



St. Matthew's Church Perth

e- Newsletter No. 32

Fri 18th December

Dear Friends

Christmas is cancelled!! That was a headline I came across a few weeks ago in a national newspaper and if we do have Christmas, it will be a very different one to those we have previously experienced– with the family gatherings, the office parties, the carols, nativities etc, the message being that it might not be as happy and joyful and meaningful as those previous Christmases.

And yes Christmas will be different this year. We are in a different place than we were last year. Covid 19 has had a profound impact on the lives of many individuals and families as the virus has disrupted our world. Each positive case, each life lost changes our world as each person is unique. Christmas will not be the same, but the birth of the baby in Bethlehem long ago who brought peace into the disruption of his day will bring peace into the disruption of ours.

The angels sang about that peace, and we still seek that peace within this Christmas season. May that peace be known to us and to our community as we prepare for Christmas, as we put up lights and decorate trees and send cards and give presents. We look forward to the greatest gift of all, of a baby born into our world whose life touches ours and who is at the heart of this season.

No matter how we celebrate Christmas this year, may we be mindful of those around us, especially those whose lives and the life of their family have been affected by Covid 19. No matter how disrupted our world is, may we continue to share the light of this season and remember the one who is at the heart of the story in whose birth the angels sang and the wise men travelled.

Wishing you all a very happy Christmas

Rev. Marc Bircham
Interim Moderator



A prayer for Christmas from Andrew,

Dear Lord Jesus
Merry Christmas once and
all and a happy New
Year. Jesus in this time
of Christmas time and
everyone is getting excited
still a few more sleeps
till then. I pray for the
other people who live on
the ground because they
can't celebrate it as much
as we do like now. They
may find this year very
hard but let's show
our support for them
for this time. I also
pray for absent friends
who does not celebrate
Christmas. Please Lord
show some support for
them. In this time and
in this hour please pray
for them and for our
friends, churches,
communities and nations.
In Jesus's name we
say now and praise
Thee. Amen.

COFFEE 'n CHAT and MEDITATIONS

These have continued weekly on a Monday and Wednesday since April.

Thanks to **Jean Young** and others who have committed to host them so frequently.

They will stop over the Christmas period and re-start on **Monday 11th January 2021** and **Wednesday 13th January**.

A few Seasonal Clippings From Nicola McNe



Isaiah 58:11

And I will always guide you and satisfy you with good things. I will keep you strong and well. You will be like a garden that has plenty of water, like a spring of water that never runs dry.

Caring for your Christmas Poinsettia

Poinsettias originate in Mexico and are a real favourite at Christmas time. The red flowers are actually bracts and the flowers are the tiny yellow flowers in the very centre of the plant. You can also get them with white bracts and shades of pink but I much prefer the red.

They have a bit of a reputation for being difficult but this is often due to the fact that they don't get kept in the right conditions in the shops. They hate draughts and being over or under watered.

When you are choosing your Poinsettia make sure the centre yellow flowers look tight and the leaves are not drooping. They are usually sold in a plastic sleeve, this protects them in transit but as soon as you get them home you should take the sleeve off.

Position them in a bright, sunny place. If they are on a windowsill, when you shut the curtains at night don't leave them there, move them in to the room as it will

get too cold for them on the windowsill. The ideal temperature is 15-20 degrees, well away from draughts.

The watering is where we all fall down! Make sure the plant dries out in between waterings. Depending on the temperature of your house you might need to water twice a week. Check them regularly, I find once a week is plenty in my house. Don't let them sit in water or they will wilt. Water them from below and empty out any excess water after about half an hour.

The coloured bracts can last for weeks and give a great display but don't worry about keeping the plants long term. It is very tricky to get them to colour up for next Christmas so my advice would be pop them on the compost heap when they start to lose vigour and replace them with a nice Orchid! Merry Christmas.

EARLY MORNING ADVENT WORSHIP IN ST MATTHEW'S

"A Play, a Pie and a Pint" was an award-winning initiative by theatre groups in Scotland to interest people in drama by offering lunchtime theatre with all three ingredients.

St Matthew's will have its own Advent version in the week before Christmas, "A Prayer, a Poem and a Pomegranate" - a series of four early morning services in the sanctuary (9am), each lasting about twenty minutes from December 21st – 24th.

It's a wonderful opportunity, in the run-up to Christmas, to explore some of the key themes of this Advent season; to prepare our hearts and minds for the birth of the Christ-Child.

Ewen Gilchrist, formerly minister at St. Matthew's - now retired but occasionally allowed out to play - will lead the services apart from Monday 21st which will be led by Maureen Pearson.

HELP WANTED!

Each week we need someone to help on the A/V desk on a Rota basis for the church service. Full training will be given.

Can anyone interested in helping on the A/V desk please contact

Alastair at alastair.byers1@btinternet.com

CHURCH WALKS

We are hoping to have 2 walks in January, depending on the weather!



The first walk on Saturday 2 January 2021 will be led by Lesley Williamson and the 2nd walk on Saturday 9th January will be led by Fiona Bruce.

Please contact Lesley on ljwbubbles@aol.com and Fiona on FMBruce6@googlemail.com for further details and to advise if you can make it.



CONGRATULATIONS to **Anita Kerr** who was appointed minister of the linked charge of Meadowside St Paul's and St Andrew's churches in Dundee on 27th November.

We send her our prayers and best wishes for the future.

CONGRATULATIONS to **Katy Wale** on the birth of baby Teddy James on 14th December. We send our best wishes and hope we can welcome him to St Matthew's in due course!



Birthday Congratulations to **John Spence** on 16 December

It is with sadness we note the death of two of our long-standing Members

Samuel Ellacott
and **Frances Dalton**

We send our prayers and thoughts to their families.



Sending a WAVE and a PRAYER to **Brian Chapman**, our former Treasurer.

MANSE UPDATE

I am pleased to report that we duly took possession of the keys to our new Manse at

12 Craigieknowes Avenue last Friday.

Thanks to **Mark Crichton** for organising insurance and inspecting the property.

Compassionate Christmas

I am pleased to report that we raised the sum of £271.83 for **Compassionate Christmas** at our retiral offering after Communion.

This will provide Christmas packages, including a Christmas meal, for 14 families in Perthshire in need.

Sunday and Christmas Services.

Sunday 20th December at 9.30am and 11am

Christmas Eve at 4pm and 7pm

Christmas Day at 10.30am

To reserve your place please use the following link to Eventbrite:

<https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/sunday-worship-tickets-127686837769> OR if you do not use the

internet Phone Beverly, our Facilities and Outreach Manager, on 01738 259961 and leave a message with your phone number.



A Christmas poem – by Lorna Gibson, Toots

Design, Cheshire.

If Christmas is hard,
If you've lost someone dear,
Just look in your heart,
And you'll know they're still here.

The star in the sky,
The light falling snow,
The robin outside,
It seems like they know

If this is a time
When you're struggling through,
Just do what you can,
For what matters to you.

There's no need to be merry,
There's no need to be bright,
Just do what you can,
It will be alright.

THE CHURCH OF SCOTLAND LISTENING PROJECT

The Church of Scotland Listening Project has got off to a flying start. Nearly a hundred people from all corners of the country have already shared their experiences of faith and church during the current pandemic. Now organisers are eager to hear from groups within the Church who are yet to participate, in particular people born 1920-45, 16 to 20-year-olds, people without internet access and those whose connection with a local congregation was infrequent before the Covid pandemic.

Anyone for whom [the online form](#) is difficult to access or use can call **07966 286617** and request one of the trained telephone facilitators to help them share their experiences and insights.

It would be good if some of our "older" members felt able to share their experiences during this pandemic.

Handel's Messiah

Handel's Messiah is being performed by Dunedin Consort at Perth Concert Hall "As Live" via VIMEO from 7pm on 23rd December 2020. Tickets can be booked via Perth Concert Hall website.

Christmas Eve Retiral Collection

You may recall that, a few editions ago, **Ann Attridge** wrote about a charity she supports called SAKHI

SAKHI's mission is to create quality learning spaces at the community level, so that every girl in the slums of Mumbai, India, will get an opportunity to continue her education with confidence. SAKHI means a female friend of girls who inspires, guides, and supports other girls for a good cause. The lack of education negatively affects slum girls. Their own mothers probably had to drop out of school and, as a result, could not get a good job and were forced into low-paying labour.

Since 2008, Aarti Naik, a slum-based young girl "Changemaker", has been building basic educational capacities for other slum girls through a community-based after-school programme.

Initially, these slum girls were struggling to read and write, their vocabulary level was poor, their confidence and motivation to learn was very low, and they were not able to participate actively in their school's daily class activities.

The availability of basic English textbooks and Klik2learn's donation of tablets and software has improved their vocabulary levels tremendously. They are now able to attend school and improve their learning further.

The hope is that every slum girl in Mumbai will be able to continue their studies with confidence and open up new possibilities for their future.

We thought it would be a good idea to support SAKHI through our Christmas Eve retiral collections and hope you will support this.

Fiona Bruce

The next edition of the Newsletter, No. 33 will be on **Friday 8th January 2021**. All contributions to FMBruce6@googlemail.com by Wednesday 6th January.

