



St John's News

The Newsletter of St John's Church of Scotland: Carluke

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December 2018

Pastoral Letter

Dear members

I thank my God every time I remember you.

We read this verse of Scripture in Philippians 1:3. Just as Paul said it to the people he loved, so do I say it to you and our church family at St John's. God has blessed us with a wonderful congregation of God-fearing people who are kind and caring. We have had a fantastic year, with lots of activities to mark our 175 years of service and mission. I am continually blown away by your compassion, generosity and unwavering faith in Christ Jesus. These virtues have been a part of who we are as a congregation over the years, and I do pray and hope that we can take these on into the future.

Another Advent season is here, the beginning of the Church's new liturgical year. It is a time for us to be alive and awake, to become ever more watchful and faithful disciples. God's people of old yearned for a Saviour, who would deliver them from their enemies and ensure their well-being. The Scripture teaches us that in the fullness of time a loving Father answered this longing by sending Jesus Christ his beloved Son. Through Jesus public ministry, his death and resurrection Christ has revealed to us the saving plan and love of God. The season of Advent offers us a spiritual wake-up call as we prepare ourselves to celebrate the birth of Jesus Christ, and as we look, to the final coming of Christ. Jesus tells us that we "*must stand ready because the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect*" (Matthew 24:44).

May this season of Advent find us awake and watchful in prayer, ready to welcome the Saviour, and above all to celebrate with joy, love and peace the wonder of Christ's birth among us at Christmas time.

Wishing you the great joy of Advent and Christmas.

God bless you!

Rev Dr Elijah Obinna
Minister

Vestry Times - Wednesdays and Fridays 9:30 am - 12:30 pm

Diary: December 2018 to March 2019

Regular Worship Times

Sunday Morning Prayers - 10:20 - 10:50 am, before morning service.

Normal Sunday Services are held at 11:00 am.

A short evening service, with prayers for healing, is normally held on the second Sunday of each month at 7:00 pm

A Praise Service is held on the last Sunday of the month, also at 7:00 pm.

A short, mid-week service is held on Thursdays at 10:30 am.

Forthcoming Special Events and Services

December

Sun 9: 11:00 Guest preacher, Rev Prof David Ferguson.
12:00 Soup Lunch in aid of the HIV/AIDS programme
19:00 Christian Aid Carol Service

Sun 16: 09:30 Christmas Breakfast
11:00 All-Age Service

Mon 24: 23:00 Christmas Eve Service

Tue 25: 12:30 Christmas Lunch

January 2018

Sun 6: 11:00 Joint New Year Service at United Reformed Church

Sun 13: 11:00 Holy Communion and Ordination of Elders

Mon 14: 19:00 Kirk Session

Sat 26: tbc Youth Praise

Sun 27: 11:00 Youth Service

19:00 Evening Praise Service

February

Sun 10: 19:00 Evening Healing Service

Sun 17: 12:00 Soup Lunch

Sun 24: 19:00 Evening Praise Service

March

Sun 3: 11:00 Sacrament of Holy Communion

Thu 7: 10:30 Holy Communion at Thursday Service

Sun 10: 19:00 Evening Healing Service

Please watch Sunday bulletins, local press or visit the church website for and changes and more information as it becomes available.

A Tale of Two Christmases

December 1914 – The war is six months old. The opposing sides dig in for the winter. Soldiers resign themselves to spending Christmas in the fields of war

Centuries before and thousands of miles away, another group of men was out in the fields at night.

Christmas Eve, and the British troops see something strange on the horizon: The Germans are putting up Christmas trees! What are those lights?

Suddenly, an angel of the Lord appeared among the shepherds, and the radiance of the Lord's glory

As the guns fell silent, there's a new sound on the wind. From across no-man's land comes the sound of singing. *Stille Nacht, Heilige Nacht*

The opposing sides sing back into the darkness, trading verses, harmonising with the enemy.

All is calm. All is bright/Sleep in heavenly peace/ Schlaf in Himmlischer Ruh!

Suddenly a great army of heaven's angels appeared with the angel, singing praises to God: *Glory to God in the highest heaven, and peace on earth to those with whom God is pleased.*

Christmas morning, one by one, men dare to put their heads above the parapet, then stand on it. Now they are advancing towards the enemy, open hands outstretched.

When the angels returned to heaven, the shepherds said to each other "Let's go to Bethlehem! Let's see this thing that has happened"

Soon no-man's land is full of officers and men of both sides, shaking hands, talking, exchanging souvenirs. Someone brings out a ball and coats are thrown down. With dozens on either side, in between the shell craters, a shambolic game of football breaks out.

They hurried to the village and found Mary and Joseph, and there was the baby lying in a manger.

Continued opposite

Letter from Stanley Firth

On Sunday 18 November, Rev Miller Milloy was our guest preacher. During the service, he read out a letter from Rev Stanley Firth, who was our minister from 1970 to 1976. Here is the text of his letter:

To those of you who remember us from the days in the 1970s, when we were part of the St John's family, we send very special greetings. We remember our time in Carluke, and the people we got to know there, with great affection.

We still bring you folks, and St John's Church, before the Lord in our prayers.

However, greetings also to those who don't know us. We are grateful to be able to see the St John's Newsletter online, each time it is published, so we do keep up with your news. May the Lord bless and lead you all, as you continue to be a vital part of God's People in your area.

We ourselves are now rather elderly, and there is quite a lot of physical disablement in our lifestyle. Nevertheless, we don't feel spiritually disabled, and continue, in various ways, in trying to serve our Heavenly Father' loving purposes, as He leads us.

Warmest good wishes to you all

Stan and Mavis (Firth)

The following morning, the order comes through to resume firing. The men refuse or shoot at the sky. But then the artillery starts up again, the shells begin to fall. The Christmas truce is gone, nothing but a hopeful memory preserved in letters and diaries. *“No one is going to believe what just happened”*

After seeing Him, the shepherds told everyone what had happened and what the angel had said to them about this child. All who heard the shepherds' story were astonished.

Both the Christmas truce and the first Christmas story were breakthroughs of peace. The 1914 ceasefire could not last, but the peace that God sent to us in Jesus endures.

The Guild Projects 2018-22

On Guild Sunday, 18 November 2018, Guild President, Mairi Somerville, reported that, through their fund-raising, between 2015 and 2018, The Guild have raised an incredible £733,440!

The focus of the Guild's work over the next three years is to journey together with our communities, nation and world, both in sharing our faith and resources, and in doing everything in our power to bring about positive change. The six projects chosen to reflect this are:



Faith in Young People - *The Boys' Brigade*: Looking at the areas of faith, community partnership and personal growth for BB boys across Scotland.

Malawi Fruits - *Growing the Future*: Encouraging young people to develop farming skills beyond subsistence level; Providing solar-powered irrigation pumps and other machinery; Connecting young people with good processing and marketing facilities.

Free to Live Trust - *Seema's Project*: Providing support and accommodation to the children of sex workers in Pune, India.

Sailors' Society - *A Chaplain for Our Ports*: Offering advice and support to merchant sailors in around 25 locations in Scotland.

World Mission Council - *Journeying Together*: Offering educational and training support, health advice and life skills to teenage mothers and other young women in Zambia.

CrossReach - *Join Up the Dots* Tackling the problems of loneliness and social isolation in Scotland.

To read more about any of these projects, visit

www.churchofscotland.org.uk/serve/the_guild/projects

Jar of Grace Appeal 2018-19



Most of us take it clean water at the turn of a tap for granted. We know where our next meal will come from. We have homes where we can feel safe and we can heat those homes. However, all over the world, as well as in our own country, there are those who are not nearly as fortunate as we are - and so very many of them are children.

UNICEF works throughout the world to help protect children in danger, whatever that danger, and the Jar of Grace appeal this year will help

Here are just some of the ways in which the money you raise could help:

£12 could help provide over two weeks' worth of life saving food for a severely malnourished child;

£15 could provide exercise books for a class of 50 children to help them continue their education in times of crisis;

£18 could provide 5,000 water purifying tablets to give families clean, safe water;

£30 could help provide life-saving therapeutic milk to treat four severely malnourished children.

If you would like to help UNICEF support some of the world's most vulnerable children, please consider taking part in this year's Jar of Grace appeal. This is how it works:

In the New Year you collect a sheet giving information about the appeal;

This sheet has a label which you detach and stick onto an empty jar;

At each meal, in thanks for the food you are about to eat, you put money into your Jar of Grace;

After Easter the money you have put into your jar will be collected, counted and sent to UNICEF.

Many thanks in anticipation of your support!

CS

Christian Aid

Be a Peacemaker for Christian Aid

At Christmas time, we celebrate the birth of Jesus, given to bring hope, love, peace and justice to a broken world. We get the chance to spend time with our loved ones celebrating the Prince of Peace. However, for millions of people this Christmas, peace seems like an impossible dream.

Violence and conflict remain the norm for many across the globe, from South Sudan to Colombia. In 2016, more countries experienced violent conflict than at any time in nearly 30 years. If current trends persist, by 2030 more than half of the world's poorest people will be living in countries affected by high levels of violence. But while peace is broken every day, it is also built every day, through the tireless work of peacemakers.

This Christmas, Christian Aid is calling for you to stand together with peacemakers around the world, who are working tirelessly to bring hope to seemingly hopeless situations. In South Sudan, Bishop Paride Taban is relentless in working for peace in his country where millions of citizens are suffering from hunger, caused by years of civil war. Now in his eighties, he believes that peace is something you practise, and every day he repeats 28 words for peace. "If all put these 28 words into their hearts, and every day they repeat them, there will be no war in South Sudan, there will be permanent peace in South Sudan."

Elsewhere in the shadow of violence and conflict, Diana Abbas sows the seeds of peace through counselling and therapy. She is the only psychologist at a childrens' centre run by Association Najdeh, Christian Aid's partner in Lebanon. Through psychotherapy, literacy classes and art therapy, the centre gives young Palestinian refugees the chance to overcome the violence they have witnessed. Thanks to Diana and others at the centre, more children can find peace. Now more than ever, we need peace. With your support, peace is possible this Christmas. Matthew, Ch5 v9 shows the blessings that lie within peace making in this world. It is up to us to do what we can in our daily lives to help frontline peacemakers like Diana and Bishop Paride.

You can be a peacemaker with your donation to ‘Christmas’ Aid, an appeal to raise vital funds for Christian Aid’s work. It costs just £10 to pay for three young women to attend a community dialogue event that will help them learn about effective ways of reducing crime. £130 could pay for a psychologist to provide one week’s worth of counselling and therapy to young refugees in Lebanon.

Will you stand with the peacemakers this Christmas?

If you didn’t manage along to our Carol Service on Sunday 9 December but would like to make a donation to Christian Aid’s Christmas Appeal, it’s not too late. Speak to Iris Nelson, Sandra Peat or Wilma Watson in church, or, alternatively, you can donate on-line by going to caid.org.uk/christmas



IN

The Older I get...

the simpler my holiday preparations become...
the closer I feel to family and friends as I write my Christmas cards...
the more I cherish the oldest ornaments...
the more fondly I remember Christmases past...
the longer I hold on to a holiday hug...
the more I realize Christmas is a matter of the heart...
the tighter my throat gets when I sing “Silent Night”...
the more I enjoy giving than receiving...
the more I try to see Christmas through the eyes of a child...
the longer I sit at night in the glow of the Christmas tree...
the more wondrously beautiful the Christmas story is...
the deeper my awe at God’s infinite love...

the More I Love Christmas!...

St John's 175

As 2018 draws to a close, so too our 175th Anniversary celebrations come to a conclusion. It's been an eventful year in the life of St John's. The Anniversary song has been sung with enthusiasm Sunday by Sunday. Past ministers renewed their links with our congregation when they visited and took to the pulpit again. The Moderator, Rt Rev Susan Brown, took time out of a busy schedule to share worship with us at our Anniversary service on 26 August, when she also presented long service certificates to a number of our elders.



Memories were reawakened through the photographic exhibition, illustrating the story of St John's from the Disruption to the present day. The Anniversary banner was dedicated at the Anniversary service and has a permanent position in the sanctuary. On the occasion of each visiting minister, a splendid buffet lunch was provided, when many of us enjoyed an extended time of fellowship. It was also a delight to have Grace Notes contribute to our worship on numerous occasions throughout the year. Our young people in the Sunday School produced a commemorative tea towel, featuring their own art work.

The Anniversary also gave us an opportunity to reach out beyond St John's, in the spirit of 1843, and look to the future by returning something to the community. Therefore, at our Communion service on 2 December, cheques were presented to Street Level and Clydesdale Christian Youth Trust. What better way to look to the future than by investment in our young people?

Finally on 7 December, 112 members and friends of the congregation brought the celebrations to a conclusion with a lively ceilidh in St Athanasius Community Hall.

Although our 175th Anniversary year has come to an end, the story of St John's will go on.

Thank you to everyone who played a part in our special year.

IN

New Elders

At the Communion service on 2 December, seven new Elders were ordained and admitted to the Kirk Session.

Our Minister, Rev Dr Elijah Obinna advised the congregation that it had been 18 years since the last intake of new elders and it had been agreed by the Kirk Session that the time was right to elect new Elders. It was clear that there were many worthy candidates

In his preamble to the ordination, Dr Obinna said:

There are different gifts but it is the same Spirit who gives them; there are different ways of serving God but it is the same Lord who is served. God works through different people in different ways but it is the same God who achieves his purpose through them all. Each one is given a gift by the same Spirit to use for the common good of God's people.

Session Clerk, Glenn Walker, then read out the Formula which was followed by the Elders elect signing of the Formula. Thereafter, the new Elders received the Right Hand of Fellowship from brother and sister Elders and took their place amongst them in the Chancel.

As their first duty, the new Elders participated in the serving of Communion.

Those elected to the Eldership were: **Margaret Dougan, Gillian Forrest, Karen Gillon, Jacqueline Hardisty, Shona Keay, Ann Walker and Jean Watson.**

Two other candidates for the Eldership, who were unable to attend will be ordained and admitted to the Session at a special Communion service on Sunday 13 January 2019.

Street Level

Chair of the Street Level Management Committee, John Wilcox, tells a little of the benefits of the project.

The View from the Bottom

According to my records, 2018 is the 25th anniversary of the establishment of *Street Level*. A big *thank you* to everybody who has been involved in the project over the years — you should be rightly proud of what has been achieved.

Faces have changed over the years as people have joined and left the project. Currently a team of 8 volunteers is fully focussed on managing our small but successful youth project. This team is hugely aware of its responsibility to the people of Carlisle to ensure the project is sustained and well managed, and that our young people are kept safe.

In the last couple of years we have revisited the vision and values for the project and brought them up to date. We have also conducted a full review of the business risks we face and put in place procedures to mitigate those risks. Staff contracts have been re-written to highlight the importance of child safety and proper relationships in all that we do and we are about to launch a *whistle-blowing* procedure to supplement statutory safeguarding. And then there is data protection...

As you might expect, it is a battle every year to balance the books. We maintain a tight control on costs but we survive only because of the continuing generosity of individuals and groups in the town. So thank you!

Working with and for young people is both a privilege and a challenge. There is much to do. If you feel you would like to contribute to this important work, speak to Jim McIntyre in the first instance.

JW

One of Street Level's most Well-kent faces, Andrew Berry, shares his Street Level journey, and how it has made a difference to his life.

I first went along to Street Level when I was aged 11 and ready to move into P7 at Kirkton Primary School. I went along to the P7/1st Year group on a Thursday evening and also on a Saturday morning. At the start there was quite a few of my friends from Kirkton went along but then eventually there was only a few attended.

It was a great way of making new friends and when I went to Carluke High School I knew people from some of the other schools in Carluke. At the P7/1st year group night we played pool, PlayStation games and often had tournaments involving all of us and started building relationships with the staff within the Centre. When I moved into second year at High School I continued to attend the Centre and during the holidays my mum often threatened to move my bed in!

In 2014 I became totally wheelchair dependent. After 5 weeks in hospital and returning home, Street Level became my safe haven. The Centre was totally accessible and both staff and kids continued to treat me the same as before but I could also rely on everyone for support and the staff were always there to talk to.

In 2017 as part of my Boys' Brigade Queen's Badge I started to volunteer within Street Level at the P7/1st year group. This was a different experience being back and helping the staff to run the night, coordinating activities or just being there to support the kids. It really felt like I was giving something back and as a volunteer my relationship with both the kids and the staff started to change. All part of growing up.

It's been a great experience and I've made a lot of friends along the way. I continue to be a volunteer within the Centre and hopefully become a role model to encourage kids to continue to attend and continue Street Levels success. The journey continues!!!!

AB

