

Mission Statement

"Our purpose is to honour and enjoy God, proclaim Jesus Christ as Saviour and Lord, serve our community in Jesus' name, strengthen one another in our spiritual life, and influence our world through prayer, witness, truth and grace."

"Eadhon, gu robh Dia ann an Crìosd, a' dèanamh an t-saoghail rèidh ris fhèin..." (2 Corintianach 5.19)...

"that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ" is the true meaning of Christmas. Stop and think about that! The Creator of the universe fulfilling the age-old longing of a down-trodden yet proud race of people in such a way as to offer hope to all races.

People looking for a way out of the endless cycle of violence and retribution and the insatiable hunger for meaning, purpose, belonging, integrity can now see the route ahead, through the one who grew up to offer himself as "the way, the truth and the life". In the mouth of anyone else that would sound like arrogant rubbish but Jesus proved over and over again that he was willing to walk his talk, so that it was no idle boast. During his life he demonstrated his glory through teaching and miracles, in his death he proved his love and his courage and in his rising he opened the gates of heaven. All this strikes me as infinitely more worthy of our excitement than those gifts around the tree or the food on our festive tables - delectable as I am sure it will be!

I hope and pray that no one will be involuntarily on their own this Christmas. But to help make sure that no one feels that the church has forgotten them - since social distancing rules have restricted gathering in church and pastoral visiting - the elders have been distributing cards and booklets to all members and adherents. The idea is two-fold: reassurance and to encourage us all to share the good news of the real reason for Christmas, by sharing our card and booklet with a non-believing family member, work colleague or neighbour. Please pray about that, decide who you think would be receptive to such a gesture (or really needs it) and then just do it. You'll be surprised!

As I look around and forward, there are so many reasons to be nervous, even horrified about the future. But for the reasons already stated we need not be. Indeed we are a people of hope, with a mandate to share that hope with those who do not yet realise they have it. But let's be careful. "Bible-bashing" is worse than useless if it puts people off. Taking the time to listen, hidden gestures of kindness, putting ourselves out to serve: all these are just as faithful expressions of the gospel (and usually more effective) than preaching. Indeed didn't Jesus say that doing these things to the least - that is those who are most ignored by society - is tantamount to blessing the Lord himself?

Sometime during the year ahead, we expect the world to re-open. But things will never be the same. The virus is here to stay and we shall have to continue to be careful. We shall have left the European Union but will we be facing another referendum which could land us back inside? Time will tell. In the meantime there will be plenty of changes happening in the church to keep us on our toes.

(continued on page 2)



(Minister's message continued)

Without rehearsing all the shenanigans at Presbytery and General Assembly levels, the urgent priorities facing us in Strath & Sleat include: rebuilding the Broadford and Elgol Sunday Schools, reconnecting with young adults and their families throughout the parish, transforming our four church buildings so they are "well equipped spaces in the right places", demonstrating what being stewards of God's creation looks like and getting our finances in balance, so that we are raising enough to be generous to those in need and to cover our expenses.

To make sure you are ready for the challenges and opportunities ahead, please make sure you enjoy a thorough holiday, full of joy and peace...

Rory



WHAT'S ON

CHRISTMAS EVE:

7pm: **Carol Service** (on-line – zoom link in the notices)

11.15pm: **Watch-night service** (on-line – zoom link in the notices)

CHRISTMAS DAY:

11.30am: **Family service** (on-line – zoom link in the notices)

SUNDAY 27th DECEMBER:

11am: **Joining the Church of Scotland's moderator for a nationwide service** (on-line – zoom link in the notices)



WHOSE PARTY IS IT?

When I was youngster, not that long ago, every time I had a birthday party, I would get lots of "prezies" from my parents, uncles and aunts, and also all the children who came to the party. Every year at Christmas we all have parties to celebrate the birth of our Lord Jesus. Every year we get gifts, some of which we get excited about, and others that go on eBay shortly after boxing day. The irony is that even though Christmas is Jesus' birthday, we get the presents. It's all wrong: He should get the presents, it's His birthday.

But what to get someone who has everything? "He holds the whole world in His hands". He said "for every animal of the forest is mine" and "the cattle on a thousand hills are his" (Psa. 50:10), or to paraphrase it "the cars on a thousand highways are His". Cattle, cars He would probably put on eBay. What would really excite Him? David said "**For you will not delight in sacrifice, or I would give it; you will not be pleased with a burnt offering. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise.**" (Psa. 50)

The hymn writer in penning the carol "In the bleak mid-winter" captured the ideal gift –
"What can I give Him, poor as I am?

if I were a shepherd, I would bring a lamb;

if I were a wise man, I would do my part;

yet what I can I give Him – Give my heart"



Robert MacRae

CRAFT GALLERY



◀ Talitha's tea light
Jesus said, "**I am the light of the world.** (John ch8 v12)



Mia & Ivanna's
Angel Gabriel ▶



ANNUAL QUIZ in AID of HOPE & FAITH School

Our fundraising quiz had to take place by Zoom this year but this brought many advantages - for one we were able to have participants from all over the world so, as well as Kirsten's family joining from the central belt, we had Ishie in Uist, Jean's sister and brother-in-law in Johannesburg and Kevin's daughter joining from Berlin. A truly international event! Through the wonders of technology, teams didn't need to be from the same household and, on a couple of occasions we were put into small groups in separate 'rooms' so that we could have a chat.

Our grateful thanks go to Tony who managed all the technical side of things and to Jamie who, as usual, was an excellent quizmaster and presented us with some very challenging questions! Our winners this year were Peter and Jane McDermott who had teamed up with Janet MacDonald and her friend Rosemary.

We were also able to show a video message specially prepared by Rosemary Mumbi in which she told us of some of the challenges the school has faced this year and how the money sent by us had been vital in enabling them to keep the school and feeding programme operational. By the way - Rosemary has just celebrated her 79th birthday (or it could be her 80th, her mum was never sure of the year in which she had been born!!). Whatever, her vitality and vigorous faith would suggest a much younger figure!

And the best news of all is that we raised over £1000 from the donations participants made - money that we know will be put to very good use in blessing the children of Ngombe compound in Lusaka.

Moran Taing dhaibh uile.

Jean Gillies

BRIGHT HOPE FOR TOMORROW

This is the theme for this year's Church of Scotland advent calendar [Advent - The Church of Scotland](#), particularly relevant as we come to the end of a difficult, frustrating and perhaps, faith-testing year.

One way of reclaiming or nurturing our Christian hope is to "Get back to the heart of the Christmas message" as encouraged by ALTERNativity www.alternativity.org.uk "Just God, Simply Christmas". This website provides reflections, discussion points and prayer to help us to explore the hope of Christmas.

For some, Christmas has become a season of excess activity and consumption, but this year, the pandemic has cut across family and societal traditions. Perhaps we can pause and try a simpler Christmas, reflecting on the truly amazing event of that first Christmas: **God** was born among **us** as Jesus Christ, to proclaim a new way of freedom and justice for *all* peoples.

So why do so many people in the world suffer oppression and injustice? The short answer is that God's will is not being done on Earth. Can we/ should we do anything about it? We can't fix everything in our own strength, but with God's guidance we can make some inroads. For example, consider climate and ecological justice. How does that fit with the Christmas message?

Earlier this month, the United Nations Secretary General, Antonio Guterres, exclaimed passionately, that the state of the planet is broken [UN Live United Nations Web TV - The State of the Planet](#). He believes that "humanity is waging war on nature". Ecosystems are disappearing and biodiversity is collapsing. Oceans are overfished, choked with plastic, and acidifying as they absorb carbon dioxide. Terrifying and destructive fires, floods and storms are happening around the world, as air and water are increasingly polluted.

We now have millions of climate refugees forced to leave home due to weather extremes, rising sea levels, and failing crops. New human, animal, and plant diseases arise due to ecosystem destruction, livestock expansion, careless use of toxic chemicals, all aggravated by climate alterations. The socially and economically deprived are worst hit by all of these problems, while children and young people will inherit the environment and social systems that we tolerate.

Our relatively affluent lifestyles contribute to these issues, so we can rectify some injustices and can become more informed to support appropriate community projects and government policies, while standing up to challenge plans that do not contribute to bright hope for tomorrow – for all.

If we consume and waste less, it reduces pressure on resources such as food and energy (and single-use plastics) leaving more to go round and less demand for carbon-greedy products. This in turn reduces our contribution to climate change and environmental destruction with their impacts on those who don't have the luxury of choice. Perhaps we will also have a greater appreciation for what we do have.

Have fun working out how you can simplify your Christmas celebration. How about second-hand gifts or making your own? Old-fashioned string or (reusable) ribbon and brown paper (even newspaper or magazine pages) as wrapping. Plan use of food and drink to reduce waste. What innovative ways can you dream up to use left-overs? Wrap up well and go for a walk or plant a fruit tree rather than going for an unnecessary drive in the car. Give gifts of time to lonely neighbours. Share your ideas in the next newsletter!

"COVID and climate have brought us to a threshold. We cannot go back to the old normal of inequality, injustice and heedless dominion over the Earth" (Guterres). That's a secular statement. So, can we live up to the stewardship required of us, and help to bring the good news of joy and peace on earth for all people? Glory to God in the highest! Happy Christmas.

Anne MacLennan

A TYPICAL CHRISTMAS and a CONSPIRACY THEORY

Reading: Matt. 2:1-12,16-18 and Luke 2:8-20

1 INTRODUCTION

This year we may not be able to enjoy the Festive season as we would like, given the Coronavirus restrictions. We will probably not be celebrating a TYPICAL CHRISTMAS. But what is a TYPICAL CHRISTMAS?

2 THE REAL CHRISTMAS

The general perception of the Christmas season is one of celebrating the arrival of our Saviour, and of family gatherings, exchanging gifts, holidays from work, and eating and drinking everything in sight, aided, of course by a jar of Hellman's.

But what is the reality.

It is not too difficult to guess what Christmas is normally like for perhaps the majority, at least the majority in this country.

1. There is an **over indulgence** in food and drink, with the resultant hangovers.
2. There would have been **office parties**, when under the influence people will have said and done things they later deeply regret. Like cutting the boss's tie in two. (Not the smartest move of my career.)
3. Still on office parties, there were no doubt **indiscretions, casual relationships** that will lead to marriage breakups
4. The instances of **drink and drug driving** offences will have rocketed during this season. Quite a few losing their license, and tragically some may well have lost their lives.
5. There will also be many who have **run up huge debts** that can take till next Christmas to pay off.

But, **looking on the bright side**, the whole nation, everyone, would of course have been reflecting on the reason for the celebrations. They will have been contemplating the coming of the Holy One and his eventual sacrifice to redeem us. Aye right!!! The vast majority would not have given it a single thought.

To summarise, there will be an **AFTERMATH** of hangovers, debts, regrets, and some tragic incidents as a result of the Christmas celebrations. It is the same every year and was the same at the first Christmas, to which we now turn.

3 THE ORIGINAL CHRISTMAS

We have the babe, the Christ child, born in a stable in Bethlehem. Imagine yourself as the prince of darkness, the satanic being who led our first forebears to disobey God, and aware of the birth of this Child, would you not plan to get rid of him?

You need to find someone ruthless enough to slay a child and powerful enough to be able to command it to be done.

Cue King Herod. He kind of fits the bill. But how do you play it that so that Herod is suitably activated, motivated. The answer is for some unsuspecting strangers to arrive in Jerusalem enquiring "**where is he who is born King of the Jews?**" Nothing would stir up Herod more than the threat of a dynasty in opposition to his own.

4 THE MAGI

Enter the MAGI. Some would claim that we cannot know much about the Magi; that we don't know who they were and where they came from other than they came "**from the East**" as we are informed in Matt. 2. But what I love about Scripture is that in many cases it has a way of interpreting itself. So also, in the case of the Magi we have some clues in the Old testament. In Isaiah 47:13 we read of a sarcastic lament for the Babylonians by Isaiah crying out to them "**All the counsel you have received has only worn you out! Let your astrologers come forward, those stargazers who make predictions month by month, let them save you from what is coming upon you. Surely, they are like stubble; the fire will burn them up. They cannot even save themselves from the power of the flame.**" In this passage, the Holy Spirit is pouring scorn on these magicians.

We also read in 4 chapters of Daniel of the presence of astrologers and in one of these, chap.4:4-7, Nebuchadnezzar, having had a dream then says **“So, I commanded that all the wise men of Babylon be brought before me to interpret the dream for me. When the magicians, enchanters, astrologers and diviners came, I told them the dream, but they could not interpret it for me.”** These astrologers, etc. (so called wise man). are held in contempt repeatedly throughout the book of Daniel.

Astrology is the study of the movements and relative positions of celestial objects as a means of divining information about human affairs and terrestrial events. (Wikipedia)

Divination is forbidden in Scripture. **“For rebellion is like the sin of divination”** 1 Sam. 15:23 And again **“Do not practice divination or seek omens.”** Lev. 19:26.

Divination, leaves you open to dangerous forces, a bit like spiritualism.

So, we see that astrologers and stargazers were active in Babylon and Assyria, east of Israel, and of course, albeit 500 -600 years later, it was **“from the east”** that the Magi of Matt 2 came. And it would be highly likely as you would expect that they interpret or divine from the position of the stars that a king is to be or has been born.

So, this **conspiracy** by the enemy of our souls, nearly worked, but for God's intervention; revealing first to the “Magi” that they should not go back to Herod, and then to Joseph that he should take his family to Egypt. Note- the revelation from God to both Magi and Joseph in dreams was clear and precise.

A Question for you. Were the “Magi” victims, albeit innocent victims of a conspiracy to destroy the Christ at His birth?

As to the result of this conspiracy, or the **AFTERMATH** of the Magi's visit, I would refer you to the slaughter by Herod's command of **“all the boys in Bethlehem and its vicinity who were two years old and under,”** Matt 2:16

The Magi were gentiles. Probably not familiar with the Jewish scriptures, the Torah. But by whatever means they came, whether by satanic influence or questionable divination, they did arrive at Bethlehem, saw the infant Christ, they worshipped him, and presented their gifts. **God was very gracious to them.** It is like they arrived at the party without a valid invitation: certainly, without the same invitation that the Shepherds had; those other celebrants at the event. Recall our reading in Luke 2 – to the Shepherds **“An angel of the Lord appeared to them. And the glory of the Lord shone around them”** (verse 9). And not just one angel, but also **a great company of the heavenly host**; the whole praise band. The angel's message is precise, there is no ambiguity. **“Today in the city of David.....lying in a manger”** (verses 11,12): The exact time and place. “satnav” might lead you to Bethlehem but not to a **“Manger”**. This is more “angelnav”, much more precise. The Shepherds invite was vastly different from that of the men from the East.

But, **proper invitation or not**, God did not turn the Magi away from the celebrations. The bouncers at the door let them in. God allowed them to see the Christ just as he also allowed Simeon in the Temple.

May I remind you that we also are Gentiles (or most of us). If the Magi had no right to be at the party, neither do we.

But, you say, they were involved in divination, maybe also spiritualism. Forbidden practices. Yes, and like we have never disobeyed God or been involved in things forbidden in Scripture. For whom did this Christ child come? **“It was not to call the righteous but sinners to repentance.”**

I recall as a young man, I had an **epiphany**. I came to understand clearly that Jesus had paid the penalty for my sin and to secure for me eternal salvation. After a short period considering the implications and plucking up the courage, I knelt and asked God to forgive my sin and come into my heart.

And as God was gracious to the Magi, he allowed me also, not just to see his salvation in Jesus Christ, but to enter into it.

Robert MacRae



PEACE AND JOY

There was a sense of relief when we learned that our September 2020 holiday was being cancelled - relief that now at least we would have our airfares refunded and we would be less lightly to catch the dreaded virus that is sweeping our nation and the countries of the world. Admittedly there was a slight sense of disappointment, for now we could no longer meet with our friends in Germany and accompany them to Assisi where they longed to share their past experiences with us and the comfort of residing in a monastery, albeit one with a 10pm curfew! At our age this mattered little – we would happily relax unitedly with them for the rest of the evening on the rooftop garden – a place to unwind after all day sightseeing – Alas, it was not to be.

Nonetheless the garden awakened memories within me of another garden. Not at a monastery but at a hotel in Jerusalem where I stayed during one of my visits there. My hotel with its beautifully terraced rooftop garden was situated just outside Damascus Gate, a main entrance to the Old City and near to the Garden Tomb.

From my room I viewed the Gate and the floodlit Old City Walls bringing to mind the joy expressed by King David in Psalm 122. - 'I was glad when they said to me, 'Let's go to the House of the Lord – our feet are standing within your gates, O Jerusalem'.

Being in close proximity to the Garden Tomb allowed me to visit at my leisure. Although there are other sites believed to be the place of Christ's death and resurrection, one being within the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, I felt there was a strong possibility that the Garden Tomb itself could very well be the place of Jesus' burial. Nearby is Skull Rock, a rocky hillside resembling a human skull, referred to in the gospels as 'Golgotha', the place of Crucifixion. The simplicity and beauty and the peaceful atmosphere of the Garden Tomb created an even deeper passion within me to share the love of Jesus.

This week I am reminded of the sweet simplicity of the Christmas story – Jesus was not born in a palace but in a stable to humble parents. May His story bring you Peace and Joy and the assurance of the merciful love of God as we celebrate His birth together. Mary Sikorski



CHURCH LIFE

Funerals

Anne Rawlings – 10th December 2020 at Broadford

John Gillies – 17th December 2020 at Inverness

Flora Struthers - 19th December 2020 at Ashaig

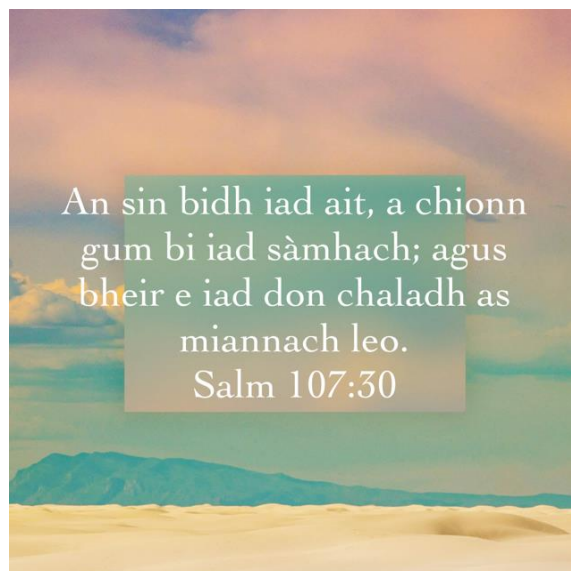
SÀR GHÀIDHEAL

Bha an coithional duilich nuair a chuala iad gun do chaochail Dòmhnall Iain MacIlinnein MBE no Dòmhnall Iain a' Vet, mar a b' fheàrr a b' aithne dhuinn e. Chaochail e na dhachaigh sa Choire air an 11mh den t-Samhain 2020, far an robh e a' fuireach airson iomadh bliadhna. Bidh iondrainn mhòr air, san eaglais gu sònraichte, am measg teaghlach na Gàidhlig.

B' e duine uasal - sàr Ghàidheal a bh' ann, nach sgìthicht' a bhith na chuideachd. Lighiche sprèidh air leth, a choisinn mòr chliù am measg a cho-obraichean. Chuir e seachad còrr is dà fhichead bliadhna na lighiche sprèidh ann an sgìre an t-Stràtha, Shlèite, Loch Aillse agus an Glinn Eilg.

Chuir e na bliadhnachan mu dheireadh seachad ri croitearachd shuas gu àm a bhàis. Dh'aindeoin nam bliadhnachan a chuir e seachad san Eilean Sgitheanach, bha a chridhe fhathast sna Hearadh, eilean àrach, far a bheil e a-nis na laighe ri taobh a bhean, Mòrag, an uaigh 's an cladh sàmhach bòidheach Losgaintire.

Tha ar n-ùrnaighean le chuid theaghlach aig an àm dhuilich seo. Bidh sinn ga ionndrainn.



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Isle of Skye
IV44 8RG

Kyleakin
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Isle of Skye
IV41 8PH

N.B. Regular meetings and services are on zoom or postponed until further notice.

If you are self-isolating, let any of us know how we can help:

Picking up shopping

Posting mail

A friendly phone call

Urgent supplies

Just call or text me and I'll do my best to help you (for free!)

Coronavirus is contagious. Please take every precaution to ensure you are spreading only kindness. Avoid physical contact (2m distance). Wash your hands regularly. Items should be left on your doorstep.

#ViralKindness

CHURCH SESSION

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