

Christmas at Mannofield



MANNOFIELD CHURCH OF SCOTLAND ABERDEEN

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Dear Friends,

We might not have a regular InSpire Magazine anymore, but it is still very exciting to be able to bring you a Christmas message for December 2022.

You will see within our E-Booklet that we are bringing you some 'blasts from the past'. I have been going through some Christmas editions of the Magazine and reading the pastoral letters. We have selected a few offerings for you to reflect back on.

What is clear as I have been reading these letters is that both in my time and in the time of my predecessor's, nearly always, we write from a perspective of world and social hardship and challenge. If it is not war, or terror attacks such as bombings, the sometimes darkness of human experience is revealed in news of poverty, hunger and economic hardship caused by whatever financial crisis of the moment.

No wonder the Rev I M Jolly had so much material to work with in his annual Hogmanay sketch! The truth of the matter is however that there is a reason that year after year the Christmas Pastoral Letters were/ are framed from within such a perspective.

Christmas is **for** a time such as this! The message of the Season is intentionally designed to speak into the hard realities of life. This is why we look forward to it, celebrate it and invite others to share in it. Its message is a gift for all who are fed up, and sometimes hindered, by the perspective of life being brutal.

The original Christmas was set in a world not much different from our own and yet into that hardship came a radiant message that 'Love wins', and 'Peace is a gift for all'.

God's intervention and promise of an alternative experience came into a world of war, poverty, disease, and anxiety

It is my hope and prayer that we make enough space in our hectic Christmas schedules for worship and reflection, in order that not just the message of Peace might be known, but more importantly that the spirit of this Peace will be felt in our hearts and through us made real for the people of the world.

God Bless and Happy Christmas

Keith

Joy and Peace at Christmas

A happy Christmas and best wishes for 2023 to all our friends in Mannofield



Keith, Katrina and family



CHRISTMAS SERVICES

at Mannofield Church

17TH DECEMBER 7PM MANNOFIELD CHURCH
LESSONS & CAROLS

18TH DECEMBER 10AM MANNOFIELD CHURCH
NATIVITY SUNDAY

24TH DECEMBER 7PM MANNOFIELD CHURCH
CHRISTMAS EVE FAMILY SERVICE

24TH DECEMBER 11.30PM CRAIGIEBUCKLER CHURCH
CHRISTMAS EVE WATCHNIGHT SERVICE

25TH DECEMBER 10.30AM RUTHRIESTON WEST CHURCH
CHRISTMAS DAY FAMILY SERVICE

1ST JANUARY 10AM MANNOFIELD CHURCH
NEW YEARS DAY FAMILY SERVICE
(WITH CRAIGIEBUCKLER & RUTHRIESTON)



Stay Curious – there's more to explore – try *Alpha*.

Alpha at Café Connect.

Explore

Life

Faith

Meaning



Starting on Monday 23rd January 2023, we are offering the *Alpha Course*.

Each evening starts at 7pm in Café Connect with a meal together, then continues with a short DVD and a brief discussion. The evening finishes at 9pm. Everyone is welcome, and there is no charge.

Alpha is a series of interactive sessions which freely explore the basics of the Christian faith. It runs for 10 weeks with an 'away-day' planned for around Saturday 11th March 2023.

The sessions look at different questions such as "*Who is Jesus?*" and "*How can we have faith?*".

There's no obligation to say anything and there's nothing you can't say (seriously!).

It would help if you could contact the Church office or email Mail@thompsonaberdeen.com, or call 01224 681384 no later than **13th January 2023**, because that will help us to make catering arrangements.

See more at *Alpha* at <https://alpha.org.uk/try>

I'm dreaming of a white Christmas are the opening lyrics of the popular song named White Christmas. Personally, Bing Crosby, sings it the best. In movies, Christmas is often associated with snow. In South Africa however, Christmas is during the summer months which have long, hot, and sweaty days. A popular Church hymn in South Africa has the following lyrics: *Skenk ons 'n helder Somerkersfees* (Give us a bright summer Christmas day).

Christmas in South Africa is celebrated in variety of ways but most of the people I know attend church and thereafter have a barbeque (in South Africa we call it braai) with friends and family. If you don't have a swimming pool, you invite yourself over to someone who has a swimming pool (the person hosting the braai, usually has a swimming pool). Braai, swimming, eating, and playing family games are very much part of the day. The presents are usually opened on Christmas Eve. The beaches are popular holiday destinations during the festive season and many families go camping together.

We are really looking forward to Christmas this year as it is our first Christmas in the UK. Evan is eagerly awaiting snow as it will be a first experience for him. I think we are going to skip the swimming this year on Christmas day

Corné Randall





Carols and Lessons

Mannofield Church

Great Western Road, Aberdeen
Saturday 17th December, 7pm

- St John Festival Choir conducted by Professor Paul Mealor
- Minister: Rev Keith Blackwood
- Organist: Professor Andrew Morrisson

Retiring collection to support the work of St John Scotland at home and abroad. Refreshments will be available after the service. All welcome!

 stjohnscotland.org.uk



St John
Scotland

St John Scotland. Scottish Registered Charity number SC047485.

A FAMILY TRADITION

When my grandchildren were quite young and staying with us for a week before Christmas, I tried to think of some activities to amuse them and build up the excitement towards Christmas Day.

I had two tiny Christmas trees so decided to turn them into 'challenge trees' - one for each grandchild.

There would be numbers on each tree, corresponding to the day of the week. They would choose the correct number and I would read out the FUN challenge/activity for that day. Of course, at the end of the activity there would be a wee present to choose from the Christmas basket.

The following year when my daughter asked my grandson if he was excited about going to Aberdeen at Christmas time, he said he was because of the challenge trees.

Not to see Granny and Grandad?

So began a family tradition.

However, over the years the challenge has become Granny's as I try to provide challenges relating to their age and interests. I have learned so much about various heroes, Pokémon, Fortnite, judo, gymnastics and football. A great deal about football!

During the pandemic, when we were all allowed to meet outside with family for Christmas Day only, my husband and I set off for Edinburgh very early in the morning. My daughter had the garden set out with decorations, fairy lights, chiminea, cosy blankets and yes - a table for the challenge trees!

Brenda McGovern

Jim Henderson - Kingswells

The 12 days from 21 December to 1 January include 3 significant days.

The first is the shortest day of the year and marks the end of a period of prolonged dark days after which daylight lengthens.

The last marks the start of a new year with all the hope which a new start brings.

Right in the middle is Christmas day which is ostensibly a day for the giving and receiving of gifts between individuals.

Each of these 3 days is undoubtedly important but for those of the Christian faith Christmas Day is the day when they celebrate what they believe is the most unique gift of all – the birth of a saviour who changed the relationship between man and God.

A saviour who brings only everlasting light not darkness – a saviour who offers a new start not for 12 months but for ever and a day – a saviour whose gift is freely given but none are expected in return.

A poem written for my twin sister's granddaughter Heather.

Margaret Stewart

A dance of snowflakes,
Three silver moons,
A flame on the hearth,
Kitten and kettle singing,
Stories and rhymes,
Then crib and lamp and angel
All this good winter
Till the daffodil days come in.



Christmas time was a happy time as a child (that's over 70 years ago).

I was one of three children in our house. We had to write our letters to Santa with what we wanted or what he could deliver on Christmas Day,

We had all the decorations round the room with tinsel, Christmas cards pinned to the wall, and the paper chain made or bought hung from the corners of the room to the light fitting in the centre. The Christmas tree which we helped to decorate was placed in the bay window.

Christmas eve was exciting hanging up our stockings by the side of the fire place, and leaving a plate with shortbread and a drink. This could have been milk or orange juice for Santa. We also left a couple of carrots for Rodolph, then we were off to bed early , but sleep was not on our minds.

When Christmas morning came we had to go into the living room together to find out if Santa had been and left any presents. We all had a main present for ourselves with smaller presents like clothes, school things like pencils, rubbers etc, We were happy with the presents Santa brought. The family did not have lots of money to buy presents for myself and my siblings. Our stockings usually had an apple, tangerine, pack of sweets, and if you were lucky a silver thrupenny bit.

Christmas lunch was always turkey, boiled or roasted potatoes, brussels sprouts, and carrots, followed by sherry trifle.

When lunch was over we went out for a walk taking our presents with us weather permitting, or we would go sledging down the Bumpers. This was a field with a lot of bumps and dips so you had to hold on as you inevitably would fall off .I can remember coming home with fingers red and so cold that they were sore, but you could not put them into a basin of hot water as this made them worse.

Back then we were happy with what we received and were not looking for more. Children today are looking for lots of presents that are very expensive — iPhones, iPads, designer clothes and footwear, and still looking for more. When Christmas comes we have a simple Christmas meal with all the trimmings, then sit down to watch the TV and may nod off as we have eaten to much Christmas Fare.

Merry Christmas to All

Les Black.



Mannofield Christmas 2022

O Holy Night

I have a special Christmas Memory that I love to revisit, sometimes more often than just at Christmas!

I was a teenager and our family went to the family Christmas Eve service at 6 pm. I enjoyed seeing people I hadn't seen in a while, because I had come back from my first year at University. It was a tradition for the choir director to sing O Holy Night as a solo, and she could hit the beautiful high notes. The sound of the quiet and the beautiful music floating around was holy.

*O holy night, the stars are brightly shining,
It is the night of the dear Saviour's birth;
Long lay the world in sin and error pining,
'Till he appeared and the soul felt its worth.
A thrill of hope the weary world rejoices,
For yonder breaks a new and glorious morn;*

*Fall on your knees, Oh hear the angel voices!
O night divine! O night when Christ was born.
O night, O holy night, O night divine.*



At the end of the service, we stood in a circle around the outside of the pews, and we passed the light from a candle around from person to person, singing Silent Night. It was a beautiful way to celebrate the birth of the Saviour with my church family on Christmas Eve, and certainly memorable.

Amy Bender

A poem/hymn written by a 12 year old child about 35 years ago. At the time the child was attending Sunday School at another church. It was a prize winner in a competition to find a new hymn. It was featured on a Sunday morning on Northsound. *Elizabeth Paterson*

A Star Shone Bright

A star shone bright

A message to send

To those wise men

In their kingdom, attend!

Go forth to a town

A Prince you must see

Being born to the world

E - - ter - - nity.

So off they set

By day and by night

The star they followed

Guided by the light.

The Babe was small

Quiet He lay

In the old stable

Amongst the hay.

The gifts they gave

The thought in mind

Whether to return

Or to the Babe be kind.

They left to release

The Word of it all

Jesus is King!

King for us all!

Jesus is King

Jesus is King

Jesus is King

The letter below was from InSpire December 2007, which was Rev. Keith Blackwood's first Christmas with Mannofield Church

Dear Friends,

Approaching my eleventh Christmas as a Parish Minister I can say with absolute certainty that I have enjoyed every one of them. To share in the joy of the Christmas services and contribute in some way to the uplifting message of the season is a great privilege and I look forward with real anticipation to celebrating with you in my first year as your friend and minister.

Christmas of course is preceded by the equally significant season of Advent. There are many words we use to describe Advent; words like 'preparation' and 'waiting' come to mind. This year I would like to think of Advent as a 'journey'.

The sense of being part of a journey is surely very apt. Advent is a season of motion – a season of spiralling themes leading to a wonderful destination. The season invites us to travel a journey of faith and hope, with the light of the Advent Candles acting as a guide to our feet as we make our way towards the stable at Bethlehem.

When we meet up with the shepherds and wise men in that familiar setting, prepare to be amazed for though the stories along with hymns are familiar, except to be touched by something for the very first time – for God's love born in us never fails to surprise.

Over the coming weeks let us journey together by the light of God's love. Let us be an encouragement to each other and as we arrive at our destination let us revel in the wonder of it all!

Best wishes

Keith



This poem comes from 'I want to be Joseph' by Roger Hurn 2011

I want to be Joseph in our nativity play

And I believe I've an excellent chance
Angel Gabriel was never an option for me
'cos for him you've to know how to dance

I did think I might be a shepherd
But mum says I'm allergic to sheep
And I don't fancy being King Herod
Because you see he's a bit of a creep

Me and Jim auditioned as soldiers
But Jim giggled and tripped over my feet
So our teacher said no which was a bit of a blow
As the helmets were really quite neat

Perhaps I could be one of the wise men
Though I didn't do well with my SATS
And they don't appear 'till right at the end
So I don't think I'll bother with that

Of course, there's always the donkey
And he's in nearly all of the play
But the costume is scratchy and tattered
And smells worse than a cat's litter tray

I asked Miss if I could be Mary
Because that's the best part to be had
But she said that even in this day and age
Mary's not a role for a lad

So you see that only leaves Joseph
And I'm not being funny or weird
But I know that I'm the best one for the job
Because I look really good with a beard

This letter was from December 1986, minister John F Anderson
Silver Jubilee Edition

My dear friends,

Our corner of the country has been much in the news recently. Shock and incredulity were experienced by many who heard and read of the helicopter disaster. So many of menfolk spend their working days offshore and we rarely consider how vulnerable they are. It takes a tragedy of this nature to bring home to us the debt we owe to all who are involved on the North Sea rigs, and our sympathy and prayers are with the many families in our own community and elsewhere who have been touched by this calamity.

The other items which has been in people's minds as I write this, is the rooftop protest at Peterhead Prison. Once again we are conscious of the fact that while TV cameras can bring items of news such as this into our homes, we cannot even begin to imagine the horror and the trauma of those who are closely involved in such incidents. Again it highlights the constant danger not only to prison staff, but also to the police force and all who attempt to maintain law and order.

Why is it that tragedies and disasters always seem to take place before Christmas?

As the world prepares to celebrate the coming of the Christ Child, as we once more embark on our annual spree of parties and festivities, we are very conscious that there are sad hearts and sad homes. Yet it was into such a sad world, a world of unrest and violence a world in which there were many disturbances, that the Christ Child once came. As we sing our carols which speak of peace on earth, may all of us find not only peace in our hearts and peace in our homes, but also may we discover a glimmering of peace in our society, for we are weary of confrontations, disputes and the unrest and tension which denies a Christ-like peace.

Your friend and minister,
John F Anderson

*This Advent prayer was published in the InSpire December 1987 edition.
It is short, succinct, but very memorable.*

Thoughts for December

“O promise Christ
we are a world of war.
Our peace depends on Thy coming.
We are a sinful people,
Our pardon depends on Thy coming.
We are full of good intentions,
But bad at keeping promises.
Lord Jesus, Son of the Father
Our world is waiting,
Waiting for Thy peace,
Waiting for Thy pardon,
Waiting for Thy coming.
Through the long days of dark December
When winter winds are wearily sighing
And winter lights burn low,
Help us to be mindful of Thy gracious promise
‘I shall come unto you’.”

AMEN.

‘The song of the shepherds’ by Richard Bauckham

We were familiar with the night.
We knew its favourite colours,
its sullen silence
and its small, disturbing sounds,
its unprovoked rages,
its savage dreams.



We slept by turns,
attentive to the flock.
We said little.

Night after night, there was little to say.
But sometimes one of us,
skilled in that way,
would pipe a tune of how things were for us.

They say that once, almost before time,
the stars with shining voices
serenaded
the new born world.
The night could not contain their boundless praise.

We thought that just a poem —
until the night
a song of solar glory,
unutterable, unearthly,
eclipsed the luminaries of the night,
as though the world were exorcised of dark
and, coming to itself, began again.

Later we returned to the flock.
The night was ominously black.
The stars were silent as the sheep.
Nights pass, year on year.
We clutch our meagre cloaks against the cold.
Our aging piper's fumbling fingers play,
night after night,
an earthly echo of the song that banished dark.
It has stayed with us.



Thanks to Nadine Fafard (See Luke 2:1-16)

12-24-2001

**THAT'S THE BEST ONE-STAR HOTEL THAT
I'VE EVER SEEN**

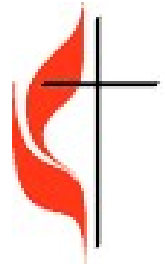
Prayer

When the day ahead seems full of uncertainty,
be the firm ground on which I can step, O God,
and the path to guide my feet.

Help me to put my trust in You
to guide,
and guard,
and grant me safe passage
as I walk through the waters of life.

When feet stumble
help me to regain my balance,
When legs are weary
help me to complete the journey,
And at the end of the day
let me rest in the knowledge
that You have been my travelling companion.
Amen.

Acknowledgement: This extract is taken from "Living Stones: Pray Now 2015" and is used with permission. "Living Stones" publications are available from www.standrewpress.com



Chocolate & ginger refrigerator squares

This is a quick and easy fridge cake — always useful at Christmas.

Ingredients

300g ginger nut biscuits, roughly crushed
300g plain chocolate
140g crystallised stem ginger

100g butter, diced
100g golden syrup

Method

Line a 20 x 30cm tin with baking parchment.

Mix the biscuits with most of the ginger then set aside.

Melt the chocolate, butter and golden syrup in a bowl set over a pan of simmering water, stirring occasionally, until smooth and glossy. Pour this over the biscuit and ginger mixture and mix together well.

Tip the mixture into the prepared tin' sprinkle over the reserved ginger and then flatten the top lightly — it doesn't need to be completely smooth. Chill for at least 2 hrs, or overnight, before cutting into small squares.

These will keep in an airtight box in the fridge for up to one week or in the freezer for a month.

Niki Anderson



Marzipan and apple scones

Ingredients

8 oz. self raising flour
2 oz. butter
1 oz caster sugar
1 medium sized eating apple - chopped
3 oz. marzipan — grated
1 beaten egg

METHOD

Rub butter into flour and add sugar
Add apple, marzipan and egg and mix to form a stiff dough
Knead for 3-4 minutes until smooth
Roll out to $\frac{3}{4}$ inch thickness on a

Cut out 10 rounds and place on a well greased tray

Bake at 200° for 15 minutes
Approximately

Serve, spread with butter and apricot jam

Recipe by *Frances Walker*

More Christian humour at Christmas

Cryptic Christmas Card

A man sent his friend a cryptic Christmas card.

It said: A B C D E F G H I J K M N O
P Q R S T U V W X Y Z. The recipient puzzled over it for weeks, finally gave up and wrote asking for an explanation. In July he received the explanation on a postcard: "No L."

Mannofield Church Christmas Card Covers 2008/2016

