

Life at St. Paul's Milngavie December



Dear Friends,

Lockdown was a time when people were 'bingeing' on various mini-series that were available online. We were drawn into a few but in the main, thought that they went on too long and often we quite literally lost the plot. Mind you some folk have had the same experience listening to my preaching. Glass houses... stones...

It can be the same with novels. I was listening recently to crime writer Denise Mina who was making a plea for shorter novels. Her latest is only 73 pages. She made the point that significant literature was produced during World War 2 when paper was rationed and therefore novels had to be on the short side. Certainly writers like Graham Greene and George Orwell did not seem to be disadvantaged.

When we come to the story of Jesus' birth we can only draw from two Gospels. Together they would not cover a page of A4 paper. And yet the significance of this story goes deeper than any that have been told. The apostle John brings it all together in a few words: 'The Word became flesh . . .' The Son of God who lived from all eternity was born as a human being. But John doesn't stop there: '... and made His dwelling among us.' (John 1: 14).

The implications of this have been worked out for 2,000 years in theological reflection and preaching. The depth of the story, short as it is, is unfathomable. It cannot be tied down to one month in the year. That's why we have the traditional Christmas hymns written in the 18th and 19th centuries. Each was meant to be a contribution towards the Church's constant reflection on the reality of God coming to us in a human personality. Something that cannot be restricted to 'carolling in frosty air.' Jesus' birth is the sign that God is on our side, that He wishes to draw humankind and creation to Himself, that He has made this possible through the sacrifice of Jesus, that His ultimate purpose is to raise a renewed humanity in a New Creation.

It won't take you long to read the stories of Jesus' birth. Much less time than the average mini-series or novel. Make it your priority to read and reflect upon them throughout the Advent season. Pray that the Holy Spirit will speak to you through them and lead you to a great appreciation of what God has done through Jesus.

Praying that you and yours know the blessings of the Season,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Fergus'.



**Christmas and Advent
Worship at St. Paul's
2021**



Saturday 4th Dec	9.30am	Advent Service
Sunday 5th Dec	10.30am	Morning Worship
	7.00pm	Evening Worship
	<i>Joint Service in Allander Evangelical Church</i>	
Saturday 11th Dec	9.30am	Advent Service
Sunday 12th Dec	10.30am	Morning Worship
	7.00pm	Evening Worship
	<i>Joint Service in St. Luke's Parish Church</i>	
Saturday 18th Dec	9.30am	Advent Service
Sunday 19th Dec	10.30am	Family Gift Service
	7.00pm	Readings and Music
Friday 24th Dec	7.00pm	Christmas Eve Family Service
Saturday 25th Dec	11.00am	Christmas Morning Family Worship
Sunday 26th Dec	10.30am	Morning Worship

**Please note that there will be no Watchnight Service at 11.30pm on
Christmas Eve**

Unless exempt, face coverings are required at all services.

**As always all are welcome to join us at any or all of
the services**

Church of Scotland World Mission Stamp Appeal

As Christmas draws near please remember to collect the stamps from cards and parcels you receive. There is a collection box in the Strathblane Road porch along with details of the charity that is being supported by the World Mission. The collection box is there all year round so please remember this is not just at Christmas.

Irene Strang

NOTICE TO ORGANISATIONS.

The Annual Examination of Organisation Accounts will take place in The Centenary Room on Wednesday 12th January 2022.

Letters will be sent to the Organisation with details of requirements for the inspection.

Should you have any questions please do not hesitate to contact me at:-
treasurer@stpaulsmilngavie.org.uk

Barbara Lawson

Family Gift Service – Sunday 19th December

The congregation are invited to bring suitably wrapped gifts on either Sunday 12th or 19th December. The gifts should indicate whether appropriate for a boy or girl and the age range.

The donation boxes will also be available for monetary contributions at these services as well as the Christmas Eve and Christmas Day services. Should you wish your donation to go specifically to one of the charities please indicate the charity on the outside of an envelope.

The gifts will be distributed between:-
Glasgow City Mission Child & Family Centre in Linthouse
The Preshal Trust in Govan and
The Salvation Army in Clydebank

Lunch Club

The Lunch Club will be open on 8th December for some Christmas fare but then closes until 12th January when we will be open as usual. You are always welcome to enjoy a lunch of home made soup, selection of rolls and home baking.

Unfortunately due to the rise in food costs we are having to increase the charge to £4.00 but it is still very good value and the companionship and friendliness are much appreciated.

Due to the generosity of many people we are able to make donations to St.Paul's, and some local and national charities. Thanks to all our guests and the many helpers who assist every week.

Do join us and enjoy lunch or come along and help.

Thank You

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to the congregation of St. Paul's for the support you have given me throughout my recent health problems. A special thanks to the prayer group whose continued support has brought me much comfort. My thanks to you all.

Sincerely,
Anne Murray

Thank you

Marjory, Marjory-Anne and Fiona would like to thank everyone at St. Paul's for the prayers, kind messages, cards and flowers received following the recent death of Angus. It was very much appreciated.

Marjory Kennedy

Christmas Zoom Quiz

We are having a Christmas Quiz on Zoom at 19:30 on Friday 10th December. We would love you to join us. We have had several online quizzes since the start of the Covid restrictions. There is always a charity which benefits from our quizzes and this one is no exception. Donations will be welcome for the Lodging House Mission.

These nights are always fun and you will be in a team so no need to panic about what you think you know, or don't know, about Christmas.

If you would like to take part and you don't already receive emails about quizzes/zoom meetings, please email Janice Maclean on:

Janice.maclean2@outlook.com

and we can include you in the invitation link.

St Pauls Society Cards- Christmas

We are hoping to send another cheque to Dumbrock House, before or around Christmas. With that in mind, I am asking you to consider purchasing some of our cards.

There will now be Christmas Cards, with a Christian Scripture on the front and I am selling three for £2. Now I know that Christmas cards are cheaper elsewhere but just think of the good cause that we are supporting. Some elders have already ordered them for their district.

Cards should be visible on the shelf outside the office and can be ordered from me on 0141 384 0274

Alex McEwan

Guild news

Our meetings in November have been very varied, taking us from the Himalaya mountains to the Forth and Clyde canal and to several other countries in between. We continue to be encouraged by the numbers of ladies attending.

Initially we heard from Linda and Des Nicholl about their visit to Nepal where they visited Kathmandu before setting out on a trek to Everest base camp; their talk was illustrated by some wonderful photography of stunning scenes. At our next meeting Ida Rennie from Bearsden showed us some of the wide variety of crafts she has been doing for years, and also the recycling she has been doing long before it was so common as it is today.

At our next meeting Bethan Spencer told us about the work of one of the two Guild projects we are supporting this year, 'Home for Good', which aims to find a home for every child in the country; we were very impressed by the passion and commitment of our speaker as she described the work.

We were delighted to accept the invitation of the Men's Association to hear Lynsey Brennan speak about 'Dundonald in the Pandemic', and we were all blown away by the extent of the church's outreach to the community and the wonderful teamwork within the congregation.

Stuart McAra has worked for the Leprosy Mission for eighteen years and described some of the changes he has seen in that time. Most of us had scant knowledge about the disease and were encouraged to hear how it can be cured; interesting comparisons were drawn between leprosy and covid as both are spread by droplets. Stuart told us about sufferers in India, Nigeria and Nepal, and how they had been helped.

At the time of writing our final meeting for the month is still to come, but promises to be another contrast as we hear about 'Life on a Canal Boat' from Patricia Rundell whose boat is moored on the canal in Bishopbriggs.

On December 6th we hold our Finance Meeting which will be followed by a mystery event. We also plan to have an afternoon with Christmas Carols, Cake and Quiz on December 10th. We have been asked to host the Dunbartonshire Guilds Together Carol Service on Monday December 13th at 7.30 p.m.. We look forward to this event as a fitting climax to our first series of meetings after such a long gap: it is very good to be back together again!



Dear Friends

I have recently finished writing a series of weekly devotions in Japanese for my church here, on the book of Jonah. It is a story we all know well, and at 4 chapters, is a short book but there is so much that we can learn from it.

One of the things that struck me was, right at the end of the book, when God asks Jonah, “And should I not have concern for the great city of Nineveh...?” We know that Jonah did not care for the people of Nineveh. He didn’t want to go there in the first place, instead fleeing in the opposite direction to Tarshish in the west. And when he did go later and preach God’s message, he was angry that God relented from destroying the city when the people turned from their evil ways,.

When Jonah disobeyed God, he was happy to receive God’s mercy in the shape of a large fish to rescue him from the depths of the sea. However, when the Ninevites turned from evil, Jonah did not think that God should show that same mercy to the people of Nineveh.

But God loved Jonah too much to leave him in his mistaken thinking. Instead, God teaches Jonah why He cares for the people of Nineveh. He points out that Jonah cared about a plant, even though he didn’t tend it or make it grow. How much more should God care about the people of Nineveh whom He created.? God showed Jonah that he didn’t care about the same things as God did. I think God asks us the same question, “Do we care about the same things that God cares about?” I know this question is a challenge to me. Do I really care about all the people who live round about who don’t know God or His love for them?

As we enter this Christmas season, we remember that Jesus gave up everything to come to this world as a baby, because God “so loved the world” (John 3:16). In Japan, as in Scotland, many people are more open to hear about Jesus at Christmas than at other times of year, and perhaps even come to a church service. May we be people who care about people in the same way as God cares about them, and seek to share His amazing love with them.

Thank you as always for your prayers and support this year. Wishing you all a very Happy Christmas.

Lorna, Calum and Alistair

Flower Donations - November

Thank you for the Flower Donations given in Memory for the Month of November.



Mrs A Murray, Mrs E Easton

Please mark any donations for The Flower Fund addressed to Treasurer, Mrs Barbara Lawson.

Donations can be left in the Flower Guild pigeon hole at the back of the Church, or in the offering plate.

First printed in the December edition of *Life and Work* in answer to The Big Question "*Will you appreciate Christmas more this year?*" *Fergus and Lynsey replied:-*

Christmas 2020 saw me shielding as a consequence of a stem-cell transplant undergone earlier in the year. Everyone was having to endure restrictions but folk like me were to be extra careful. So no big family gathering on Christmas Day. Only our youngest was with us in the garage for Christmas dinner. Suitably decorated and candle-lit. But freezing and therefore brief.

At this point in time we can look forward to a different Christmas with 'live' worship and the family once again together. There is always a joy in regaining something you had lost. The thing to remember though is that no matter how dismal last Christmas might have been for many of us, we never lost God. Think of the circumstances nationally and personally in which Jesus was born. His parents were under compulsion to leave their homes to register in a census. His birth was in conditions undesirable by any standards. His early years were spent as a refugee in a foreign land. The birth stories of Jesus have their dark side. And yet through all of this God was working for the good of us all.

Isaiah's vision of 'Immanuel', God is with us, was realised in Jesus. In the 'downs' as well as the 'ups', in dark as well as light, in sickness as well as health, He is with us. That Jesus is the ultimate assurance of this is the message that makes all Christmases meaningful. And maybe it's in the most challenging times we appreciate it most.

The Rev Fergus Buchanan

Straight away my answer is “No”. Last year with the restrictions in place it created for us opportunities to share the Christmas story and the wonderful “Good News” of the birth and gift of Jesus Christ in new and inspiring ways. We used the railings outside the church and lit up the word “JESUS” in light surrounded by a lit-up star. We also invited the children in the village to decorate stars for our “wall of star-filled joy” that contained messages of hope for people to read. The primary school also used the church railings to display artwork depicting the full nativity story with each class designing a different part of the story. This was a wonderful display and brought joy and light to the village.

We encouraged our local radio station to join in with “carols on the doorstep” and as a community we enjoyed singing carols safely from our doorsteps taking photos and videos to share on social media. I got the fun job of hosting the event live at the radio station! We also partnered with other community groups to provide every child in the local primary school with a “Bag of Christmas Sparkle” that contained Christmas goodies as well as sharing the nativity story. This was appreciated by the school, given Santa was unable to visit in person!

Personally, as I experienced a slightly slower pace of ministry last year, it helped me to reflect more on the amazing miracle of the first Christmas and by stopping to listen and be still before God and Jesus my Saviour, this gave me a greater sense of peace and joy.

The Rev Lynsey Brennan, minister, Dundonald Parish Church.

Drama Kirk is back with an online retelling of the Nativity from the perspective of the shepherds as they receive the news that will change their lives forever on the night of the first Christmas.

Featuring a cast of professional actors, 'Shepherds' Christmas Story' by Jeanette Walters, directed by Nicholas Elliott and produced by Liz Blackman, is an engaging take on the Christmas Story reflecting the joy of Jesus' birth.

Share the wonder of the Shepherds this Christmas as they go from tending their flock to being the very first visitors to the new-born King.

The Hamilton-based theatre group have also filmed four of Bob Hartman's Rhyming Bible poems which focus on the lead-up and the Nativity itself.

Both Christmas projects will be available free for schools, churches and community groups to use, and all the films can be accessed via the [Drama Kirk YouTube playlist](#) for streaming or can be downloaded on request or sent on DVD by contacting info@dramakirk.org

World Mission News

Prayer Request from Pakistan

Our partners at the Centre for Legal Aid, Assistance and Settlement (CLAAS) in Pakistan ask for our prayers as they help one of their clients. Zafar Bhatti was charged under the blasphemy law and is currently serving a life sentence, having previously been given the death penalty.

CLAAS has been attempting to appeal the sentence in the high court. However, the high court judge referred Zafar Bhatti's case to the lower court to revise the judgment for the second time. Zafar has been confined in Adiala jail, Rawalpindi, since 2012, where his health continues to deteriorate, as does that of his wife.

Our partners continue the fight for a ruling to be made by the High Court, convinced that if the appeal is heard impartially, his release would be certain. If the sentence were upheld there, the matter could be taken to the supreme court. However, Mr Bhatti's case remains in a state of uncertainty.

This is deeply distressing for both Mr Bhatti and his wife, and we are asked to pray for the situation and for the couple's health.

Thantlang village in Chin State, Myanmar, burned to the ground

Myanmar military have been accused of razing the village of Thantlang in Chin State, reportedly torching nearly 200 civilian buildings following the killing of a soldier by the Chinland Defence Force resistance group on 29th October. Our partners at the Presbyterian Church in Myanmar reported that the church and minister's house were burned down.

Save the Children said "dozens of buildings have been deliberately set ablaze", including the group's office. The Chin Human Rights Organisation said its office was also burned, and both groups said there were 20 children and some teachers still in an orphanage in the town at the time of the attack. The organisation called for "urgent action" including an emergency meeting of the United Nations Security Council.

Dr Sasa, an international spokesman for the National Unity Government, who is from Chin State, warned that without international intervention "the fires lit in Chin State by the murderous military regime will engulf the entire nation." He said "words will have zero effect" on the military junta and urged the international community to cut its access to "money, financial services, fuel, weapons and ammunition, and... legitimacy."

Fighting between the Civilian Defense Force and the military continued through the week in Chin State.

We ask that you continue to keep the people of Myanmar in your prayers.

Church of Scotland news

Lord Wallace, Moderator of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland, invites you to join in with this year's Advent calendar: Light in the Darkness.

Meaning 'coming' or 'arrival', Advent is a time of prayer and preparation for the coming of God's Son.

It is also a time when many look outwards to the needs of others, spreading joy with friends, families, local communities and further afield.

Lord Wallace said it has been another challenging year and people would be forgiven for being tempted to stay in bed and pull the duvet even more tightly over their heads.



"But as followers of Jesus, we know that there is a light, a light which shines in the darkness and a light that the darkness does not overcome," he added.

"And Jesus himself says 'I am the light of the world, whoever follows me will never walk in darkness.'"

We invite you to [sign up for a daily email or visit our online Advent Calendar for some daily inspiration](#).

Throughout the season, we'll bring you inspiring stories that highlight how church members around the country are celebrating the birth of Jesus and sharing their faith, hope and love with everyone in their communities.

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Copy Date

The copy date for the January issue is Wednesday **5th** January.

Please send any articles to st.paulslifemagazine@gmail.com

Sanctuary and Christmas Tree

Very grateful thanks are extended to all the volunteers who assisted in decorating the Sanctuary and who helped build and decorate the magnificent Christmas Tree which adorns the Church.

**MERRY CHRISTMAS
EVERYONE**

