



St. Matthew's Church Perth

e- Newsletter No. 33

Fri 8th January



Dear All

Wishing you a happy, healthy New Year from St Matthew's Church.

Recently I came across a poem "The Months" by Sara Coleridge which I'm sure we learnt by heart at school:

"January brings the snow,
Makes our feet and fingers glow...."

How true that has been this January. I cannot recall such a sustained period of cold – and icy pavements!

The name "January" is derived from the Roman God "Janus" who was the god of beginnings and transitions and who is often depicted with 2 bearded heads facing in opposite directions.

As Raymond Young said in his Wednesday Meditation, January is a curious month. It has a 2-way feel- both looking backwards at the past (and what a year 2020 was!) and looking forward to the future as we make tentative plans for this year.

Raymond read us an article from "The Herald" about a young lad and his grandfather and how the child taught the elderly man to live in the present and appreciate the "here and now". No doubt you will have seen the many articles on the "lessons learnt from lockdown" and that seems to be one which pervades- that we have time now to enjoy the winter walks, appreciate the sunsets and the chats with neighbours and church friends, and make more meaningful contact with people to whom we usually only send a Christmas card once a year!

Fiona Bruce, Session Clerk.



Prayer

Hovering Spirit,
because of You there was a beginning.
Heavenly Dove,
because of You there is a continuing.
Untameable Wind,
because of You there will be a completing.

Source, Saviour, Spring of life,
refreshing and replenishing God,
all that pours from You is good and wise and true.
Soak us with the delight of Your surprising nearness
and let us splash in puddles of joy.

Lord our God, faithful and kind,
You have always been our help.
With and without our asking,
with and without our recognition,
You are the wind in our sails,
the compass for our walking,
the firelight for our resting.
It is Your pleasure to help,
and for this we thank You.

You never neglect us.
Even when we blame or berate You;
even when we are too despairing to ask
or too weary to find words;
it is Your pleasure to help,
and for this we thank You.

So we seek Your help again.
Bring deep rest to those exhausted and spent.
Bring deep solace to those bearing loss upon loss.
Bring deep purpose to those plodding on in
unceremonious conscientiousness.
Bring deep release to those glad to see the back of
2020.
Bring deep wisdom to those leading and governing.
Bring to us all deep trust in what is possible in
partnership with You.
For it is Your pleasure to help
and for this we this we thank you, Gracious God
Amen

*Extract of Prayer written by Jo Love for Church of
Scotland Worship Resources.*

COFFEE AND CHAT on Zoom

On Mondays at 11am – 11.45am

Meeting ID: 930 1458 2081

Please Note: Meeting ID has changed.

MEDITATIONS on Zoom

On Wednesdays at 9am

Meeting ID: 977 1495 2443

Please Note: Meeting ID has changed.

SITCOMS QUIZ

Do you know your sitcoms? I'll ask

12 questions in total in the next 3

Newsletters and

then ask you to let me have your answers – and the phrase made by the first letter of each answer- at “the end”.



There will be a draw of correct answers – and a prize!

1. A Maplins Greeting
2. Dropping Aitches in France
3. Breakfast in Prison?
4. A quick look at the Stage Performance

CHRISTMAS SERVICES

As many of you will be aware, we were fortunate to be able to celebrate several Christmas services in December (with 2 services on Sunday 20th December and on Christmas Eve) for which our thanks must go to our Locums, Rev Barbara Quigley and Rev Anne Brennan.



Thanks to them also for their services throughout 2020 which have been conducted in difficult circumstances but with a cheerful willingness at all times. Speaking of “cheerfulness” we must also thank our Organist, Michael Ellacott, who has brightened up every service with his music- usually with a “twist “of some sort – and made our Reflections suitably reflective.

The Sanctuary looked beautiful throughout December thanks to Joyce and Malcolm Thom who put the Christmas tree up and took it down (no mean feat by the size of it!) and Alison Ford and Norma who donated the Christmas floral decorations and Advent wreath and decorated the windowsills and tables beautifully.

I would also like to take this opportunity to thank all our Duty Teams and A/V teams and Beadles and Tom for organising our “Track and Trace” system on Eventbrite.

Thanks also to Jean and Viv who made 100 Christmas bags to donate to the uniformed organisations- as you can see “Re-opening” the Church in this time of the pandemic has really been a team effort!

And now... sadly it is closed again due to the current Covid Regulations.

But we will re-open St Matthew's as soon as Regulations permit. Watch this space!

ADVENT MEDITATIONS

We were very glad that Rev Ewen Gilchrist was prepared to lead our Meditations this year– I'll let him explain his title:

"**A Prayer, A Poem and a Pomegranate**" - well, over the years I've discovered that I like to have a broad theme/catchy title on which I can hang a few ideas, to be explored in the context of worship. Any act of worship will almost inevitably include a **prayer**. I increasingly find **poetry** to be an invaluable element within worship - it sometimes surprises people, invites us to consider something in a different light, that kind of thing. And because I can be a sucker for alliteration I threw in **pomegranates** because (a) it sounds good and (b) Mary and Joseph would have had them as staples in their diet and (c) I like the fact that a peeled and pipped pomegranate - there I go again! - looks much bigger than when it is unpeeled. It's the Tardis of fruits!"

Thank you to Ewen for his thought-provoking Meditations- and to Maureen too for stepping in when required.

This is the Advent Prayer which **Ewen** used:

ADVENT WORSHIP PRAYER

Lord Jesus, this is our season of travelling; migration even.

From village to city to village; from borderlands to highlands;

from country to continent.

We travel at this time of year this Season of Travelling, this Season of Advent to be with those we love.

Mary and Joseph travelled stoically, to fulfil the demands of Roman bureaucracy.

The Shepherds travelled unprofessionally, and with scarce-disguised disbelief as to an outhouse.

The Wise Men blundered into Herod's web, sincere and clumsy in their search for truth.

But our travelling, Lord, in this Advent season, this COVID season,

is challenged and changed by fear for ourselves and fear for those we love....

whatever we do, Lord, it seems that risk is inevitable.

As it was when you, Lord, left the glories of heaven for the poverty of a stable; you left the worship of angels for the bewilderment of shepherds;

the stumbling of Magi

and the indifference of folk...a lot like us.

Yours was the Journey of Incarnation.

And so this morning we ask for your blessing and guidance

upon our journeys in this Advent season.

And no less we ask your blessing

even when our journeys do not leave our front door.

For we would wish our home to be your home; a stable of a kind.

And with a whispering, troubling sense of guilt and reproach

we also think of those whose journeys are filled with terror and uncertainty -

those who refuse to live with poverty,

who dare to dream of security;

who escape persecution and pray for acceptance;

who flee the carnage of war and plead for shelter.

Refugees, Lord,

as you were, as your parents were, when you fled Herod's jealousy and fury and found shelter in a strange land, called Egypt.

So it seems, Lord, that travelling is never a simple task.

Our disturbing days of plague remind us how fraught and uncertain a journey can be.

Be with us, please, in our journeys.

Wherever we go,

may we find welcome and shelter.

And whoever calls upon us,

may they find welcome and shelter. AMEN



On Christmas Eve we held our Retiral Collection for "Sakhi" who aim to create quality learning

spaces at the community level, so that every girl in the slums of Mumbai will get an opportunity to continue her education and I am pleased to report that we raised the sum of £135.75 for this deserving charity. For further information use this link: [Sakhi for Girls Education | Literacy and leadership for slum girls in Mumbai, India](#)

Vacancy

Thank you to everyone who has returned their 'update membership' forms.

No questions were asked so we now proceed to the next mailing and voting slip which will be distributed once we receive this from Presbytery.

Fiona Bruce

Session Clerk

MODERATOR'S SERVICE

As we are not open this Sunday 10th January, I thought people might like to link into the service by the Moderator, Very Rev Martin Fair, on **You Tube**, Search "**Church of Scotland Moderator service**"



Fiona Bruce, Session Clerk

*This week's tale of the unexpected comes from **Dr John Robertson**, who shares his childhood experience of evacuation to Perthshire during the second World War.*

My life took an unexpected turn in 1941. Due to the continual bombing of London during the Blitz and the fact that my father was employed in the aircraft industry, my parents felt that I was safer out of London for a while. I was sent up to be with my grandparents who lived on the South shore of Loch Rannoch where my grandfather was a gamekeeper on a Highland Estate.

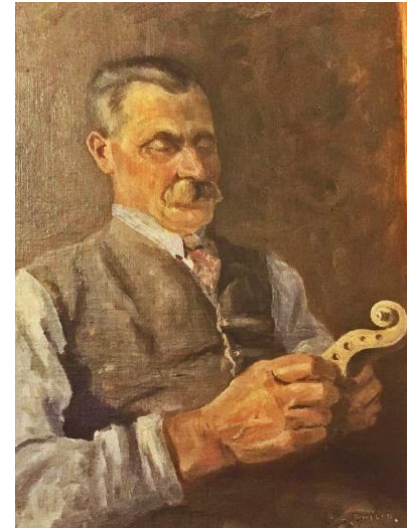
I was put on the train in London and collected by my grandfather at Rannoch Station. This proved to be quite an adventure as I wasn't quite 5 years old!



Grandpa met me off the train and we travelled the 8 miles or so back to my grandparent's house by trap, being pulled by Sheila the pony. What an excitement driving over the beautiful, but isolated Moor of Rannoch after the hustle and bustle of London traffic.

Grandpa (John Robertson) had a busy life, so when I wasn't able to be with him, I was pretty much left to my own devices. My time was spent mostly wandering up the hills and braes, paddling and plootering in the burns or in the loch or perhaps searching for bird's nests with my constant companion Scamp the Cairn Terrier. The only other playmate I remember was the daughter of 'Farmer MacKenzie', who was a similar age to me. As in all childhood memories, the summer days seemed endlessly long, warm and sunny; for me it was idyllic. Granny had a busy schedule, but thankfully this involved a lot of baking and I always had the treat of home-made cakes, pancakes or my favourite treacle scones made on the girdle over the fire. I adored my grandparents and our evenings were spent quietly at home, sometimes listening to the crystal radio set to get news of the war. Granny would knit or darn by the fire and my Grandpa would busy himself making violins. He was a very patient man and spent a lot of time perfecting each instrument. His fiddles were sought after and some even went as far away as America. He occasionally would play, but my

happiest memories of hearing him, were later in life when he and my father would play their fiddles together. One of my treasured possessions is a fiddle lovingly made for me by my Grandpa. Sadly, I never really learned to play my fiddle as I was encouraged to take up the piano and I am still learning to play that!



Looking back, I cannot understand why I was never sent to school whilst I was evacuated in Rannoch as I stayed there until I was nearly 7 years old. I certainly had no complaints about not attending school! It didn't seem to hamper my education as in due course I went on to study medicine at Guys Medical School and found myself a GP to some of the singing stars and pop groups of the 1960s – but that's an 'unexpected story' for another time! Wherever I have lived, Rannoch has always been like home to me and all our family holidays were spent there. I also had the joy of returning to live in Rannoch for a while in the 1980s with my late wife Elaine; where I experienced the delights of revisiting those special places first discovered as a child during the war. In 1943 my Highland adventure came to an end when my parents requested my return to London as things had quietened down a bit. My little sister was due to be born, so I presume they wanted the family all to be together, unless of course the Truant Officer had tracked them down!

Andrew's Prayer.

Dear god Jesus

I know at this time this is the most beautiful day ever with the winter being out

And we are all need to be really careful while we are out. Also I pray for everyone who I care for and support to as well. Please keep us going dear Jesus guide us now as we feel your presence and to keep everyone safe and warm and to excise more and keep us going

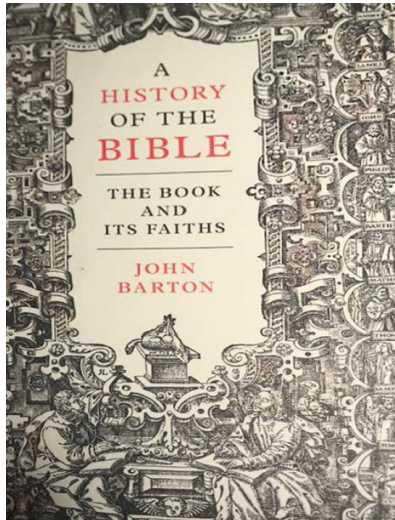
In Jesus name

Amen

A HISTORY OF THE BIBLE

By John Barton

I would be lying if I called this a Book Review! I have bought the book but, at almost 600 pages and looking dense, I'm afraid it has been left unopened until I finish some less daunting books!



However, what I did do quite by chance in the week after Christmas was listen to a serialisation of the book in 5 episodes on Radio 4 and I would heartily recommend this.

Hugh Bonneville reads the story of the Bible and of how the 2 faiths that hold it sacred have shaped it and been shaped by it. You can enjoy these episodes on BBC Sounds!

Fiona Bruce



To St Matthew's Church
Re: Donation to Giraffe

On behalf of Giraffe, I wish to thank you for your recent donation of £271.83 received on 19th December for Giraffe Compassionate Christmas.

Your donation will go towards helping us provide 500 Christmas hampers to people in need. Each hamper will provide a full three course Christmas dinner prepared by Giraffe, and a selection of finest local Perthshire food and drink, as well as other tasty treats. Giraffe is working with other local charities such as Perth Foodbank, TullochNet, Caledonia Housing and Letham4All to distribute these parcels to those in need this Christmas.

The trainees in our café and professional kitchen come to us for training, socialisation, personal development, supported work experience and more. Those we work with have barriers such as learning

disabilities, autism and mental ill health – and we help them move towards independence and playing a meaningful part in their community. Each compassionate Christmas parcel will be made and put together by our trainees. To date, they have already helped to supply an incredible 7000 meals to those most vulnerable and in need during the Covid-19 crisis.

Should you wish to find out more about what we do – please have a look at our website <https://www.giraffe-trading.co.uk/>. Giraffe couldn't achieve success without the interest and contributions of community partners such as yourself.

With best regards,

Gareth Ruddock
Chief Executive Officer

THE WORK OF CHRISTMAS

When the song of the angels is stilled,
When the star in the sky is gone,
When the kings and princes are home,
When the shepherds are back with their flock,
The work of Christmas begins:

To find the lost,
To heal the broken,
To feed the hungry,
To release the prisoner,
To rebuild the nations,
To bring peace among brothers,
To make music in the heart.



Birthday Congratulations to Alice McGregor who turns 80 on 18th January!

WAVE & A PRAYER

Sent to **JOHN SPENCE** on his return home from hospital.

And to **MAY & FRED SELBY**

The next edition of the Newsletter, No. 34 will be on **Friday 22nd January 2021**. All contributions to FMBruce6@googlemail.com by Wednesday 20th January 2021