

Blackbraes and Shieldhill
Parish Church
linked with
Muiravonside Parish Church
Christmas 2021



www.bsandm-church.org.uk

Interim Moderator: Rev Scott Burton

Locum Minister: Rev Sandra Mathers OLM

Registered Charity

Blackbraes and Shieldhill SC 002512

Muiravonside SC 007571



A Christmas Message
From our Interim Moderator : Rev Scott Burton

Dear friends,

As we approach the Advent season, I wonder what emotions and expectations you carry within you? Are you looking forward to a return of some “normality” this Christmas with maybe less limitations than we experienced last year? I think we must admit, we are very much creatures of habit – we like life to go the old familiar ways, we want normal, we prefer the rhythms of life we have become so accustomed to.

Humanity has changed very little in this regard over the generations, so I suspect that the various characters of the Christmas story were just going about their regular lives, probably appreciating their own normal too.

But then comes Christmas – and everything is turned on its head for these individuals! A virgin is pregnant, shepherds are startled by angels, a king is threatened by reports of a possible coup – wow!

Yet, in the midst of normality being disrupted, God was doing something, God was at work, God was telling people not to be afraid, that there was good news which would bring joy, and there would even be the hope of peace (Luke 2: 10, 14). Maybe when some people heard this, they appreciated their normal being disrupted – maybe they couldn't wait?! Maybe this news gave them life, maybe they had got too comfortable and this is exactly what they needed from God.

However, maybe you're approaching this Advent differently, maybe you've experienced a lot of disruption or heartache this past year. Maybe your normal Christmas is never likely to return. Nevertheless, might the same words be for you too – not to dampen the difficulty, or minimise the hurt, but to give a measure of strength, hope and comfort as you journey through

this season.

However we are approaching Advent, I pray that you and your families, will know the truth and power of the Advent message: may it disrupt us where that is needed and comfort us where we feel broken, and through it all may you know that God came near through Jesus – and He still is, even today.

With love to one and all,

Scott

November 2021



A Message from our Locum Minister

Rev Sandra Mathers

Hello everyone, its that time of year again – what's known as the "festive season" is upon us, and although its still November already Christmas trees are appearing in the windows of some homes, and as we know the shops are full of the goodies they reckon we can't live without and the Christmas music is being churned out almost everywhere. So far so predictable.

Of course, all over the Christianised world the preparations for Christmas are in full flow – the parties are arranged, the bookings for celebration meals at hotels and restaurants have been made, the cash registers are ringing as presents are bought although we've been warned that some goods may be in short supply, especially those originating in China

But in the midst of all the noise and busyness, unnoticed by the world at large, yesterday was the first Sunday of Advent, that time of waiting, of anticipation, as we look forward to the dawning of Christmas Day when as Christians we celebrate the coming of the Christ child among us, the one born to be King, to be our Lord and Saviour.

You'll no doubt have noticed the advertisement being shown on ITV at the moment – its for M & S – which asks a question, a question which all of us might do well to consider – "What's the best part of Christmas?"

Perhaps you'd like to take a moment to consider the question and think what your answer might be – is it the coming together of friends and family, something that often happens at Christmas but seldom if ever throughout the year? Perhaps for you its the brightness of the Christmas lights shining not only in your own home but in just about everyone else's bringing cheer in the darkness of winter. Maybe its hearing and being able to join in the singing of the Christmas carols – after all we only get that opportunity once a year. For others its perhaps the sending and receiving of Christmas cards to and from people we're seldom

in touch with – cards that often also bring news of how things are going in their lives – the new babies born or sadly the news of lives that have come to an end, news of children growing and beginning their careers, children we perhaps haven't seen since they were babies. For the young people – and the not so young – the dances and parties are quite possibly the high point – and of course there's the giving and receiving of gifts, whether those received are to our taste or not – as the saying goes - 'It's the thought that counts.' There are all sorts of answers and all of these are a good and enjoyable part of this special time of year.

If you've seen the advertisement on TV you know the answer given there to the question "What's the best part of Christmas?" and it is "It's the food that's the best part" meaning of course M& S food .

Food is important to all of us – we need food and the right kind of food – to keep our bodies and our minds healthy. We can't do without it, and without doubt Christmas dinner is something to be looked forward to and enjoyed complete with the crackers, paper hats and corny jokes. But do we really think that food is the best part of Christmas?

Well, if we don't have any or very little food I would imagine it might well be – and there are thousands in this country and millions around the world for whom that is the case. On TV we see the ads like the one I've already mentioned where we see tables loaded with food but we also see those of children dying for lack of food, ads which challenge or should challenge us in our comfort zone - so many who have so little or even nothing at all!

That brings my mind back to the stable in Bethlehem where Jesus, the Saviour of the world, made His entrance into this world. In our sanitised, rather romantic view of the Nativity, arrived at through generations of beautiful pictures of Mary and Joseph bent adoringly over the new born baby, with perhaps a donkey and a lamb added for atmosphere, we're apt to forget the reality of Jesus' arrival in this world: an exhausted young

mother who'd just travelled miles, perhaps on a donkey. There was no bath available, no help with the pain, no clean white sheets or caring midwife to give help and encouragement – just a dirty stable – and it was there, in these conditions, that the Saviour made His arrival in the world. Right from His birth Jesus was identifying with the poor, the needy, those regarded as expendable, as indeed the dross of the earth. Surely **this** is the best part of Christmas!

There was none of today's noise and babble at His birth – nothing save the cry of a woman giving birth, the cry of a new born baby, perhaps the bleat of that lamb and the munching of the donkey. As the carol puts it "all was still" – well, at least until the visitors arrived at the stable to see the new-born Messiah.

Perhaps that should remind us in the midst of all the busyness that surrounds Christmas in the 21st century that first and foremost our preparations for Christmas should include times of quietness, of stillness. The angelic choir who heralded His arrival sang: "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men on whom His favour rests" (Luke 2:14).

I think Eddie Askew got it right when he wrote:

Lord, in the quietness reach out and hold me.

Draw me gently into your peace

And in the loving silence at your heart, attune my ears

To hear the sounds I never listen to –

***The harmony that lies in you
The discords in the world you've put me in
The laughter and the tears
In other people's lives.***

I pray that each one of you may know the peace, the joy and the beauty of Christmas in your hearts, your minds and your lives as together we travel through Advent and look forward to the culmination of all our 'waiting' as together we welcome the new born King, born on Christmas Day.

I look forward to seeing all of you at our Christmas Eve service at 3.00 pm in Shieldhill Parish Church and of course at the services in both churches on Boxing Day.

Sandra Mathers

Locum Minister

.....

Funerals

'The Lord will protect you as you come and go, both now and forevermore'.

Muiravonside Parish

Mrs Carol Brodie

Mrs Jean Sneddon

Mrs Pat Muldoon

RENDEZVOUS GROUP

The first meeting of the Group took place in October. This turned out to be rather eventful. The entertainment which had been arranged well in advance had to be cancelled at short notice due to unforeseen circumstances. Alternative arrangements were attempted but, again for genuine reasons, the persons contacted were unable to help us out. Finally, however, thanks to Jim Currie, we all enjoyed a DVD and presentation of the local area from days past. (Did I mention that our minibus driver phoned on the morning of our meeting to say he had tested positive for Covid? That's another story!) On 10 November we enjoyed an outing to the Grange Manor Hotel for afternoon tea. Over twenty people were present and it was a great opportunity to meet up with friends. Our next meeting is our Christmas Party on 8 December at 1.30 pm in the church hall. All are welcome. As in previous years there will be no meeting in January.

GUILD

The Guild has been meeting since the beginning of October. Our next meeting will be on 1 December when the topic will be 'Christmas Preparation'. The final meeting this year will be the Christmas Party on 15 December when we will be joined by some of our friends. The Guild will resume on 19 January 2022.

Marion Zacks

SMILE TIME.

God knocked at the door of my soul one day,
and I looked for a place to hide.
My soul was cluttered and choked with debris
and things were untidy inside.

I needed some time to put matters right,
surprised He would call on me.
My soul needed cleaning from bottom to top.
There were things He should not see.

There were tasks neglected-long overdue-
cobwebs to be brushed from the wall,
rugs to be shaken and Windows cleaned up,
I hadn't expected His call.

I stood with my hands on the latch of the door
and gazed at the mess in the room.
When I opened the door, my soul blushed to see,
God had left on my doorstep.....a Broom'.

Etta Napier

Some Christmas Jokes to cheer you up!

Why did no one buy Donner and Blitzen at the Christmas Market? - They were two deer!!



What does Santa suffer from if he gets stuck in the chimney- Claustrophobia!!

Why are Christmas trees so bad at sewing - They always drop their needles!!



What do you get if you cross a Christmas tree with an apple - a pineapple!!



What do you get if you eat Christmas decorations - Tinselitus!!



What happened to the man who stole an Advent calendar - He got 24 days!!



Why is it getting harder to buy Advent calendars - Because their days are numbered!!

Why does Father Christmas have three gardens - So he can "ho,ho,ho"!!



Submitted by Norma Jack

Website

Our magazines are now available on our website :

www.bsandm-church.org.uk.

If anyone would prefer to access them this way, instead of paper format, please let your Church Elder know.

As well as saving paper, and trees, you would receive the magazine in colour. It could also be enlarged if you need to see it in large print.



Reflections at Christmas

Reading “A Wonderful Gift” from the December edition of “Life and Work” magazine about how Ministers keep their minds and ours “Fresh” every Christmas, made me think of many occasions that I managed to swap shift working Christmas Day!

Guess we all wonder at times about where do the years go and so quickly at that! Refreshing ideas are indeed welcomed in Christian worship and celebrations with the coming of the Christ Child.

May love come down at Christmas, and may it bring fresh hope and peace within us this festive time.

John Robertson

May each day in the week be a good day
May the Lord always watch over you
And may all of your hopes turn to wishes
And may all of your wishes come true

May each day in the month be a good day
May you make friends with each one you meet
And may all of your daydreams be memories
And may all of your memories be sweet

May each day in the year be a good day
May each dawn find you happy and gay
And may all of your days be as lovely
As the one you shared with me today

Submitted by John Robertson

(From the song “May each Day” written by Mort Greene and George Wyle, sung by Andy Williams)

My First Christmas in Heaven

I see the countless Christmas Trees around the world below,
with tiny lights, like heaven's stars, reflecting on the snow.

The sight is so spectacular, please wipe away that tear,
for I am spending Christmas with Jesus Christ this year.

I hear the many Christmas songs that people hold so dear,
but the sounds of music can't compare with the Christmas choir up
here.

I have no words to tell you, the joy their voices bring,
for it is beyond description, to hear the angels sing.

I know how much you miss me. I see the pain inside your heart,
but I am not so far away. We really aren't apart.

So be happy for me dear ones. You know I hold you dear,
and be glad I'm spending Christmas, with Jesus Christ this year.

I send you each a special gift, from my heavenly home above.
I send you each a memory of, of my undying love.

After all "Love" is the gift, more precious than pure gold.
It was always most important in the stories Jesus told.

Please love and keep each other, as my Father said to do,
for I can't count the blessing or love he has for each of you.

So, have a Merry Christmas and wipe away that tear.
Remember, I'm spending Christmas, with Jesus Christ this year.



Submitted by John Robertson



St Columba

Most of what is known about St Columba comes from the writings of Adomnán, who was abbot of Iona in 700AD. The historian Bede wrote about Columba some thirty years after Adomnán and from Irish annals that were compiled during the 800s. These were stored at Iona.

Columba was born in Ireland in 520BC and was given the name Cremthann. His father was Fedlimid, son of Fergus who was an aristocrat from the family Cenél Conaill which ruled over much of Donegal.

Columba was seen as a priest, and he was said to have founded monasteries in Ireland but the Iona Abbey is dated earlier than the known Irish ones. He returned to Ireland during his life and he probably founded this monasteries then.

Columba fell from grace after the Battle of Cul Dreimne. This battle was fought between branches of Uí Néill of which Columba's house was part of. The details of the battle have been lost in time, but Columba appears to have been the cause and to be held responsible for the loss of much blood. He was excommunicated from the church in 562 but was reinstated by the synod of a meeting of Irish clergy at Tailtiu (now Teltown, County Meath). It was shortly after this that Columba, with twelve companions, sailed to the court of Conall mac Comgaill, king of the Dál Riata in Scotland. He arrived on Iona in 563. It is from this point that we leave legend behind and have historical fact relating to Columba to consider.

Columba is already interacting with important laymen. He has a working relationship with Dairmait mac Cerbaill king of the Uí Neil, with leaders of Cenél Conaill, and with Conall mac Comgaill, king of the Dal Riata. Although the Uí Neil and the Dal Riata peoples were not related, they spoke the same Gaelic language.

Columba sailed to Scotland wishing to be a pilgrim for Christ.

Later tradition had Columba sailing directly to Iona and landing at Port na Cruraich on the south side of the island. However, Adomnán's writings suggest that Columba was more of a diplomat than a priest.

The Irish annals say that Columba stayed with King Connal and it was he who gave Iona to Columba as a place where he could build his monastery.

Adomnán doesn't say very much about Columba remaining with the Dal Riata and so it is possible that Columba spent his early years in that part of what is now Scotland, working on Iona and travelling to other islands in the southern Hebrides, setting up monasteries and Christian communities.

While Columba was on Iona, on one of these Hebridean trips, he heard of the death of Conall in c.564. There are several versions of what happened next but the common thread is that Columba had an angelic visitation that told him about the king's death and news of his possible successor.

Columba wasn't a blood relation of the Dal Riata, and so it is thought that he would play no part in electing the king. However, he did work closely with the new king of the Dal Riata, Aedán. It is thought that Aedán would have been crowned on the footprint that is still to be seen today, on the top of Dunadd in Knapdale. There is a similar footprint at Southend in Kintyre that local folk say belonged to St Columba. It may be that Columba blessed Aedán at this place.

Aedán was aggressive towards his neighbours, in fact he took part in a family dispute in which he came out the winner.

It could very well be that Columba's relationship with Aedán may have soured his standing with neighbouring tribes. One example

of this is that when Columba first visited King Bridei. King Bridei was king of the northern Picts and had a royal fortress on top of Craig Phatric near to the River Ness. Entrance to the fortress was denied him. When he hammered at the gate with his staff, the gates flew open and the fortress and the king and his councillors rushed out to meet him.

About this time, c. 580, there are records of King Aedán carrying out a raid on islands within the Orkneys. The purpose of Columba's visit to King Bridei was to ask him to ask the sub-King of the Orkneys to grant favourable passage to a monk called Cormac, who was seeking a place to live as a hermit on a southern island in the Orkneys.

It was also at this time that a large aquatic creature was spotted in Loch Ness. Adomnán's monster doesn't resemble more recent appearances of Nessy. Could this have been a forerunner of our Nessy?

Adomnán mentions small pockets of the Pictish folk who became Christians, by far the largest number of Pictish converts came after Columbus's death.

Assessing Columba's life is not easy. He was born a nobleman, he could mix with kings but could also show empathy to the monks that did the everyday work. The monks on Iona worked in the fields but also worked indoors. It is thought that the Book of Kells was produced on Iona as the art work in this book is so fine.

Columba slept on the stone floor and had a stone for a pillow. He died in front of the altar on Sunday, 9th June 597.

References: The Saints of Scotland by Alan MacQuarrie

Saints of Scotland by Edwin Sprott Towill

Rena

Blythwood Trust Shoeboxes.

I took 19 shoeboxes, two bags and £65 to the Blythwood Trust van.

Well done everybody.

Your boxes and bags will go to Eastern Europe.

Rena



Santa's Treats

The treats on offer to Santa Claus vary around the world.

In Britain, it is traditional to leave out a mince pie and a glass of sherry or ginger wine to warm Father Christmas against the chill weather.

In North America, they are a little more health conscious and leave Santa a fortifying glass of milk with a plate of chocolate chip or gingerbread cookies.

In Ireland, what else could it be but a mince pie and a pint of Guinness?

In the Scandinavian countries, Santa gets a bowl of hearty rice porridge, possibly with a cup of coffee in Sweden or maybe a jug of beer in Norway.

In Latvia, the treat on offer is a *piparkukas*, which is a type of spicy or peppered gingerbread biscuit that is often hung on the Christmas tree.

The Dutch are much more concerned with the poor reindeer and tend to leave carrots (good for seeing at night) along with some hay and a bowl of water.

The French are the same and leave carrots for the reindeer although they do put out biscuits for Santa too.

In Italy, Santa gets a clementine while the reindeer get some hay.

In Germany and Switzerland, poor Santa gets nothing at all. Instead children are encouraged to write him a letter outlining their hopes and fears, and in return the Christkind will leave a small gift.

In the southern hemisphere it's summer-time, of course, so Santa prefers something cool, especially as he has to race around in that heavy red coat. In Australia, for instance, which

is one of his first stops, they speed him on his way with a glass of the amber nectar (beer) and a plate of biscuits, plus some carrots for the reindeer.

In Chile, Santa can stock up on some delicious *pan de pascua* (Christmas bread), which is a type of sponge cake made with candied fruit, ginger and honey.

Submitted by Norma Jack





The New Songs

Christmas is such a special time.

Perhaps it's the sense of expectation we had when we were children when December came round ever so slowly. Then the excitement began to build as each December day passed by until that magical day - the 25th when Santa finally arrives!

As I child I loved attending the school Christmas Service. In those days, we all walked down from the school to the church on the last day of term. The cold weather didn't hamper our spirits. There was a sense of expectation – that something very special was about to happen. I loved the Christmas carols and as we sung them and heard the Nativity story read through the Scriptures, I looked forward so much to the next few days ahead which weren't like normal school holidays. I was so proud we were celebrating the birth of someone very special, a King of kings, Lord of all lords.

We also never forget some of the Christmas presents we received as children. Even fifty years later, I still remember receiving all the selection boxes, as well as the train sets! I played with them so much that I actually overheated the transformer that was powering them, resulting in the house being enveloped in an oily sort of burning smell that I can still smell in my imagination and remember as if it were yesterday!

All of you will have your own memories of very special presents from childhood and I think too that this is why the giving and receiving of Christmas presents mean so much to us

as adults. We maybe don't give each other train sets or selection boxes (both of these would be absolutely magic - by the way!) but that sense of excitement and enchantment when we were children of giving and receiving presents never really leaves us, as well as the sense of wonder as the story of the Nativity is related through Scripture – some of which are my most favourite passages in the Bible.

Because this is such a special time, we celebrate Christmas Day and everything it stands for in so many different ways, but ways that are very special to us. We may eat a sumptuous Christmas dinner. Perhaps we treat ourselves to something expensive we wouldn't normally buy and have been looking forward to all year. I am no exception to this and my Christmas treat for this year started in September when an announcement was made that something really special was going to happen after forty years of waiting.

This announcement was just so special that it has resulted in my taking part in a personal quest which will come to fruition on Christmas Day.

Let me explain how it all came about.

It all goes back to Christmas 1976, when I received a batch of record tokens which were very much in fashion at the time as “The Ideal Gift.” Delighted to say, my aunts and uncles – bless them! - had got together that year and all bought them from the same shop which happened to be the John Menzies store. At the time, this shop was not only adjacent to the old Falkirk Bus Station, but almost actually in it! (I believe it is now a

Hairdresser that is in these premises nowadays.)

This resulted in my being rather wealthy in record token terms! I was faced with a quandary though. Just after Christmas 1976 and during the early months of 1977, although there were lots of great artists and superb pop groups around, I just didn't have a personal favourite. I enjoyed listening to all the current songs on the radio, but was at a total loss as to which artist to invest my record tokens in! Because of this, I kept putting off redeeming the coupons and still had them just before Easter came around! Already a few of my aunts had asked me which album I had bought! I hadn't the heart to tell them I was utterly stumped and simply said that I appreciated receiving the tokens so much that I was searching for a very special album and would keep them posted!

John Menzies' store was a great place because if you had just missed your bus or a connection, you could just literally walk into the shop and have a look at all the records, as well as all the books and magazines in warmth and comfort while you waited for your next bus. In the past, I had often pored through all the many stacks of LPs at random, but again didn't have a particular favourite that stood out.

The schools finally broke up for the Easter holidays. I rapidly exited Graeme High School and walked very determinedly along Callendar Road towards the town on a mission! I had my record tokens with me and I knew I must buy something with them. After all, my aunts and uncles had been very kind - teaming up and going to the bother of buying them all from John Menzies. I desperately wanted to buy something with them.

I entered the inviting and friendly shop and made straight for the record department which was actually just inside. The records on display were listed in alphabetical order. There were hundreds of them, so I thought even if I go through the very first ones beginning with A at least I was trying!

Almost the very first record I came upon was an ABBA album. It was their Greatest Hits compilation. I had of course heard of ABBA and had watched them winning the Eurovision Song Contest a few years before, but hadn't really listened to much of their music. What made me stop and look at this particular album were the photographs on the front and rear covers. On the front cover, one of the couples in the group was sitting apart on a park bench, looking at the camera absolutely dejected. Whereas on the rear cover, the other couple in the group were seated at the other side of the same park bench locked in an embrace.

There was something compelling about the photographs because they were so different – a yin and yang of conflicting emotions. The seventh heaven of delight compared with abject sadness. Of course, I realized the photos had been staged for the album but I looked at them for long time as they were so compelling. It was as if I was already being told a story by them. A story about life where there is happiness but there is sadness as well. Absolutely intrigued and curious, I wondered if their music would also tell me a story. I then realized I had found the elusive album I was searching for.

And that was how I encountered ABBA for the very first time.

I took the LP home, put it on my record player and was totally blown away, not only by the lyrics which did indeed tell a story, but by the music and wonderful vocals as well. I will never

forget these warm Spring days in 1977 because I played this album for the entire Easter holiday until the stylus on the record player was worn out. Even to this day, anytime one of these tracks are played, I am immediately taken back to that time and to John Menzies' record department.

I bought every other ABBA album right up until their last one with new songs - "The Visitors" was released in 1981. Later in 1982, they announced they were "having a break," but years then passed and they never released any new material as ABBA. This didn't stop the fans listening to their old albums. Just like myself many are still listening to them forty years later.

Fast forward to 2021 and you can imagine the joy that ABBA fans experienced when on the 2nd of September, ABBA suddenly announced they had got together and made a new album. There was even going to be a Christmas song included. It had been announced back in 2018 that they maybe would release two new songs, but the Pandemic and other factors put paid to that and we had almost given up.

It is difficult to describe the joy that this has generated not just for myself, but for all other ABBA fans. It is just so special that as I described earlier in the essay, I will be taking part in a personal quest. Christmas day is so special to me as we celebrate the birth of the Baby Jesus and I got to thinking instead of listening to the new ABBA songs just now, (the album was released on 5th November) why not wait and listen to the ten songs on Christmas Day?

This is actually much more difficult than it sounds, as the songs are being played all over the place just now on the radio, tv and media sites. But somehow I have managed to evade them, despite being very tempted to listen. I feel it is worth it because

it will be almost like getting a special Christmas present from ABBA!

The new ABBA songs are of course not theological but quite strikingly, the name of the first song in the album is called "I still have faith in you." This will be the first song I will listen to on that special day and as well as enjoying this ABBA song, I will reflect on how apt this title is in the theological world of our church that we love so much.

My prayer to God on this most special of days will be:

"I still have faith in you" Lord, despite the fact that the world seems to be falling down about us just now with climate change, pandemics, wars and shortages of supplies.

"I still have faith in you" Lord, during these times of change when the world seems so different to how it was just a few years ago before the Pandemic and its restrictions came.

I know that you will see us through and show us the way.

Amen

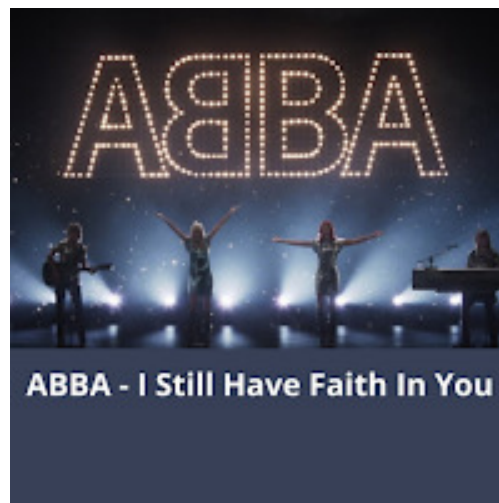
The title of the new ABBA album is "Voyage" and we are indeed on a journey throughout our lives with times that are sometimes happy and times that are sometimes sad, but it is a journey filled with hope because the Lord is with us.

Going back to the ABBA songs, like so many of the original ABBA fans, I am now nearing retirement, but when I listen to the songs, I will in fact be embarking on time travel and will go back to that nice Spring day in 1977 to John Menzies' record department when my life was just beginning and I encountered ABBA for the first time. I will give thanks to God that by his grace

I am still around in 2021 to hear the new songs.

What a lovely way to spend Christmas day - celebrating the birth of our Lord Jesus and listening to the new songs.

Drew Robertson



**Some Christmas Specialities for which Countries around
the World are Renowned.**

USA and Canada - Eggnog.

Australia and New Zealand - Fresh Fruit Pavlova.

France - Caviar, oysters, pate de foie gras, Champagne.

Germany - Stollen, gingerbread, Gluhwein (mulled wine).

Italy - Panettone (sweet bread).

Spain - Chicken noodle soup, *torrons* (baked sweet made with honey, nuts and egg).

Portugal - *Consoada* (baked codfish), *Bolo Rei* (fruit cake).

Poland - *Pierogi* (stuffed dumplings).

Eastern Europe - Carp (meat free meal).

Scandinavian countries - Rice pudding, *Glogg* (mulled wine).

Puerto Rico - *Coquito* (eggnog made with coconut milk, and rum).

Columbia - *Natilla* (a creamy custard dessert with coconut, cheese and raisins).

Mexico - Tamales with chicken (steamed corn cakes stuffed with meat, fruits, vegetables or chillies).

Japan - Kentucky Fried Chicken, strawberry sponge cake.

Submitted by Norma Jack



*Open your heart at Christmas
And not just for one day
Open your heart at Christmas
Let this beautiful feeling stay.*

*For caring, generosity and love,
we treasure through the year.
Don't wait until Christmas
to share it with those you hold dear.*

~S.M. Carne

Submitted by Rita Braes

Property.

I have recently reluctantly stepped down as property convenor due to health reasons. Stepping back has allowed me to reflect on property matters over the years, I have always been part of a team nothing has been done without their support.

When Barbara and I together with our 3 year old son Stuart moved to Shieldhill in 1973 it was comforting to be welcomed into the church family in both Shieldhill and California. It was a time of change for the church up the Braes, it was to welcome a new minister the Rev. John Paterson.

He moved from Edinburgh to a council house in Hallglen with his wife Margaret and faithful companion Bing. He needed somewhere more appropriate to stay.

Knowing my background, I was invited to draw up plans for a new manse as the existing manse was in disrepair. The plans were drawn up based on 1 ½ storey bungalow replacing the 2 storey building that was typical for a manse at that time. The old manse was sold for £19,000 and the new Manse built for £20,000.

The records show that in 1977 a new hall was to be built doubling the size of the existing hall complete with a new kitchen and toilets, I was named in the grant application to C of S as the Architect, Supervising Officer and Property Convenor, the cost of the new hall was to be £13,250, we received a grant of £500. The number of communicants at that time was 540 plus 10 adherents.

It was by good fortune that the village had a strong link to the building industry, if a member's family were not in the building trade, then their neighbour was. The property team had a strong

link to good building practice strengthened by having an elder who was a quantity surveyor. As years passed by the team's numbers got smaller and smaller as did the number of communicants.

My roll most of the time was advisor as others took on the roll as property convenor one being Bill McKinnon. Whilst the village has seen the development of new housing this is not reflected in the church membership. In the 44 years since I became actively involved in the property side of the church, I have been fortunate to have full support by the members in keeping the fabric in good order, it is more than a building it has been mine and your second home for all these years. I wish that anyone taking the reins will still appreciate that.

I give thanks to all who have been with me on that journey, I will still be watching from the second row.

Jim Currie



The following interesting article, submitted by Norma Jack is from "The Book of Christmas" by Christopher Winn, author and historian.

Advent Wreath

The Advent wreath is a circle of evergreen plants, usually pine branches mixed with holly and perhaps mistletoe, that is laid somewhere in the home on a flat surface and set with four standing candles. Three purple and one pink, the candles represent the four Sundays of Advent. The first candle is lit on the first Sunday in Advent, and then two candles on the second Sunday, three on the third and all four on the fourth.

Sometimes there is a white candle symbolising purity which is placed in the middle of the wreath and lit on Christmas Eve. This is known as the Christ Candle and represents the life of Jesus Christ in the world.

The tradition of the Advent wreath comes, like so many Christmas traditions, from 16th century Lutheran Germany, but the modern Advent wreath was the idea of a 19th century German Protestant pastor called Johann Wichern, who designed it as a way of explaining Advent to the children of his mission school. Wichern's Advent wreath was made out of an old wooden wheel and had twenty small red candles and four large white candles. One small candle was lit on every weekday and Saturday during Advent and the four white candles were lit on the Sundays. Advent wreaths in Germany today still have red candles, although there are usually now only four of them.

Though popular in Germany since the 19th century, and in North America since the 1930s when they were introduced by German immigrants, Advent wreaths were not widely known in Britain until 1964, when the BBC children's programme "Blue Peter" demonstrated how to make an Advent wreath at home, inspiring a whole new generation to take up the idea.

Submitted by Norma Jack

The Twelve Days of Christmas

Have you ever wondered about the origins of the much loved song?



"The Twelve Days of Christmas" was first published in England in 1780 without music as a chant meant for children. Was thought to be French in origin.

Some historians believe that the song was used as a catechism at a time when practising Catholics were persecuted.

12 drummers drumming symbolised the 12 points of the Apostles' Creed.

11 pipers piping stood for the 11 faithful Apostles.

10 lords a leaping are the Ten Commandments.

9 ladies dancing represents the 9 choirs of angels or the 9 fruits of the Holy Spirit : Charity, Joy, Peace, Patience, Goodness, Mildness, Fidelity, Modesty and Chastity.

8 maids a milking are the 8 Beatitudes.

7 swans a swimming represent the seven-fold gifts of the Holy Spirit: Prophecy, Serving, Teaching, Exhortation, Contribution, Leadership and Mercy. Some believe they represent the seven Sacraments : Baptism, Confirmation, Holy Communion, Confession, Marriage, Holy Orders, and the Anointing of the sick.

6 geese a laying stands for the six days of creation.

5 golden rings represent the first 5 books of the Old Testament.

4 calling birds are the 4 Apostles - Matthew, Mark, Luke and John

3 French hens stand for the Theological Virtues of Faith, Hope and Charity, or The Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

2 turtle doves are the Old and New Testaments , or the two natures of Christ - human and divine.
And...what does

1 represent...?

Please turn over to the next page for the answer!

1 The partridge in a pear tree represents Jesus Christ .

The pear tree is representative of the cross. Why was a partridge used for this symbolism? Because they demonstrate selflessness and are willing to sacrifice themselves to protect their young, by feigning injury to lure away predators.

Submitted by Lorna Coulter

From a past edition of “My Weekly” Festive special

Thank you

Mrs Jean Robertson would like to thank everyone at Blackbraes and Shieldhill Church for the lovely flowers she received. They are much appreciated really cheered me up when I wasn't feeling so well.

Thank you again.

Love from

Jean Robertson



Muiravonside Treasurer's Report to 31/12/21

INCOME		EXPENDITURE					
WFO	4189.51	MINISTRY/MISSION	12,753.00		91,792.16	BANK STATEMENT SHOWS	41,558.42
GIFT AID	13,802.82	PULPIT SUPPLY	65.00	MINUS	50,015.59	BANKED 31/10/21	427.00
OPEN PLATE	50.00	HEAT/LIGHT	2,132.00	=	41,776.57	=	41,985.42
FABRIC FUND	53,448.43	SALARIES	9,401.35				
SMARTIES	335.80	FABRIC CHURCH	22,963.02			UNCASHED CHQS	208.85
DONATIONS	891.50	FABRIC MANSE	632.19			TRUE BALANCE	41,776.57
FUNERALS	450.00	SUNDRIES	336.84				
		INSURANCE	1,732.19				
APPEALS	330.50	TOTAL	50,015.59				
SUNDRIES	18,293.60						
TOTAL	91,792.16						

427.00 banked 31/10/21 not on bank statement but account for in calculation as within accounting period, uncashed chqs issued but not yet banked by recipient.

Thanks to all our dedicated members who gave via their envelopes and standing orders, next month will not look as healthy as the final bill for the exterior work has been paid. Work is now ongoing in the interior.

Please note that the Earl Haig Poppy Scotland collection realised £116.00 and cheque has now been sent.

Best Wishes to all for Christmas and New Year -

Moir Sharp

A Message from the Editor



Just a quick note to thank everyone for their magazine articles. We have had a wonderful response, both from Blackbraes and Shieldhill and Muiravonside.

It has been an absolute pleasure receiving these articles and compiling them and seeing the magazine take shape.

I look forward to the next magazine around Easter time.

In the meantime, have a very Merry Christmas and a Good New Year.

Best Wishes from

Drew

