institute's approach to education is an exercise in what we believe about ourselves, the world and each other. Since it involves questions of values, so our education must take beliefs seriously. One of the most fundamental questions the Woolf Institute seeks to answer is not simply how to accommodate beliefs, nor how to accommodate different beliefs; rather, how to accommodate potentially conflicting beliefs?

We believe that interfaith education is key to building stronger ties between traditions and between the religious and secular world, thereby providing a framework for the constructive engagement of diversity, including disagreement. I have learnt at first hand in Jerusalem, for example, that understanding interfaith relations can be used as one model for conflict resolution, and to appreciate the value of someone else's sacred texts (and perspectives) in a diverse society.

The act of encountering different groups of people and different faiths acknowledges that whilst we are all uniquely different as individuals and communities, we are also connected and have shared values. Thus, interfaith education deals with deep-seated issues of belief, values, identity and society; to face conflicting beliefs, explore why they seem to be such, talk about differing experiences, authorities, origins, hopes, destinies, and to identify the issues of values and practices that arise.

Most of all, our educational programmes (whether for future religious leaders, academics or diplomats) emphasise the importance of encounter. This moves beyond simple 'learning about' other traditions, which is not sufficient as a basis for mutual understanding, for we can only understand the 'Other' by interpreting what we encounter in the light of our own experience. Through personal encounters, students learn that commonality emerges through different religious stories and practices, and that disagreement and conflict may be the result of 'distance' rather than 'discernment' at close quarters.

This process involves exchange and dialogue. It involves listening as well as speaking, an attempt to understand others in their own terms, as we ourselves wish to be understood.

### The Pedagogy of Dialogue

#### *1) Begin with common ground*

Whilst it is essential to explore difference, understanding begins with experiences or beliefs that different faiths have in common, particularly shared tradition and values. The Qur'an is representative when it states: "We have created you male and female, and have made you nations and tribes that ye may recognize one another" (Quran 49:13). This principle also lies at the heart of Judaism and Christianity (and other religions). We all proclaim the unity of God and the diversity of human existence.

### 2) Explore perceptions

What we believe is a crucial element in our sense of identity and our sense of meaning. We are all born within a culture and we learn it from our earliest days. Our culture helps to shape the way we view the world and others. It fashions our perspectives. 'Believing that' and 'believing in' are powerful influences on what we consider to be right, worthwhile and important.

### 3) Engage in dialogue

Once we are aware of our own perceptions, we can begin to engage with others more effectively. Personal encounters foster dialogue, as Margaret Beaufort students experience ecumenically, as well as through an encounter with Judaism and Islam. Through dialogue, neither participant is required to relinquish nor alter their beliefs but both will be affected and changed by the process. As dialogue increases, so does understanding.

### 4) Respect Difference

The process of encounter helps to unravel the complex of identities – social, religious, ethnic, and others – which we all hold. In this way, students learn to value diversity as expressed through language, food, clothes, dress and rituals, for example whilst, at the same time, opening up the shared ethical space in which respective beliefs and values, often convergent, can be explored and understood through inter-personal engagement.

Living with diversity requires tolerance. Are there limits to tolerance and diversity? Of course! There are some non-negotiable values, including freedom of speech. I want to add there can be no resolution of conflict without dialogue, no dialogue without listening, no listening without tolerance, no tolerance without respect; no dialogue, no listening, no tolerance, no respect without education.

Yet, and this is a point of great significance, too many of us are advocates of one side or another, pursuing a strictly partisan agenda. Why is it comparatively rare to find people who are both pro-one side AND pro-the other? How many people do you know, for example, who are both pro-Palestinian and pro-Israeli?

The reason is that too few are concerned about seriously engaging different views, becoming easily overwhelmed by the shrill screams of religious intolerance, ignoring the diversity of humanity. The Mishnah, the Jewish text, edited about 1800 years ago, states,  
'Humankind was produced from one individual, Adam .... to show God's greatness. When a man mints coins in a press, each is identical; but when the king of kings of kings, the Holy one, blessed be he, creates people in the form of Adam not one is similar to any other.' (Sanhedrin 4.5)  
Now supposing you and I see things differently. We have different perspectives on reality. Is that it? What can we do under those circumstances? Well, we can talk. We can converse. You can tell me how the world looks to you. I can tell you how the world looks to me. We can have a dialogue. We can, through that dialogue, learn what it feels like to be different. We can bridge the distance between two perspectives.

When you see everything in terms of two dimensions, it is either true or it is false. And there can only be one perspective! That is what we reject. There is always more than one perspective. And that is the vision of the Woolf Institute. If I am standing in Madingely Road, things look different from what you see if you are living on Grange Road. We are seeing the world from different perspectives. In the Institute's teaching, in Cambridge and around the world, we seek to confer dignity on how the world looks to me and how the world looks to you.

Interfaith education influences and reflects the values of society and that is why it needs so much attention. Education is a route to well-being and promotes both self-understanding and understanding of others. But we hope for more than that. We hope that it will generate positive action and responsible behaviour.

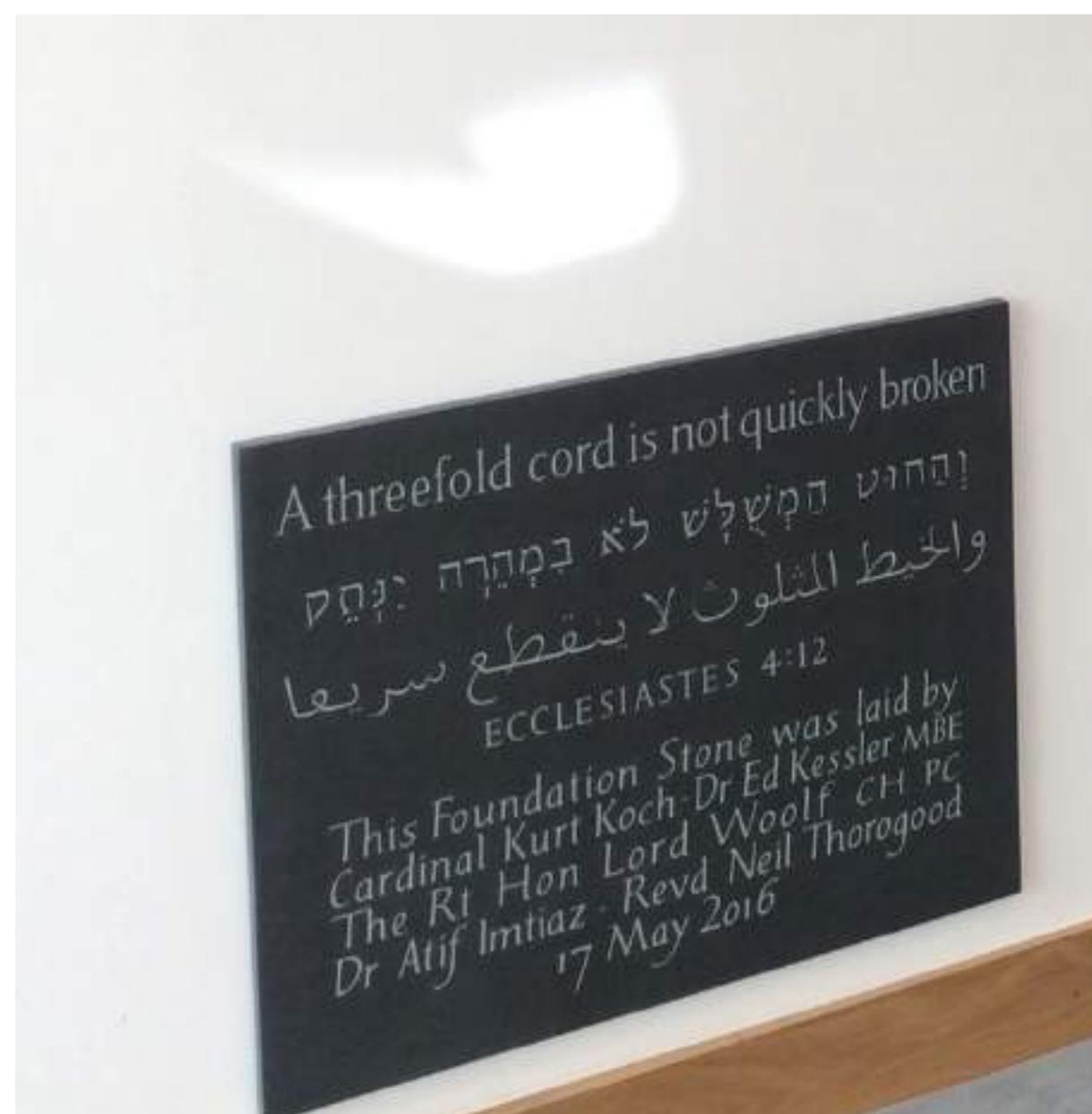
Our goal is to face the danger that as a new generation emerges, it is unwilling to giving a respectful hearing to the other side. When that happens, violence is waiting in the wings.

### Conclusion

I am grateful to follow in the footsteps of the Margaret Beaufort Institute of Theology, not just because both Institutes were founded a year apart and shared a common home in our first years at Wesley House, but because we seek to equip our students to live in a society with religious faiths that differ in many important respects, and yet which share many important features. These have shaped and do shape much of our spirituality, our culture, our society, our morality and our ideals. We weaken all of them if we do not enable our students, Christian, Jewish and Muslim, to learn about religions and learn from religion.

There is no alternative than to build on our commonality and face our differences. Separation and distancing are not practical. Worse, they may lead to marginalization, conflict and ultimately persecution. Wanting to be faithful to my tradition does not involve me in diminishing the traditions of others. Practising my belief does not require me to discriminate against those who wish to practise their beliefs. It is the precondition of being able to value them together in a diverse society and allow them to flourish for the good of all.

Our task is dialogical, giving dignity to the multiple perspectives, learning how to disagree and manage difference. In other words, to teach genuine dialogue.



## Prophetic Imagination: A Conversation between Thomas Merton and Abraham Joshua Heschel.

Susanne Jennings (UK) and Melanie-Préjean Sullivan (USA); 22.01.2022, MBIT, Cambridge, UK

I saw three words: prophetic, Heschel and Merton. I re-read the flyer on the MBIT website and knew the study day on Thomas Merton and Abraham Heschel was a ‘must’. I know I speak for other attendees when I say we weren’t disappointed by what was a great addition to the MBIT programme for this year. The end of the day confirmed that it was an event I’m glad I didn’t miss. I am sure others will share in saying ‘thank you’ to MBIT for facilitating this day, and to Melanie and Susanne for a rich and engaging series of presentations and conversations.

Looking back these past months since January, not least the last two weeks, so the work and witness of Heschel and Merton, and their unwavering commitment to inter-faith dialogue and social justice, seems all the more urgent, all the more timely. Indeed, a particular (and now pressing) observation that emerged in relation to both men concerned ‘timing’. Prophets are ‘out of time’, or so it seems. They don’t know they are prophets; and nor do we fully comprehend prophetic identity. But following Heschel and Merton, so the cry of the oppressed in every generation continues to echo the prophecies of a shared Judeo-Christian history.

Prophets speak truth to power; they keep vigil in the night hours; they listen to the voices from the margins as much as the mainstream; and they see distant horizons in the routine and commonplace. Prophets – Merton and Heschel – didn’t study prophecy. They certainly didn’t perceive themselves as such. Rather, the prophetic vocation is in part bound up with a passionate concern for human and earthly suffering. Both men saw that suffering is not an option. They both exposed the suffering of their own day. But they also taught that hope is not external to suffering but is enlivened in the very heart of the suffering itself. This is one of the paradoxes of prophecy and, as we shared during the study day, it’s also one of its central challenges.

Heschel and Merton are prophetic because they embody in their writings and witness the hope that justice and lasting peace might not elude us. The prophetic disposition is one that demands we keep vigil – at all times – in order to see beyond the horizon of current suffering. It’s not a false optimism that these men teach. Rather, they confront in their different circumstances the real possibility that human connection, via prayer and dialogue, and via contemplation and action, will overwhelm moments of despair and abandonment.

In our small groups, we variously considered what it is we take from Heschel and Merton today. If we’re on the side of the prophets, then we too will call out the injustices of the present. We learn with them that the prophetic imagination seeks daily conversion of heart and mind; and it seeks truth in concrete acts of hospitality and compassion. Heschel and Merton didn’t exempt themselves from the need to keep vigil. They did this by choosing dialogue, collaboration and connection. Guided by our two facilitators, and in conversations in small groups, we were reminded that one of the underlying challenges of the prophetic imagination concerns human agency. How do we in our own circumstances choose to respond to discipleship?

As we pondered the work and witness of Heschel and Merton, so we recalled that their insights invite us to consider the impact and consequences of our actions, big or small. Heschel and Merton looked to the signs of their times. They too lived in times marked by racial division, violence and war. With them, the day invited all of us to confront our own times. Strengthened by the prophetic wisdom of Heschel, Merton and each other, the day closed by imagining a future marked by dialogue and hope.

Anthony Purvis

## A Letter from alumna Sr Edel Bhati who now lives at Jamma Home Community in her native Nairobi: *'My Life after Margaret Beaufort 1999 – 2022'*

I look back 23 years now since my life in Cambridge. My two years in the Institute were years of renewal and encounter with the making of many friends and new, enriching experiences of steeping myself in theology and spirituality.

I am appreciative of the knowledge I gained in Pastoral Theology for which I obtained a Master's degree. The fruitfulness of my studies enabled me to help many Religious men and women from initial formation to on-going formation. I have also worked to enhance the lives of laymen and women in various sectors.

My field in initial formation was that of understanding the theology and spirituality of religious life from the African cultural side, the acculturation of the religious life for which St. Pope John Paul II called. To both religious and lay people, I have also given many sessions on psycho-sexual human and spiritual development.

I have been involved in giving directed retreats and preached retreats to religious men and women and have facilitated four General Chapters.

My out-reach in mission was cut short in 2014 when I broke my ankle joint badly with three fractures on the leg. Unfortunately, the plate in place became badly infected which then spread to the bones. With four operations, the cartilage was damaged; hence, I cannot walk or drive as I used to do.

I thank God for the graces given to accept the pain and handicap. My time is spent now in prayer, small chores at home, reading, scrabble and doing the crossword.

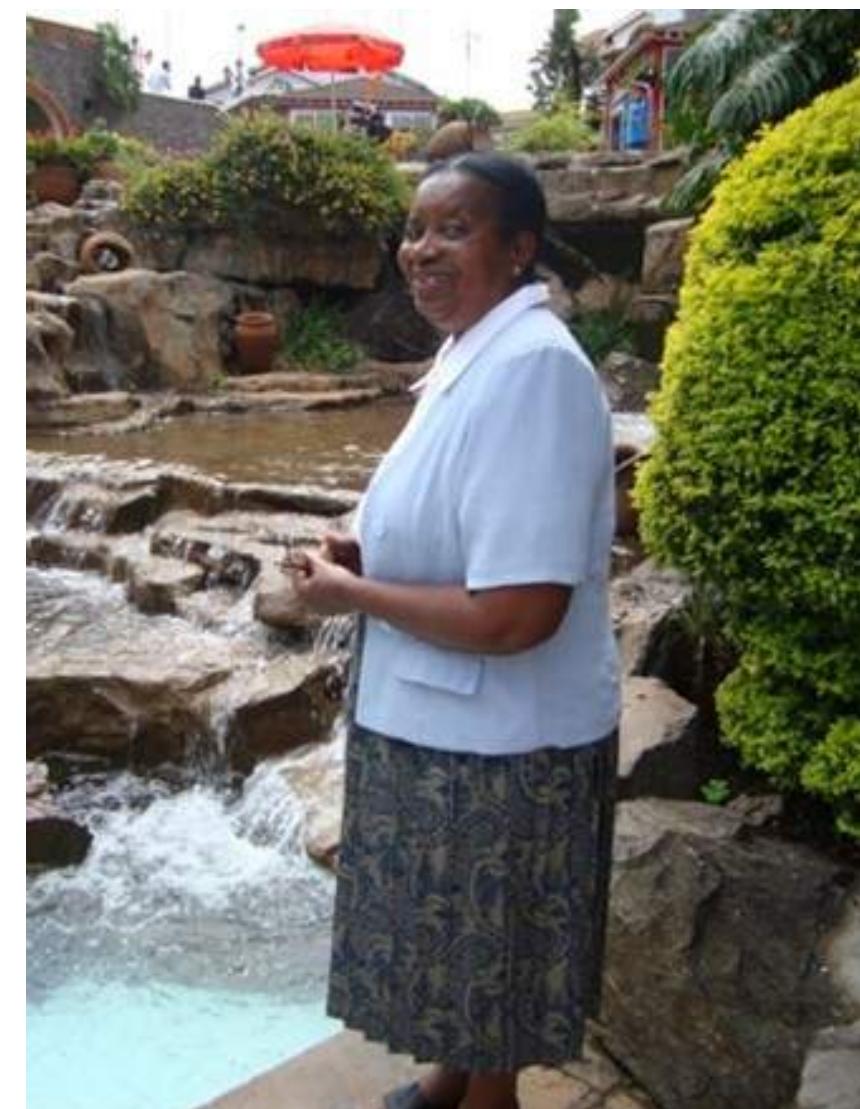
The worldwide pandemic of Covid-19 has affected us, too but thank God we are safe. A good number of people here have died from corona virus. We are now urged to have the vaccine. Fortunately, I have received mine plus the booster and have urged many people to also receive the vaccine.

My prayer is that God eradicates the pandemic the world over.

Love to all friends of Margaret Beaufort.

Much love and God bless,

*Edel*



## From Poland with love

### A letter by Marie Stec

Dear MBIT friends,

I am writing from Poland to ask you to pray for peace. The war in Ukraine has brought untold human tragedies. In Poland we have around one million of the Ukrainian war refugees, mostly women and children as the majority of men have remained to fight for their own country, Ukraine. Those persons are very brave and extremely patriotic. We hope they will win one day.

Instead of an account of the war here, I have decided to send something really uplifting: a person at the border with Poland, welcoming the Ukrainians refugees with piano music. Beautiful.

Ukrainian refugees fleeing to Medyka & Korczowa Poland, were greeted with live music, as a man played the piano near the border crossing on March 4.

Ukrainian refugees entering Poland were treated to a real-life pianist as beautiful music was being played at the border crossing on March 4.

Daniel Baird recorded a video showing people walking along a road in Medyka and Korczowa, Poland as refugees from Ukraine continued to arrive on buses.

In the background of the video, beautiful music being played on a piano which could be heard while people carried their suitcases to seek asylum in Poland. Click on: <https://youtu.be/gT6AUcM4UKo>



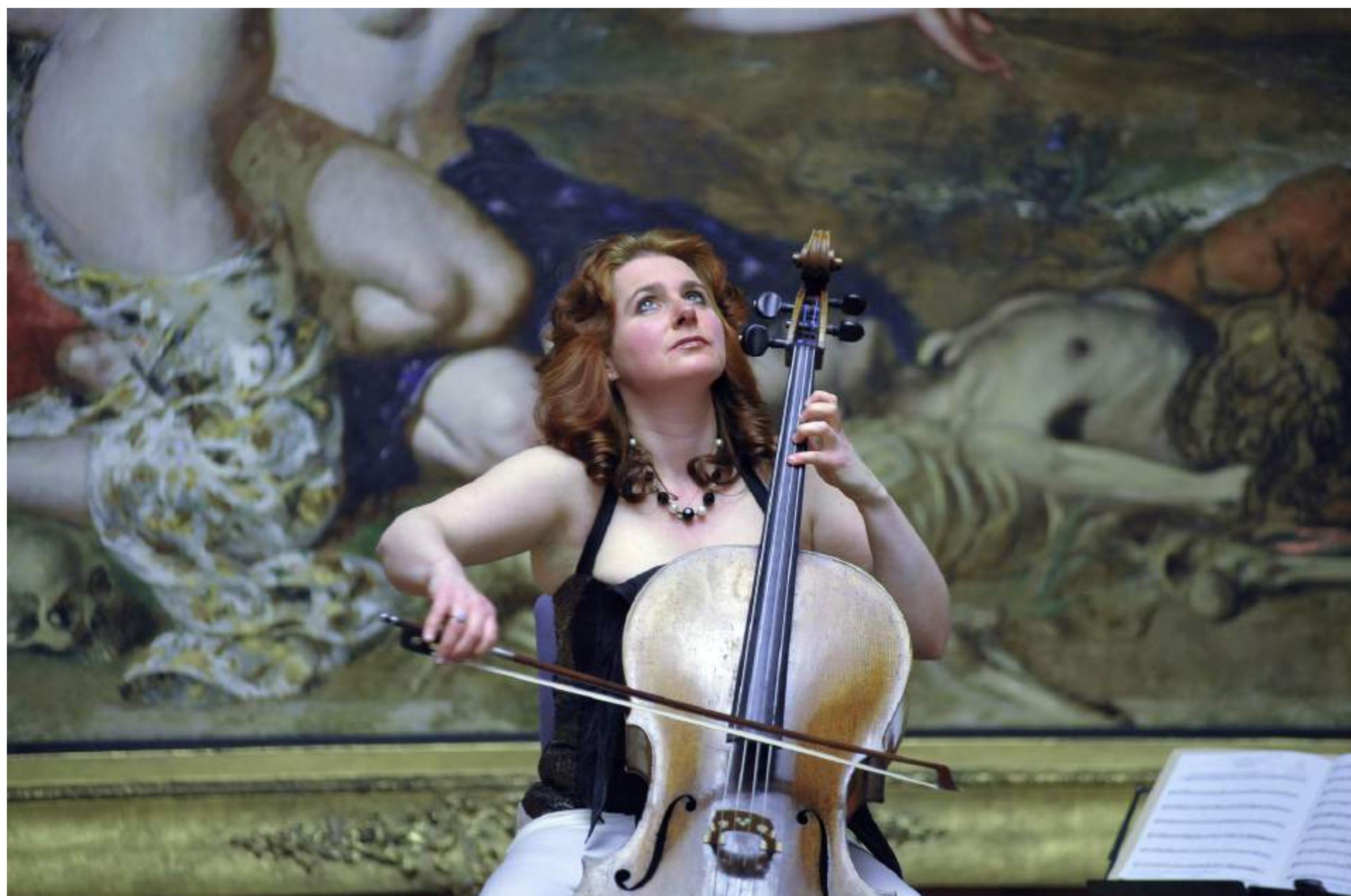
Video showing man playing piano as Ukrainian refugees arrive in Poland.

A man who appeared to have brought the piano attached to a bicycle nearby is shown briefly in the video playing on a piano with a peace sign painted on it. Russian forces continued to press a campaign that has brought global condemnation. People across Ukraine have taken up arms and sought shelter. More than 1.2 million people have fled mostly to Poland the U.N. refugee agency said this week.

Thank you very much for your prayer and concern.

Maria Stec, Consecrated Virgin from Krakow, Poland

The Susanna Roberts Bursary Fund supports



Hannah Roberts, HonRAM, FRNCM  
Principal Cellist Manchester Camerata  
Professor of Cello RAM (London) and RNCM (Manchester)  
Visiting Artist in Cello BCU

## Aspiring Cellists

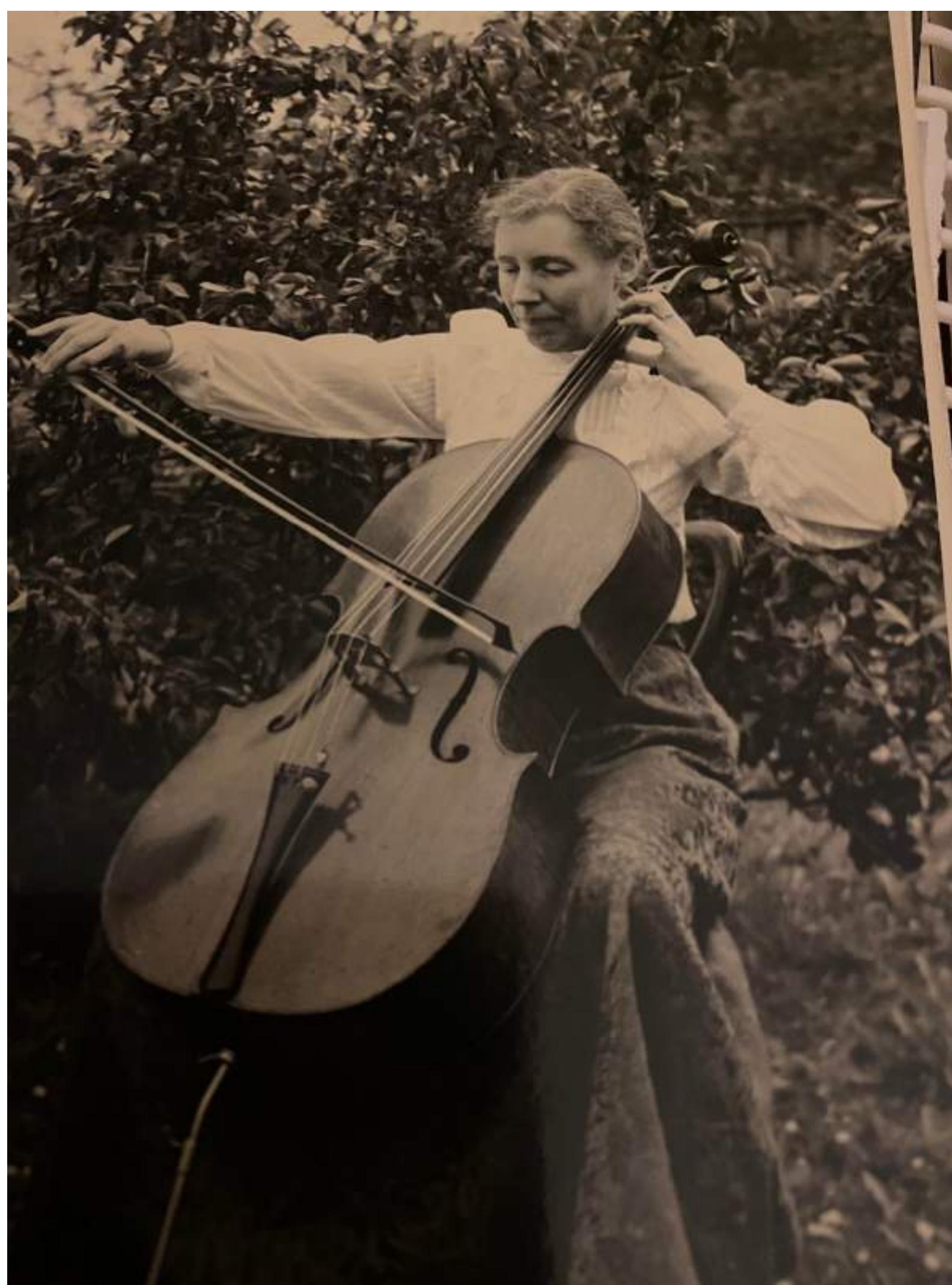
As a meaningful way of honouring her late mother, MBAT alumna Susanna Roberts, the internationally renowned cellist, Hannah Roberts has initiated a bursary in Susanna's name. The *Susanna Roberts Bursary Fund* is intended to provide financial support for gifted young cellists who would not otherwise have the means to attend the *Hannah Roberts Summer Cello Classes* which are held annually in the beautiful setting of Malvern College (<https://summercellocourse.co.uk/>).

Founded in 2004 by Hannah, together with Leandro Silvera, the Master Classes are intended to provide a stimulating and intensive summer course for aspiring professional cellists. The course now attracts some of the most talented cellists, internationally and from the UK, with past attendees including cellists now enjoying successful careers at the top of the profession.

A donation of any amount would help towards enabling a financially constrained aspiring cellist to attend the Master Classes. As a guide, the following sums would provide:

- £100 can cover UK travel for a student to and from the course
- £200 can significantly enable a student to travel from abroad
- £300 would represent a half scholarship
- £600 would represent a full scholarship
- £800 could cover full fees and a contribution to travel

For further information on how to donate funds as a legacy to Susanna, please contact Hannah at [hannah@hannahroberts.com](mailto:hannah@hannahroberts.com)

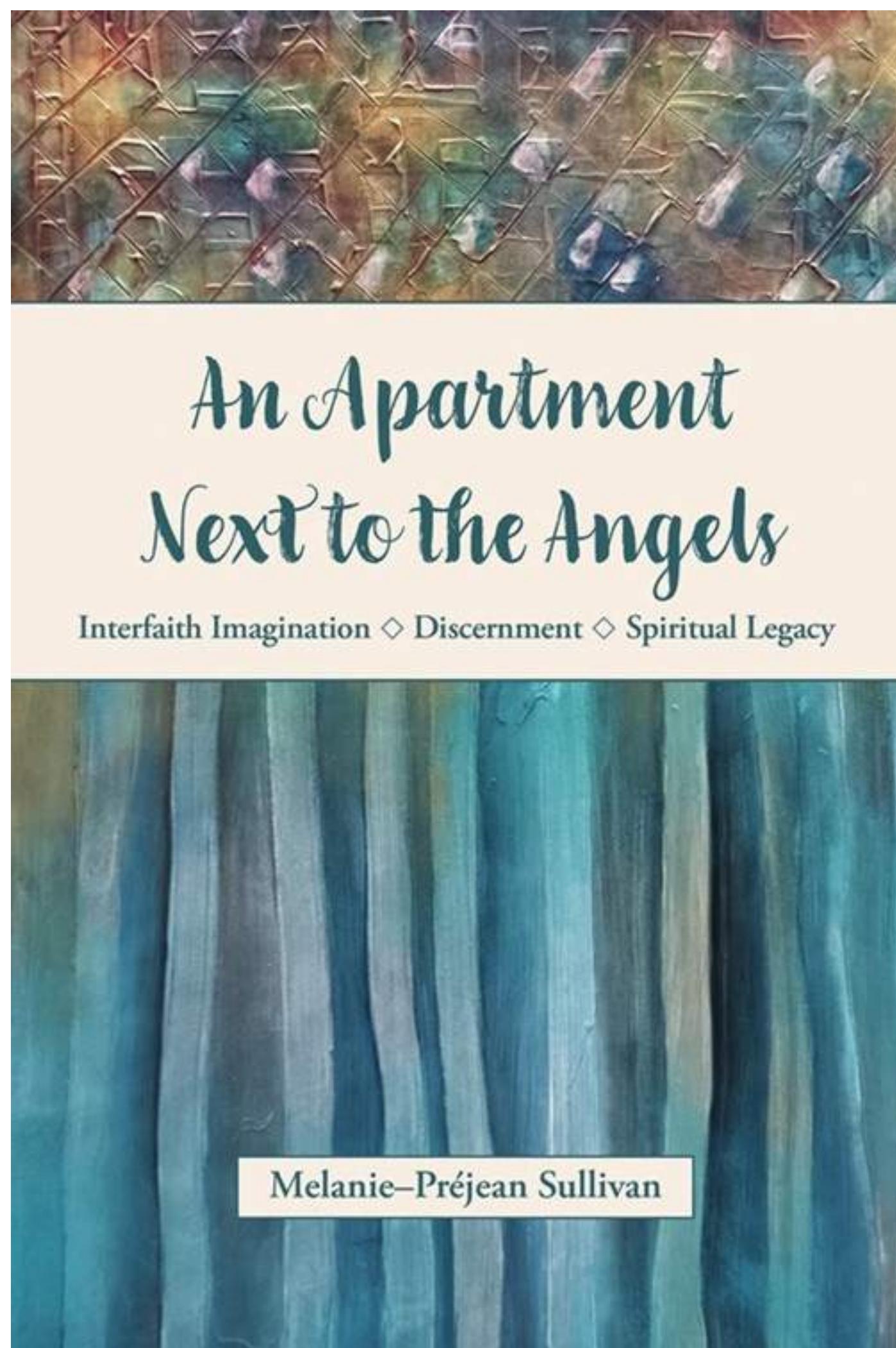


Alumna Susanna Roberts with cello

## New Publications

In spring of 2017, Melanie-Préjean Sullivan began to discern her retirement as the Cardinal Hume Scholar with MBIT. *Discernment* had been the topic of her doctoral research with undergraduates, using spiritual practices to determine their first vocations. After nearly two decades as a university minister, *discernment for retirement* became the focus of her sabbatical. It became clear that she was to continue teaching, to work in some form of interreligious chaplaincy, and to embark on a writing project or two. Since her retirement, she has taught for MBIT, a synagogue, and a women's spirituality network. She has also published two articles and a book, which is available on Amazon.

*An Apartment Next to the Angels: Interfaith Imagination, Discernment, Spiritual Legacy*, is a collection of stories inviting readers to ponder ultimate concerns: What do I believe about why I am here, about suffering, about the afterlife? Melanie shares her perspectives from her lifelong friendships with people of many faiths and worldviews. Reflective prompts throughout the book invite readers into the stories, to discern their own answers and to create their own spiritual legacies.



*The Cambridge Theological Federation is an ecumenical partnership of twelve institutions, with over 300 students, from thirty different countries. It is engaged in teaching theology for ministry, reflection on mission in local and global contexts, and research. This book tells the story of the significant developments that have shaped the life of the Federation over the course of fifty years.*

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The Cambridge Theological Federation must surely count as one of the most impressive and diverse theological institutions to be found anywhere in the world. As one who was involved in a small way in its inception in the late 1960s and now back in Cambridge, I am amazed and impressed by the developments that have taken place and by what is now on offer.

*Brian Beck, from the Foreword*

The Federation is the broad canopy under which the twelve institutions safely collaborate and can thrive... It is a treasury of wisdom and insight, friendship and formation, questioning and learning. It is one of the world's greatest, broadest and most collaborative theological education communities.

*Neil Thorgood, former Principal of Westminster College*

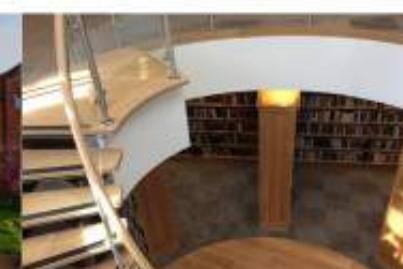
Our theology, while Roman Catholic, is done in the ecumenical and inter-religious spirit of the Cambridge Theological Federation and in dialogue with other disciplines. It is this kind of theology that has a future.

*Anna Abram, Co-Principal of the Margaret Beaufort Institute of Theology*



**THE CAMBRIDGE THEOLOGICAL FEDERATION:  
A JOURNEY IN ECUMENICAL LEARNING**

MARY TANNER AND IAN RANDALL













To order a copy of this publication, please contact the Revd Dr Ian Randall at [ian.m.randall@gmail.com](mailto:ian.m.randall@gmail.com)

*To a Leveret*



Photo©Richard Steel

What wouldn't I give to move like that, just for an hour?  
To cross the turf like a pebble skimmed on water,  
                to make the ground appear  
                taut as a trampoline,  
                 sounding silent waves in total  
                step with the earth's cadence:  
                to be all dance.

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