

Christmas 2023

angels

ETHIOPIANS

TABERNACLE

MARY

STAR

GOD WITH US

JOSEPH

hepherds

St Mary's Parish Church - Kirkintilloch
Christmas 2019

St Mary's Parish Church Kirkintilloch
Christmas 2023

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Pastoral Letter ...

Hello everyone!

This morning Grace took great delight in telling me that it's only 8 more sleeps until the return of Elf on the Shelf. That filled me with dread, not only because it means that the pesky Elf will be getting up to all sorts of mischief for 24 days in a row (all ideas welcome!) but that December will have arrived and with it, a longer to-do list than normal. I don't feel ready. Are you?

Yet, whether we are ready or not, by the time you read this letter, December will have arrived, the Christmas lights will be on in the main street, festive tunes will be blaring from shop to shop, and we will be hurtling towards the end of the year. So, how can we prepare?

Well, I'd say work out what is important and stick to that. Never mind the Christmas bucket lists about baking Christmas cookies, gathering the family in matching Christmas PJs, colour co-ordinating your decorations and making, from scratch, reindeer food, whilst sipping hot chocolate! No, ditch all of that, slow down and

focus on the essentials and, as you do that, remember what and who, for us, this season, is all about.

God. God with us. God whose love is so great, that God sent his son, Jesus, into the world. To be born among us, as one of us, to save us, that we might come to know and believe that God is for us and that through Jesus there is nothing that can ever separate us from God's love.

Go on, read the paragraph above again. Isn't that amazing? For YOU, Jesus was born. For YOU, he came into this world. For YOU, he lived and died and rose again. All for YOU.

No matter who you are. No matter how you are feeling. No matter how ready or not you are. God promises to be close and near, especially to the broken hearted.

So, as we sort and tick off our to-do lists and prepare to celebrate (or pray for the strength to get through and survive) Christmas this year, may we remember the love at the centre of the Christmas story, believe that it was for us, that Jesus was born, and respond in ways that show that we have received the good news in our hearts, by counting our blessings, being kind to others, being present to those around us, savouring the simple moments of joy wherever they are found and praying for the coming of God's Kingdom of peace. Oh, and if you've got time, then one of the nicest ideas I saw on a bucket list, besides singing a carol, eating a mince pie and watching a candle flicker, was to read the Christmas story aloud.

With love and blessings this Christmas and approaching new year,

Ruth



The next issue of the magazine will be February 2024 and any material should be e-mailed to sandraburns.me@gmail.com no later than Sunday 28 January 2024. With continued thanks to those who make donations towards the cost of producing the magazine.

The Parishioner Online



www.stmaryskirkintilloch.org.uk

Missed or lost your copy of the Parishioner ... why not go to www.stmaryskirkintilloch.org.uk and see this month's copy. Stephen McKean, Webmaster, has built up previous issues online so you can look back on past copies. Also, if you wish any news or information to be put on the website, please e-mail webmaster@stmaryskirkintilloch.org.uk and we will put these on the News page of the Website.



Church Flowers

As you know the church is decorated each Sunday with flowers. Each arrangement is delivered to someone who is unwell, bereaved or having an over 80 Birthday! To continue this ministry of flowers we depend on donations from members and recently donations have lessened, so we need your help. If you would like to donate to church flowers either on a regular basis or a one-off donation, then please let one of us know.

Grateful thanks to all who have donated over the past month.

***Fiona Leishman, Sandra Burns,
Ruth Poynton, Elizabeth Walker
The Flower Committee***

Nursery Update

Two successful Stay and Play sessions were held recently. Our parents/carers spoke very highly of the experience and the children loved having their folks to play with and having the opportunity to show the nursery to them.



A photographer visited to take portraits of our children and their siblings – just in time to get prints for Christmas!

The nursery children visit the church regularly during Open Doors days. This gives them the chance to see around the church and explore different areas. They will be providing artwork to decorate the sanctuary at Christmas – look out for the nursery hearts!

The children will visit Campsie View Care Home at the beginning of December to entertain the residents with some Christmas songs.

Our Christmas Nativity, 'Whoops a Daisy' will be held in church on Wednesday 20th December at 10.30am. This is always a lovely performance, which I'm sure you would enjoy, so please come along and show your support. It would be lovely to see you!

Our nursery continues to go from strength to strength. Two of our groups are currently full and the other three groups will be full by March. We have a further seven children joining us next year so we will need to create another group. Our two-year-olds room has 17 children with more to join next year. Three of our two-year-olds moved into the nursery in November with another transferring in December.

As always, thanks are due to all staff for their hard work this term. I wish them all a restful Christmas break.

**Fiona Leishman,
Nursery Convener**

Church Office

The secretary, Mrs Denise Japp is available in the office Monday to Friday 8.30 a.m. – 1.00 p.m. and may be the first point of contact for general enquiries. Denise will be able to refer you to the person best suited to respond. Church office telephone 0141 775 1166 or e-mail: office@stmarysnursery.uk

A New Year with New Opportunities

Christmas has not yet arrived, but thoughts are already turning to the new year and new activities. On Sunday 18th February, the Sunday following Shrove Tuesday, there will be our usual lunch after church, but this year there are some changes to look forward to. What they are you will have to 'wait and see' Tickets for this will go on sale on Sunday 28th January.

A little later in the year there is the return of an old favourite. On Friday 8th March we will be holding a fashion Show. More information about this will be provided soon. Tickets for this event will go on sale on Sunday 25th February

Christian Aid

Kirkintilloch and Lenzie Christian Aid group once again thank St Mary's for the use of the Church Hall for the Advent Coffee morning on 18th November. The sum raised is now in excess of £1,200. Sincere thanks to everyone who came along, helped out, contributed home baking and other items and to those who couldn't come but made a donation.

All proceeds will go to Christian Aid's Christmas Appeal. In the year 2021 – 2022, 1.4 million people were reached by Christian Aid's humanitarian programmes, 257 projects were implemented in 14 countries and £7 million was raised to support humanitarian emergencies.

Thank you for helping to make this happen.

Dates for your Diary



Special Services over the Festive Period at St Mary's

10th December – Gift Service 11:00am

20th December – Blue Christmas 7:30pm

24th December – All Age Family Service 11:00am

24th December – Watchnight 11:30pm

31st December – Service 11:00am

Advent: Still and Slow, Wednesday 6th December, Thursday 14th December and Thursday 21st December, all at 7.30pm in the Session House

The Churches Walking and Talk Group

The Walk and Talk Group will continue to meet throughout December and January at the locations below. Unless stated otherwise the walks start at 1:30 on Thursday afternoons, last approximately one hour and the start points and routes vary.

If you would like to join us for a walk, then please turn up at any of these locations on these dates and we will be delighted to see you.

One of the walks in January will be outside the Kirkintilloch and Lenzie area. On the 18th January the meeting point will be St Columba's Church at 1:15, note the earlier time, and a car sharing operation will take place to get to The Boathouse. Please note that at least $\frac{3}{4}$ of our walkers arrive by car and are happy to provide transport for non-car users where required.

30th November

7th December

14th December

21st December

28th December

4th January

11th January

18th January

25th January

1st February

Donaldson Street, including refreshments at The Stables.

Lenzie Co-op.

St Columba's Church.

The Redbrae. Walk at 1:30, Lunch at 2:30.

No plans. Use WhatsApp to poll the group for a possible mid-holiday walk.

Hillhead Basin.

Merkland Nature Park.

St Columba's Church. 1:15pm for transport to The Boathouse.

Kirkintilloch Leisure Centre.

Waterside, including refreshments at The Gatehouse.

ORGANISATIONS ACCOUNTS/ AUDITORS

It is that time of year again when accounts need to be prepared for the year to 31 December 2023 for all Church Organisations. I would therefore ask that all treasurers of organisations please ensure that a copy of their annual audited accounts is passed to the Treasurer or Finance Convenor no later than 24 February 2024. These accounts will be made up to their year-end falling into the year to 31 December 2023. The Nursery, Social Committee and Young Church whose accounts are included in the Church Accounts should work to a deadline of 13th January 2024 as I go on holiday from 18th January until 17th February.

The members of the Finance Committee who have volunteered to act as auditors for the church organisations are John Pears and Hugh Biggans.

The Church Accounts should be submitted to Presbytery and Church of Scotland by 31 March annually, therefore it is very important that these deadlines are adhered to, especially with the forthcoming Union with SDMP in mind. We need to present the accounts to Session as early as possible to enable them to be inspected by our Independent Examiner prior to submission to the relevant bodies.

Your assistance in this matter is very much appreciated by John and myself.

Hugh Biggans
Finance Convenor

Christmas and St Luke's Gospel

It is to St Luke's wonderful gospel that many Christians turn as the year draws to a close and Christmas approaches, for it is to St Luke that we owe the fullest account of the nativity.

Luke alone tells us the story of Mary and the angel's visit to her, and has thus given the Church the wonderful Magnificat of Mary.

Luke alone tells us the story of Simeon's hymn of praise, thus giving us the wonderful Nunc Dimmittis. Imagine an Anglican evensong without the Nunc Dimmittis.

Luke alone tells us the story of how the angels appeared to the shepherds and how the shepherds then visited the infant Jesus. So – imagine Christmas cards and nativity scenes every year without the shepherds arriving to visit baby Jesus. Imagine school nativity plays without our children dressed as shepherds or sheep. So – thank you, Luke!

What makes it so amazing is that Luke was not a Jew! The man who wrote the fullest nativity story, and indeed more of the New Testament than any other single person, was a Gentile!

Christmas Prayer 2023

Almighty Father,

Thank you for your indescribable gift of Jesus – the Light of the world. Thank you that He brought light and life to all who received Him during His life on earth and that He still brings light and life to all who receive Him.

Lord, how this broken world needs your light today. As we rejoice and give thanks for Christmas, we pray that the light of Jesus will pierce the darkness of self-interest and hatred – and change the hearts of those who do not love you or their neighbours.

We pray that by the power of your Holy Spirit you will deliver your people from evil, and that Your kingdom will come on earth as in heaven. Thank you, Father, that because of Jesus, light will always shine in the darkness and the darkness will never be able to extinguish it.

Glory and thanks and praise to You Father God, this Christmas and always. In Jesus' saving and powerful name. Amen.

By Daphne Kitching

Children's version of the Christmas story

- When the three wise guys from the east side arrived, they found Jesus in the manger.
- When Mary heard that she was the mother of Jesus, she sang the Magna Carta
- Jesus was born because Mary had an immaculate contraption.

A Bible quiz – of sorts!

Q. What kind of man was Boaz before he married?

A. Ruthless

Q. What do they call pastors in Germany?

A. German Shepherds.

Q. Who was the greatest financier in the Bible?

A. Noah. He was floating his stock while everyone else was in liquidation.

Q. What was the greatest female financier in the Bible?

A. Pharaoh's daughter. She went down to the bank of the Nile and drew out a little prophet.

Q. What excuse did Adam give to his children as to why he no longer lived in Eden?

A. Your mother ate us out of house and home.

Q. What's the phone number of the Garden of Eden?

A. ADAM-8-1-2

The Big Bash!



JESUS OFTEN TOLD STORIES WITH HIDDEN MEANINGS



ONE STORY WAS ABOUT A RICH MAN WHO DECIDED TO HAVE A PARTY

HE SENT OUT LOTS OF INVITATIONS



OH!
NO!!

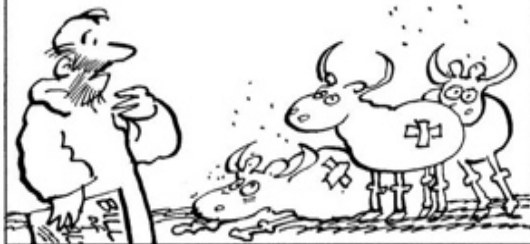


BUT PEOPLE STARTED MAKING EXCUSES

ONE MAN SAID HE HAD BOUGHT A FIELD, BUT NEEDED TO MEASURE IT



ANOTHER MAN SAID HE NEEDED TO TEST DRIVE THE OXEN HE HAS JUST PAID FOR



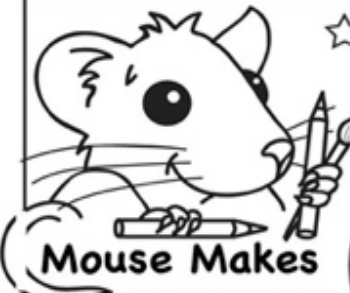
ANOTHER MAN SAID HE HAD JUST GOT MARRIED - AND HIS WIFE WOULDN'T LET HIM OUT!

SO THE RICH MAN INVITED ALL THE POOR AND NEEDY INSTEAD.




YES - I CAN COME TO YOUR PARTY

THE PARABLE MEANS WE SHOULDN'T MAKE EXCUSES FOR NOT FOLLOWING JESUS.




Mouse Makes



GOD'S PROMISE
Isaiah 9:6-7

CHILD • BORN • SON
GIVEN • WONDERFUL
COUNCELLOR
MIGHTY • GOD
EVERLASTING
FATHER • PRINCE
PEACE • LORD



AN ANGEL MESSENGER
Luke 1:26-38

ANGEL • GABRIEL
JOSEPH • MARY
FAVOUR • SON
JESUS • GREAT
THRONE • REIGN
FOREVER • HOLY
SERVANT • WORD



ADVENT
comes from
the Latin
'AD VENTO'
which means
ARRIVAL

In Advent we
celebrate Jesus' birth
and look forward to
the time when Jesus
will come again.



A LONG JOURNEY
Luke 2:1-20

BETHLEHEM
REGISTER • BIRTH
MANGER • INN
SHEPHERDS • FLOCK
ANGELS • JOY
GOOD NEWS • PRAISE
SAVIOR • CHRIST



THE BEST GIFT OF ALL
John 3:16

GOD • SO • LOVED
WORLD • HE • GAVE
ONLY • SON
WHOEVER • BELIEVES
ETERNAL • LIFE

V	R	P	R	I	N	C	E	L	R	O	D
W	O	R	D	C	F	A	T	H	E	R	E
J	A	G	M	A	N	G	E	R	G	E	B
O	W	H	O	E	V	E	R	W	I	I	J
S	J	O	Y	B	O	R	N	O	S	G	E
E	S	L	S	E	R	V	A	N	T	N	S
P	P	Y	J	C	H	I	L	D	E	P	U
H	R	O	S	H	E	P	H	E	R	D	S
F	A	V	O	U	R	E	F	R	W	S	O
B	I	R	T	H	S	W	O	F	O	D	L
I	S	A	V	I	O	U	R	U	R	L	O
F	E	C	O	U	N	C	E	L	L	O	R
A	N	G	E	L	B	J	V	K	D	V	D
B	E	T	H	L	E	H	E	M	G	E	S
L	A	N	G	E	L	S	R	G	O	D	V
I	G	A	B	R	I	E	L	T	D	S	M
F	P	G	I	V	E	N	A	H	U	O	A
E	E	H	G	A	V	E	S	R	W	N	R
S	A	E	G	R	E	A	T	I	O	N	L
O	C	H	R	I	S	T	I	N	N	J	O
N	E	O	G	O	O	D	N	E	W	S	N
F	L	O	C	K	M	I	G	H	T	Y	B

Colour in one star each day until Christmas

Dec 23 © Deborah Noble • parishpump.co.uk

The Rectory

St James the Least of all

My dear Nephew Darren

Carol singing is not what it used to be. My fond memories of a group of choristers, muffled in scarves and overcoats, carrying lanterns, and walking from door to door in the snow, as they sang 'While shepherds watched ...' had to be suddenly revised when I saw your own music group, in T-shirts inscribed with 'Jesus loves You', singing 'Little donkey', in your shopping centre. I suspect any money you raised would just about have paid for the electricity used to power your banks of electronic equipment. Singing in the main square of the Centre next to the fountain may have looked good, but it seemed to mean that the choir men were obliged to make constant trips to the lavatory.

Here at St James the Least of All, carol singing is regarded as a staff perk for the choir; the year when the Boys' Brigade tried to break their monopoly was suppressed with a ruthlessness that would have impressed Genghis Kahn.

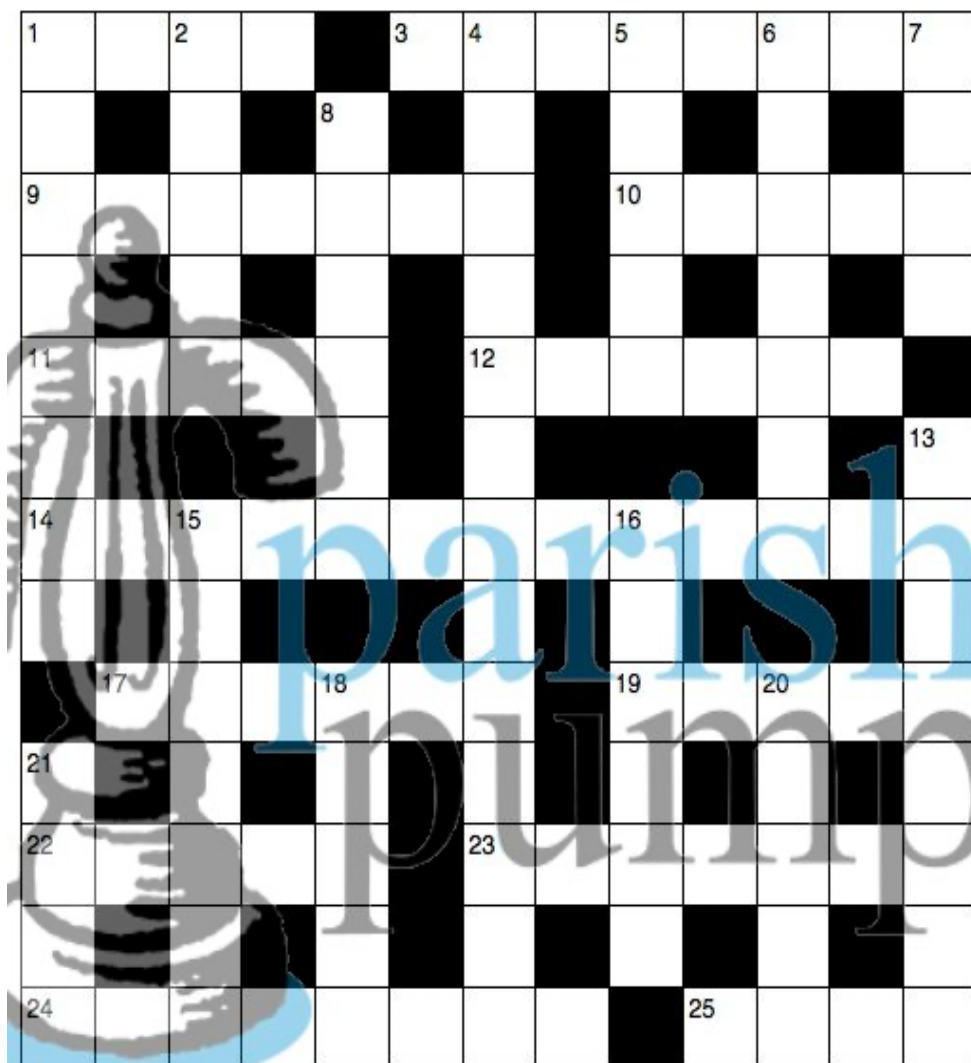
Our annual carol-singing route involves months of meticulous planning. We find that a transparent collection box is vital, so that donors can see what earlier patrons have given. This means that those who are

bound to put in notes must be visited first – 'pour encourager les autres'. It also needs a detachable base, so that if coppers are given, they can be removed from sight before the next call.

Those homes that contain several children are visited just after bedtime, so that parents will give generously simply to get the choir to go somewhere else. Veiled threats to stay and sing more carols (unless they give generously) are usually very effective. Getting whoever looks the most innocent and photogenic to ring the bell and ask for money is a far more subtle way of ensuring a donation than planting any number of mafia lookalikes (such as our church treasurer) on the doorstep.

The choir always finishes its evening at the local pub – but again, the timing must be carefully managed. Too early and there will only be the landlord, his wife, and their Labrador to listen; too late and people will be so full of Christmas cheer that any carols will be hi-jacked and become the equivalent of back-of-the bus rugby songs.

Your loving uncle, Eustace



Across

- 1 Rely (Psalm 62:7) (6)
 4 'He stretches out the heavens like a — , and spreads them out like a tent to live in' (Isaiah 40:22) (6)
 7 What the dove carried the olive leaf in, when it returned to Noah's ark

(Genesis 8:11) (4)

- 8 Annoy (1 Samuel 1:6) (8)
 9 Judah's last king, who ended his days as a blind prisoner in Babylon (Jeremiah 52:11) (8)
 13 'They all — and were satisfied' (Luke 9:17) (3)

- 16 Eliphaz the Temanite was one;
so was Bildad the Shuhite and
Zophar the Naamathite (Job
2:11; 16:2) (4,9)
- 17 National Association of
Evangelicals (of the USA)
(1,1,1)
- 19 Popular song for New Year's
Eve, Auld — — (4,4)
- 24 Able dock (anag.) (8)
- 25 The number of stones David
chose for his confrontation
with Goliath (1 Samuel 17:40)
(4)
- 26 Elgar's best-known 'Variations'
(6)
- 27 Soak (Isaiah 16:9) (6)

Down

- 1 Money owing (Deuteronomy
15:3) (4)
- 2 Conciliatory (Titus 3:2)
(9)
- 3 'Do this, whenever you — it,
in remembrance of me' (1
Corinthians 11:25) (5)
- 4 A group assisting in the
governance of the Roman
Catholic Church (5)
- 5 One of the gifts Joseph's
brothers took with them on

- their second journey to Egypt
(Genesis 43:11) (4)
- 6 'Reach out your hand and — —
into my side. Stop doubting
and believe' (John 20:27) (3,2)
- 10 Be outstandingly good (2
Corinthians 8:7) (5)
- 11 'What — — that you are
mindful of him, the son of man
that you care for him?' (Psalm
8:4) (2,3)
- 12 Horse's feet (Judges 5:22) (5)
- 13 Notice (Deuteronomy 17:4) (9)
- 14 Comes between 2 Chronicles
and Nehemiah (4)
- 15 One of Israel's northern towns
conquered by Ben-Hadad (1
Kings 15:20) (4)
- 18 Narnia's Lion (5)
- 20 One of the two rivers in which
Naaman would have preferred
to wash (2 Kings 5:12) (5)
- 21 Avarice—one of the evils that
come from inside people (Mark
7:22) (5)
- 22 Knight Grand Cross of St
Michael and St George
(1,1,1,1)
- 23 Jacob's first wife (Genesis
29:23) (4)

ACROSS: 1, Depend, 4, Canopy, 7, Back, 8, Irritate, 9, Zedekiah, 13, Ate, 16, Job's comforter, 17, NAE, 19, Lang Syne, 24, Blockade, 25, Five, 26, Enigma, 27, Drench.
DOWN: 1, Debt, 2, Peaceable, 3, Drink, 4, Cunha, 5, Nuts, 6, Put it, 10, Excel, 11, Is man, 12, Hoofs, 13, Attention, 14, Ezra, 15, Ijon, 18, Asian, 20, Abana, 21, Greed, 22, GCMG, 23, Leah.

We're at that time of year again!

But is Christmas just about the shopping, tree or presents? At its heart, Christmas is all about a God who has showed up on earth. The Creator of the universe, whose hands flung stars into space, cared enough to come to earth as a tiny baby. 'The Word became flesh and made His dwelling among us.' (John 1:14)

Every year we sing carols and retell the same story of the donkey, innkeeper, stable, angels, shepherds, star, wise men, gifts and Mary and Joseph with baby! Why do we do all this? It's to remind us that God deals with the mess of our world by sending His Son to die in our place. This makes it possible for us to have a relationship with Himself:

When the time came, He "did not consider equality with God something to be used to His own advantage; rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to death – even death on a cross! (Philippians 2:6-8)

Reflecting on Jesus in the manger is a great place to start understanding the heart of the Christmas message. However, it's so much more than simply a cute baby lying in the bed of straw:

*If our greatest need had been information, God would have sent us an educator;
If our greatest need had been technology, God would have sent us a scientist;
If our greatest need had been money, God would have sent us an economist;
If our greatest need had been pleasure, God would have sent us an entertainer;
But our greatest need was forgiveness, so God sent us a Saviour.*



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