



St. Matthew's Church, Perth

e-Newsletter No. 75

December 2023/ January 2024

An Advent letter from the Manse

Friends, as I write this, we are fast approaching the season of Advent. A certain wee boy is already very excited about Christmas. When he awakes each day, he asks, "Is it Christmas today?" "Nearly but not quite yet" is my reply. As we step into the season of Advent, we embrace the sense of waiting and anticipation for the arrival of the Christ child and the celebrations we have at Christmastime. But let's not rush it. Advent is a great opportunity for reflection and making time to consider who Jesus is to us and what our relationship with him means in our lives today. We can sit with our burning questions about faith and we can share with each other our favourite memories and most treasured traditions. It is a time of hope for the future held at the very same time as we experience the sadness of missing loved ones. It is a season of many mixed emotions and a real expression of what it is to be human.

And is that not what Advent and Christmas are all about? As it had been promised, God came to earth in human form to be with us, to walk with us and to experience all it means to be human. As we celebrate the birth of baby Jesus, may we recognise our own vulnerabilities and our need of others. As we tell the story of Mary and Joseph, may we honour all people who create families and places of belonging, especially for those who have been displaced. As we reflect upon the shepherds, may we worship God in our places of work as well as in the sanctified spaces. As we think of the animals, may we approach Jesus with curiosity and perhaps even occasional mild annoyance at the ways in which he breaks into our lives. May we sing our hearts out like the choir of angels. May we give generously of what we have, inspired by the Magi. May we choose to gather together to worship our God: Father, Son and Holy Spirit this Christmas, welcomed in even as we welcome other seekers into our church family.

So please do take the time to consider the programme of Advent and Christmas services and events. Step out of the busyness of Christmas and take time to reflect in a quiet sanctuary. Meet with others for our Advent meditations and the chance to talk about faith. Sing some carols and enjoy some good company at our 'Carols and Capers' afternoon. Get your pyjamas ready (if you're brave enough!) and embrace the chaos of the Christmas Eve Family Service. Bring along your best present and share your joy with others on Christmas morning at a short celebration. But more than anything else, celebrate love. Tell your loved ones what they mean to you. Spend quality time together and talk about the things that matter. Know that you are loved beyond measure by God, who knows the challenges and joys of human life, and share that message with others. At the end of the day, the wrapping paper ends up in the recycling bin and Christmas dinner is just one meal. The real gift of love is for all time, eternal.

May this time of waiting be precious and your Christmastime be blessed.

With love, Your Minister, Fiona



CHURCH NEWS

Rev Fiona's return to St Matthew's Church

Most of you will have heard on the grapevine that I have returned to work at St Matthew's Church. I am glad to be back and it has been lovely to reconnect with folk in the Kirk Session, congregation and community alike. It will take time but I am gradually working my way back to full ministerial duties (goodness, that sounds posh!), which I should be taking up in the New Year. As the weeks go on, you'll likely see and hear more of me but for now, I will be taking part in worship and assisting with pastoral care along with attending events and meeting people while our Interim Moderator, Rev Bob Milne, continues to support us. I am also planning various Christmas services, which I am looking forward to leading – expect the unexpected! I hope to see you at some point over the seasons of Advent and Christmas, as we celebrate the greatest story of inclusion, welcome and love, our God, Immanuel.

Your Minister, Fiona

Members of the **Kirk Session** are reminded of an extra (and short) session meeting on **Wednesday 6th December** at 7.30p.m.

WELCOME On Sunday October 29th we welcomed Dawn Anderson, Andrew Davies, David Donaldson, John Paton and David Sawyer into our membership, by profession of faith, along with Chris and Chrissie Dobbs, David Firth and Barbara Quigley by resolution of the Kirk Session.

IN MEMORIAM It is with sadness that we announce the deaths of two of our members. Cathy Sandeman died on Saturday 25th November; her funeral is at Perth Crematorium on Wednesday 6th December at 3p.m. Elder Jack Rough died on Friday 24th November; there will be a memorial service for Jack in the church on Wednesday 13th December at 1p.m., following a private committal. We give thanks for their faithful witness over many years.

THANKS Sheena Beange writes "Thank you to all my friends in St Matthews for their prayers and best wishes after my recent stay in Ninewells. Thank you also for the many beautiful cards, flowers and telephone calls. I have been joining in the services via You Tube and trying to identify you all but only seeing the rear view. God Bless and Happy Christmas."

Zoom and You Tube Links for Sundays

Zoom code for Sunday morning worship from 10.30a.m Click the following link and when asked provide your name then join the meeting <https://us06web.zoom.us/j/86884300748?pwd=omhN3xdeXbaARVmQyxigrW8lqKTfX1.1>

OR "Join a meeting" on ZOOM providing the following: **meeting id = 868 8430 0748** then provide the **password = 436175**

We now have an easy to remember link to take you directly to the St Matthew's church YouTube home page as follows:

youtube.com/@stmatthewsp Perth OR

youtube.com/@stmatthewsp Perth/streams

Midweek Musings

Wednesday at 9 a.m. Zoom at <https://us06web.zoom.us/j/88455159577>

Meeting ID: 884 5515 9577 Password 536657

The next **Boys' Breakfast Blether** will be held in Wetherspoons (next door to the church on Tay Street) on **Wednesday 13th December** at **10a.m.** As always, new attendees will be made welcome.

Recent Retiring Collections:

Water Aid £227 Poppy Scotland £190.60
Thanks to all who contributed.

XMAS FAIR Many thanks to everyone who supported our Xmas Fair on Sat. 18th November, when £1420.40 was raised for church funds.



ADVENT and CHRISTMAS SERVICES AT ST MATTHEWS

Monday 18th—Friday 22nd December at 10a.m. in the sanctuary

Short 15 minute reflections each morning in the final week before Christmas.

Tuesday 19th - Friday 22nd December 12.00 – 13.00 in St Matthew's Church sanctuary

Time to reflect

The sanctuary at St Matthew's Church will be open for everyone at these times offering time to reflect, pray, or escape the busyness of Christmas. There will be an opportunity to light a candle or add the name of a loved one to our Christmas prayer tree. Your Minister will be available to sit with you or listen should you wish or you can simply enjoy the stillness.

Wednesday 20th December 14.00 – 15.00, St Matthew's Church sanctuary, Carols and Capers

Come and enjoy a sing-a-long of your favourite Christmas carols along with a lighter view of the Christmas story. Refreshments will be available afterwards along with good company. All are welcome.

Christmas Eve, Sunday 24th December:

11.00 Nativity service

Feel free to come along dressed as a character from the nativity or take the opportunity to dress up during the service as we celebrate the Christmas story with a nativity play in our morning worship.

18.30 St Matthew's Church sanctuary, Christmas Eve Family service

Come along in your pyjamas if you are brave enough (the Minister may be wearing hers) but please bring your sense of fun and wonder as we step into Christmas by sharing the story in creative ways. There may even be a Christmas Quiz! Bring along your family or encourage friends and neighbours to join in the fun.

PACT Advent Lantern Procession

You are warmly invited to join in the Lantern Procession on **Saturday 9th December**. Gather at St Ninian's Cathedral at 4.45p.m., ready to follow the Pipe Band through the city to St John's Kirk for carol-singing with Perthshire Brass. There will be a drop-in lantern-making workshop at St Ninian's from 2-4p.m. The procession and carol-singing is always a happy occasion with members from many local churches—do join us this year.

PACT CAROL SERVICE

Friday 22nd December at 7p.m. in the North Church, with guest preacher Right Rev. Sally Foster-Fulton, our current Moderator. All welcome



CRIMBOH

We welcome back to St Matthew's the Bohemians from Edinburgh, led by Finlay Turnbull, with a concert of carols, songs and sketches, guaranteed to get you in the festive spirit.

**Sunday December 17th
at 3p.m**

Tickets £10 (under 16s £5)

SERENDIPITY

"Bethlehem and Beyond"

An evening of Christmas Carols and readings, conducted by our own Michael Ellacott on

Monday 18th December at 7.30p.m.

Tickets £8, no cost for children.



Christmas greetings Margaret Wright, who joins in our services each week via Zoom, sends all her friends at St. Matthews her very best wishes for a joyful Christmas and a happy new year.

Dark Days

"Aye, the nights are fair drawin' in". Throughout my childhood, that statement seemed to be uttered by all adults on an almost daily basis from August until the end of October! Even though winter crept up on us in the same manner every year, there seemed to be the need to confirm it. I could never understand this annual ritual. Was it fascination at the changing of the seasons, or perhaps a fear of what the darkness might bring? As a child, all I knew, was that shorter days meant less time for playing outside with my pals. Whereas my father tidied up the garden, picking the last of the vegetables, storing the potatoes in a 'clamp' and the carrots into sand in a tea chest (Do tea chests exist anymore?) in the shed. He also ensured logs and coal were at the ready to keep the fire going. My mother was hanging thicker curtains to keep the winter draughts out, putting extra blankets on the beds and making copious pots of soup to keep us warm.

Now that I am grown up (well, sort of!), I admit to experiencing that feeling of encroaching darkness. Others would probably confirm that I too am heard to say the very same sentence as we approach the time to turn the clocks back.

What is it about the darkness and the countdown to winter that we fear, I wonder? Despite the build-up, it seems to me that once the clocks turn back, everyone accepts that we have no choice but to settle down and see the dark days through. Dark as it is, winter, although sometimes harsh, can be a time of surprises. The trees lose their leaves. The naked trunks and skeletal branches silhouetted in the winter sun highlight their strength and majesty. Clear, dark skies exhibit the stars shining like diamonds. The rising of the winter moon, so big and bright; looking like a picture from a child's story book. The Aurora Borealis shows dancing curtains of colours eerily shimmering on the horizon. Bright red berries bring the joy of visiting birds such as Waxwings and Fieldfares. Shepherds bring their sheep in closer to home and keep a vigilant eye on their welfare.

As the shepherds care for their flocks, then so does our shepherd care for us. In John 10: 11-18 we are told that "*Jesus is the good shepherd and He laid down His life for us*". As all good shepherds, He will be with us even in the darkest of days.

We are blessed in that our darkest days of winter will be lit up with the celebration of Christmas. A time to remember the Christ child who brought us hope and a light brighter than any other.

In John 8:12 Jesus says "*I AM the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness but will have the light of life*". If the dark winter months start to get you down, wrap His blanket of love around you, follow His lamp and His way. Remember the words of John 1:5 "*The light shines in the darkness and the darkness can never extinguish it.*"



Last month the Guild had a visit from Fiona Martin from the charity "Sunshine Boxes" which provides small toys for children attending hospital in Tayside. This is a lovely local charity to which the Guild members and one or two others contributed with enough small toys and colouring books to fill a box which was passed over to Fiona at our meeting on 27th November. Guild members have their Christmas lunch at the Mustard Seed on Monday 4th December, then have a break until 22nd January, when Michael Ellacott will entertain them! *Lorna Morrison*

"Warm Spaces" returns!

Fiona Bruce writes: I'm pleased to report that "**Warm Spaces**" is back again in St Matthew's Church on **Wednesday and Friday afternoons 1.30-4.30pm** starting on Wednesday **10 January** through to Wednesday **27 March 2024**.



As well as being able to chat and play games and enjoy a cup of tea or coffee, there is an activities programme as follows:

- 10th and 12th Jan: Trivial Pursuit (Janet Martin)
- 17th and 19th Jan: "Name that Tune" (Michael E.)
- 24th Jan: Film
- 26th Jan: "Windowsill Gardening" (Nicola McNee)
- 31st Jan. & 2nd Feb: Carpet Bowls (Tom Morrison)
- 7th Feb: P&KC Community Engagement

Come along and enjoy a warmth of space and company in the winter months! Any queries please ask me. FMBruce6@googlemail.com

Weekly Freewill Offering Scheme - Update

Our supplier of Freewill Offering Envelopes has ceased trading. As a result, the decision was taken by the Kirk Session to discontinue the scheme at the end of the current year when the existing envelopes run out. (We now have only ten contributors who use this method at St Matthew's.) Please be assured that we value all the donations from the existing donors for the life and work of the Church and we hope these donations continue via a different method of giving. Donations can be placed the open plate, and white and blue Gift Aid envelopes are available in the café area. We also now have a card machine which accepts all the current credit and debit cards; this machine is usually located in the café area of the Church. However, the most efficient way of donating is through a Bank Standing Order which is quick and easy to set up by contacting any member of the finance team. This method is particularly helpful to the Church as Gift Aid can be added to the donations if you are a taxpayer. Also, payments can be amended and, indeed, cancelled at any time by simply advising your bank.

Existing users of the WFO scheme will be contacted by one of the finance team to discuss the change and help with finding the best alternative method of giving. Thank you for your understanding and your support to the Church over the years.
Alastair Byers.

And an update about 34 WATERGATE - The church holiday flat. Tom Morrison writes

After five and a half years of looking after the flat with the assistance of Malcolm, Mark and John, I have passed over the management role to Ann Attridge and her daughter Maddy who have kindly offered to take this on.

These have been interesting years, having the responsibility of managing the flat and learning how to run what can only be described as a business. Fortunately this business has been very profitable, having brought in over £50k to the church funds over the years. Our best customers by far are our friends from Germany, Wolfgang and Angela who book the month of July; another is a lady with five return visits from the Western Isles. We have hosted clients from every continent, bar Antarctica. There have been many highly complimentary comments made in the visitors' book, a few constructive ones, and some highly critical. However, all are welcome and have been noted appropriately.

In the 5 years there has only been 1 instance of the flat being mistreated, and fortunately that did not involve damage to the property, just an exceptional cleaning effort for CMCleaners, who have been cleaning the place since day one.

One major hurdle we are, hopefully, getting to the end of is the Short Term Letting Licence. This licence has involved substantial work for myself, lawyer, and architect at a cost of about £2500.

After 5 years use, the current year has an 85% occupancy rate and is in the top 3% of letting properties in the area. There are inevitably some items starting to look a bit "tired" and as such it will be a task for Maddy and Ann to bring things up to the standard we would like. This will include decorating, new furniture and linen. The flat is marketed by Sykes Holiday Cottages and I would ask you to promote it to friends and family who may be looking for a holiday break in Perth.

A note of thanks from Perform in Perth

Thanks to all who helped to make Perform in Perth's Exhibition Week run so smoothly – the Perform in Perth committee members who staffed the door, welcoming visitors and answering queries; the minister and congregation of St Matthew's Church for lending us their wonderful building; the team at St Matthew's who helped set the church into exhibition mode and then tidied up at the end of the week in time for their Sunday service; the café staff for sustaining us; special thanks to Tom Morrison, Beverly Skene, John Paton and Peter at St Matthew's for all their help; thank you to ALL the musicians who took part in a truly festive week of celebrations. *Andrew Mitchell*



As a result of St Matthew's planting a tree to celebrate the Queen's Platinum Jubilee, we were invited along to Scone Palace to a "Tree Planting" to celebrate the Coronation of King Charles III.

Look out for the tree when you are in the grounds- it's near the Moot Hill.

Perth: St. Matthew's Church Sunday worship at 11 a.m.

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Andrew's prayer

Dear Lord Jesus
we know it's almost time
for Christmas time coming up
and also let's include families,
friends and loved ones in
this special time. Christmas
is about love, togetherness and
being happy. We pray for
those people who feel alone
and lonely in this time Lord.
It's a part of our
Christian Faith to look
after each other. Lots of love
and compassion Amen

If you do not already receive this newsletter electronically and would like to receive future issues via email, please send your email address to the editor, and you will be added to our distribution list.

Sunday morning rotas for December (not all January rotas are available yet!)

Welcome Teams

- 3rd Oakbank (Donald Stewart)
- 10th Burghmuir (isobel Sinclair)
- 17th Bridgend (Alastair Byers)
- 24th Gannochy (Wendy Burnett)
- 31st Muirton (Janet Martin)

Beadle Duty

- 3rd Tom Morrison
- 10th Bill Chalmers
- 17th Andy Turnbull
- 24th Malcolm Thom
- 31st Raymond Young

READERS

- 3rd Andrew Tait
- 10th Andy Turnbull
- 17th Lesley Williamson
- 24th Marjorie Clark
- 31st Alison Sweeney

TEA/COFFEE TEAMS

- 3rd Frances Turnbull
- 10th Marjorie Clark
- 17th Isobel Sinclair
- 24th Joyce Thom



FLOWERS

Dec.	Donated by	Delivered by
3rd	Bill and Eileen Montgomery	John and Helen Dewar
10th	David Wright	Alison Sweeney
17th		Nicola Macnee
24th	Ina Soreide	Marjorie Clark
31st		

The next issue of the newsletter is due out on the 26th January 2024. All contributions by **Sunday 21st January** please to the editor: Marjorie.clark@btinternet.com