

Blackbraes and Shieldhill  
Parish Church  
linked with  
Muiravonside Parish Church  
Winter and Christmas  
Edition 2020



[www.bsandm-church.org.uk](http://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 Message**  
**From the Interim Moderator : Rev Scott Burton**

Dear friends,

We are coming up to Advent and most likely we approach this with a greater sense of uncertainty than we ever have: uncertainty with what lies ahead for our world, community, family and congregation. There is much happening in our world and church today – on the one hand we have Coronavirus and its affects upon us all, and on the other we have ongoing conversations about the future shape of the Church of Scotland across the Braes and from this significant decisions will need to be made in the New Year. How are we to approach such an Advent? Can we recover joy, or at the very least a measure of hope?

I am reminded of the opening chapters of Matthew's gospel wherein we read the familiar words retelling the birth of the Messiah, Jesus the Christ – the promised King who would begin to set the world alight, bringing forgiveness of sins (Matt. 1:21) and securing for us an 'eternal encouragement and good hope' (2 Thess. 2:16). In the first chapter of Matthew, we read that one of the names of Jesus will be (and is) 'Immanuel', which means 'God with us' – and that is great encouragement: that Jesus is with us and He has been with us as a human being, knowing and sharing every sense of despair and worry that we might ever have felt.

But at the same time, this revelation of Jesus is told by the angel to Joseph, in a dream, and upon the eve of Joseph potentially divorcing Mary since she has been found to be inexplicably pregnant. Joseph's – and Mary's – plans have been completely upended by God! The world as they knew it, the world as they thought it would be, is no more – they must have felt a great measure of uncertainty, maybe more so than us. Yet into this situation the message from God is that this child is His and He is Immanuel, God with us – with us in the flesh and with us now by His Spirit.

Sisters and brothers, we face a winter, we face Christmas celebrations like we have not had for generations, and we face decisions as a Church that few of us would ever wish to take, but there is hope – God is with us. He has shown it two thousand years ago and was faithful then, revealing the depth of His love and grace when it was least deserved, so we can be confident that He will be faithful now and be with us in these days as well.

I pray that you and your families, will know the hope of the Advent message and that together, as the people of God in this Braes area, we will shine a bright light of hope to neighbour, friend and family as we remember that Jesus is Immanuel, God with us – now and for all eternity.

With love to one and all,

**Scott**

**November 2020**

### **Update on the Braes Churches Hub**

Presbytery agreed at the end of October 2020 to accept the proposed Presbytery Plan, wherein the Braes Churches would work towards becoming a “Hub” and together have two full-time Ministers as well as two Ordained Local Ministers (OLM) and one Ministry Development Staff (MDS) member, whose role would be focused on mission.

The Kirk Sessions of the Braes Churches also met at the end of October for a conference and reviewed a number of example Hub models, giving feedback on the various options as well as sharing our hopes and fears. The Kirk Sessions, in September, had also agreed to appoint two representative elders from each Kirk Session to work with the Ministers, Interim Moderators, OLMs and Locums on taking forward feedback from this conference and draft a proposed shape of a Hub for the Braes Churches.

As of 2nd November, the representative group had held their first meeting and reviewed the feedback. They will meet again

on the 16th November and still hope to present a first draft of a proposed Hub model to all the Kirk Sessions before the Christmas break. Kirk Sessions will then be able to give feedback on the draft and help the representative group refine things. This “back and forward” communication will continue until a Hub model has been agreed, which we hope will be early in the New Year. Around the same time, we hope to put out a shared statement from the representative group to all congregations.

Please note that the work of the reps is in relation to the shape of ministry and not buildings, which will be a later matter of discussion amongst the Kirk Sessions as Presbytery require us to make a decision by April 2021 on the long-term future of our buildings, and when we have more to share we will keep you updated.

Please do be praying for all involved in these discussions, particularly the representative group, but each Kirk Session as well. Ask the Lord to give us His heavenly wisdom which, as James said, ‘...is first of all pure; then peace-loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere.’ (James 3:17)

Yours in Christ,

**Rev. Scott Burton**

**November 2020**

## **A Message**

### **From the Locum Minister: Rev Sandra Mathers**

Dear Friends, In the midst of all the uncertainty and constant change of these days, it has been good to see some of you back at worship recently, even though the services aren't exactly as they used to be. Change - whether in our style of worship or indeed how we and all the congregations in the Braes area have always viewed ourselves – is the order of the day as we seek to draw closer to one another and operate as a 'Hub' ministry, drawing on each other's gifts and skills as we move forward into the future.

Change can be good for us causing us to re-evaluate our needs and our methods as individuals as well as a congregation, letting the wind blow through what we've taken for granted because "it's aye been done that way" but which has often become stale and no longer meaningful to those we should be reaching out to in Christ's name. Rather this is an opportunity for us to allow ourselves to be guided forward by the Holy Spirit into newness of life and witness in our parish. Of course the message does not and must not change – it's the old, old story which in the words of the hymn is "old yet ever new," but we are called to prayerfully seek to ensure that our telling of that story is presented in such a way, whether in the church or out of it, that all those hundreds in our villages who know nothing of Jesus and His love for us, are captivated by Him and themselves become His followers and disciples.

We are approaching one of our most important Christian festivals – Christmas – a time of excitement, certainly for the children, and if we're honest, most of us who've long since passed our childhood. Always in the run up to Christmas there's a frisson of expectation and excitement in the air, and it's not all to do with the hoped for visit of an old man in a red robe with white whiskers who comes bearing gifts.

We in the Church also are looking forward – looking forward to celebrating the second most important event in world history – the coming of Jesus to this world – God Himself taking upon Himself our humanity, becoming 'one of us'. One of the slogans

we hear bandied about in these days is “we’re all in this together.” Whatever the truth of that where the corona virus is concerned, its certainly true of our human condition – we’re all born sinners in need of salvation, the exact reason why Jesus left the glory of heaven and was born in that Palestinian stable.

The picture of the stable that we grow up with is the sanitised one of our nativity scenes not to mention Hollywood, where everything is clean and lovely with one or two animals there for effect. Let’s not forget that where there are animals there is dirt, there is a repugnant smell, and it was into such circumstances that Jesus, the King of kings and Lord of Lords, was born – and He came because He loved US – not just the shepherds or the wise men who’d travelled an enormous distance to see him and, as the scriptures tell us, to worship Him (Matthew 2:11). The shepherds were Jews, but men who weren’t acceptable in the ‘nicer’ echelons of society. The wise men were gentiles, pagans?, totally unacceptable company for any orthodox Jew – but our God is the God whose love straddles the world and everyone in it – from the aristocrat to the pauper, from the social climber to the social outcast and everyone in between regardless of age, colour, background, religion or no religion. Our hymn sums it up very well:

From heaven you came helpless, babe

Entered our world, Your glory veiled

Not to be served but to serve

And give your life that we might live .....This is our God!

And what a God He is! The God of might and miracle, the God who saves all who come to Him in faith, the God who holds us in His hands and will never let us go, the God who by His Holy Spirit dwells within us and is our Guide, our Comforter, our Friend as we look to Him in faith. Truly we can say – “Hallelujah, what a Saviour.”

I wish all of you a very happy and blessed Christmas and New Year in spite of the restrictions. I trust that all of us will be able to get together with our family and friends, but regardless, we have our Saviour’s promise – “I am with you ALWAYS” - an

amazing promise to take with us into 2021 and all that the future holds. Stay safe, stay loving and stay confident that you are never alone – you are safe in your Saviour's hands.

**Sandra Mathers**

**Locum Minister**



### **Funerals**

***‘The Lord will protect you as you come and go, both now and forevermore’.***



### **Muiravonside Parish**

John Jones

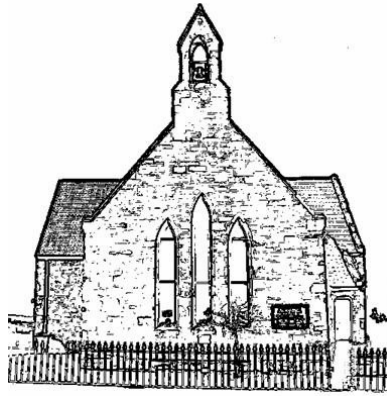
Alastair Waddell

Janice Boles



### **Funerals**

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



### **Blackbraes and Shieldhill Parish**

Georgina Russell

Alexander Thomson

Philip Henderson

### **Quiet Reflections**

Since March 23rd 2020, Sunday worship was curtailed following the Covid - 19 pandemic.

Many churchgoers appreciated viewing "Reflections at the Quay" from Glasgow, also previous "Songs of Praise" programmes featuring recordings which included some of our favourite hymns.

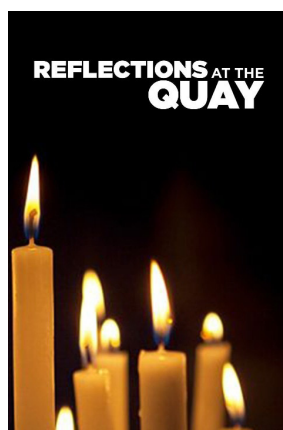
Around the end of April, gardens were needing attention, grass cutting, roses pruned, shrubs cut back and summer bedding planted, but restrictions caused a waiting period for such work. One morning, an elderly lady from Bridge of Allan phoned me saying she couldn't get the petrol mower started! "My Goodness," I said, "I'll come over and see what can be done."

After cutting the lawn, I drove along part of the Hillfoots, with Dumyat gleaming in the sunlight. Such beauty reminded me of the hymn

"I to the hills will lift my eyes."

Let's hope and pray our Sunday worship will return soon.

**John Robertson**



## Embracing Change

New ways of arranging ministry within the national church is currently taking place as progress continues with Presbytery plans for the Upper Braes Churches.

Restrictions have curtailed normal Sunday worship and church activities with Zoom meetings being the mainstream alternative for Kirk Sessions to progress.

Strange times indeed have created a continued bond with people, elderly and lonely alike, with telephone calls and offers of help. Many folk have commented on how grateful they were. Such help was appreciated.

May the proposed changes for our Parishes allow trust and hope to enable understanding of the need for closer relations with our neighbouring churches.

# John Robertson



## **Muiravonside School**

### **I was a Pupil in 4a at the Welfare Hall**

Electric light was introduced to the school, the schoolhouse and the old schoolhouse when an electric line passed the buildings. The school roll was steadily rising through the 1950s and it was decided to ask the Welfare Committee for the use of their hall to accommodate an infant class. It was reckoned that by 1954, there would have to be accommodation for 174 children. The teachers, who were provided with a midday meal at the school, were told that they would have to pay 1s 6d per meal instead of the present 1s 2d and the children would have to pay an extra 1d for their meal. The Welfare Hall in Whitecross was redecorated and new furniture was brought in for the class that was to be held there.

The school role had risen to 130 and there were now four teachers and the headmaster Mr. Wilson, Mrs. Gardiner, Miss Wilson, Miss Mitchell, and Mrs. Calder who was teaching primary 5 pupils in the Welfare Hall. The Education Committee for the County of Stirling faced a call for providing a school at Whitecross to replace the "obsolete type of school" at Muiravonside which only had accommodation for 120 pupils and was a mile from the village. It was agreed to build a school at Whitecross as soon as a suitable site could be found. The headmaster had a television set installed in the Welfare Hall to allow the children to view the Coronation of Queen Elizabeth; this was done in relays from 10 in the morning till 4 in the afternoon.

The school met in the parish church for a Coronation presentation service. The children all received either an illustrated book or a mug. The marble plaque presented to the school by Mr. James Napier Reynard of Manuel House (who

had since died and been replaced there by a Major Collville) had no room left on it to take the next set of names. The decision to provide one was deferred until the building of the new school at Whitecross. Work started on the new school in August 1954 with the contractor being Messrs. Duncan Stewart, Bonnybridge and a cost of £30,132 16s 5d. When the schools resumed from their summer holidays in August 1955, the school wasn't ready and the pupils had to return to Muiravonside School (Primary classes 1,2, 3, 4b,6 & 7,) classes 4a and 5 were to be taught in the Welfare Hall).

A decision was made after inspecting the school that it would not be ready for occupation until Monday October 3rd. The school was designed by Mr. A.J.Smith A.R.I.A.B. the County Architect. The school was officially opened by ex Provost Peter Symon, vice-convenor of the County Education Committee, on Friday 2nd December 1955. After 118 years of service to the Parish of Muiravonside, Muiravonside School finally closed and the council put the old building up for sale.

**Submitted by: John Robertson**



## **The Mayflower 400 Anniversary**

I am a regular viewer of "Songs of Praise" and recently the programme celebrated the 400th Anniversary of the epic journey of the ship Mayflower sailing in 1620 from Plymouth in England to the New World, North America. This event in my schooldays had only been a paragraph in a history book but when I read more there is an interesting story to be told.

In 1603 King James VI of Scotland inherited the English throne and took the title King James 1 of Great Britain. Religious matters at that time were unsettled after the break away in England from the Catholic Church and the writings of reformers like Martin Luther and John Calvin influenced many. James 1 in 1604 decided to convene the Hampton Court Conference to discuss the issues. This conference commissioned the King James Bible as we know it, the authorised version. This was an English translation used from the 17th century until the early 20th century and is still loved by many today because of its poetic language.

The Church of England leaders and Puritan Groups took part in the discussions and debates. Puritans asked for changes removing bishops and other theological issues but James supported the Church of England. He did not favour the Puritans because as King of Scotland he had had too many differences with the Scottish Presbyterian church. A Puritan group, the Separatists, wanted radical reform in the church and were dissatisfied and disappointed. Some fled to the Netherlands in search of religious freedom while others set up their own Independent Churches in England.

By 1617 a group of men decided to explore establishing a colony in the New World. At that time, there was only one English colony at Jamestown but a Royal Charter had given

territorial rights to land at the Hudson River near where New York is today. This appealed to the Separatists and just as happens today, the Mayflower Project was launched and the ship Mayflower engaged. A company was formed and investors invited. Fund raising had begun.

The Mayflower had a volume of 180 tons, was approximately 100 ft. long, 25 ft. wide and the hold had a height of 5ft. Christopher Jones, her captain was an experienced sailor but had no experience of crossing the Atlantic Ocean. On the first attempt two ships left Plymouth, the Mayflower and the Speedwell but the latter was not seaworthy and on a second attempt setting off later than planned, the Mayflower sailed off on its own through the Channel towards the Atlantic Ocean taking supplies that they thought they might use on reaching their destination.

The travellers felt they had no choice since conditions and persecution had become worse in England. They had little knowledge of America except that the climate was hot. They would head for Virginia where they hoped they would find fertile land to grow crops. Separatists numbered 102 and four children had no parents with them. Each passenger was allocated a space 6ft. long 2ft.6in wide and the height of the hold 5ft. This reminds me of the refugees crossing the Mediterranean Sea today in cramped boats also seeking freedom or a safe haven from conflict.

Little is recorded about the voyage itself. They experienced fair winds and fierce storms. After nine weeks on 9 November land was sighted but a distance from the destination they had hoped to find. The unhappy settlers and crew sailed along the coast for another month before Captain Jones decided that he had found land suitable for the needs of the settlers and a safe harbour for the ship. They named their new home New

Plymouth. It was recorded that a baby Oceanus Hopkins was born and a young boy William Batten died during the crossing. Unfortunately because of the winter weather, poor housing and disease, half of the people who had sailed from Plymouth died in the first six months.

Before they left the Mayflower, the colony leaders drew up the Mayflower compact, a document detailing how they were to be governed. Together they had agreed to work as an Independent Church and now too they would work together as a community.

The seeds which they had brought from England were of no use in their new land. With the help of a native American Squanto from the Wampanoag people, the settlers quickly learned how to sow and harvest maize. They worked in the fields, fished for cod and shared with the families. Wild ducks and geese came to swim in the rivers. They built a fort which became a meeting place and a place of government. In October 1621 they held three days of Thanksgiving activities, a forerunner of the Thanksgiving which Americans celebrate today. The Native Americans who had helped them joined in their celebrations. The colony thrived and they built boats and started trading.

As conditions in England worsened more settlers arrived seeking religious freedom. They wanted to protect their world, their culture and their faith as did the Native Americans who wanted to preserve their way of life, their culture and their land. The colony expanded taking up more land and the friendly relationships with the Native Americans broke down. The story continues.

Today we are fortunate that we have freedom to worship as they have in America but this is not so in many parts of the world. An interesting ending, in 1957 the Mayflower II was built in England, a replica of the first Mayflower and given as a gift to



the Americans in recognition of all they had done to help Britain in the World War 2. This is now a popular tourist attraction in Massachusetts.

Loving God we give you thanks for the freedom we have to  
worship you in spirit and in truth.

We pray that those who do not know these freedoms may come  
to enjoy them.

May your spirit enable us to live your freedoms wisely.

Prayer by Rev. John Bradbury

Songs of Praise 13 September 2020

Book : "The Mayflower Pilgrims 1620" Nick Bunker.

### **Lorna Coulter**



### **Thank You**

I would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone for continuing to give so faithfully during this most difficult time.

You have enabled me to pay all the bills and fulfil our obligations to Presbytery and the wider Church of Scotland.

Your generosity is very much appreciated.

### **Blessings**

**Christine Jones**

**Treasurer**

**Blackbraes and Shieldhill**



## **Muiravonside Treasurer's Report**

Dear Friends

Another year is quickly drawing to a close, this has been a very difficult year for everyone hopefully 2021 will be much brighter. On behalf of the Kirk Session I would like to thank everyone who continued to hand in their offerings to Rita Braes and Les Page and thanks must go to them for carrying out this task, knowing that there is a continual flow of money coming in makes my job as treasurer a lot easier.

Since the 27th September I have managed to bank £3470.00 this includes £208.00 from the harvest appeal which the church retains there were also donations of £160.00. The next service is on 15/11/2020 in past years we have always taken a collection in aid of The Lady Haig Poppy Veterans if anyone wishes to donate to this cause please feel free to do so and I will ensure any donations will be forwarded.

I hope everyone can have as good a Christmas and New Year as possible at this very difficult time.

God Bless and Stay Safe

**Moira Sharp Treasurer**



Below is an update on Romain, the little boy who is being sponsored by several members of the congregation through Compassion UK.

DISCOVER MORE

# ABOUT ME



## ROMAIN

DATE OF BIRTH:  
01 September 2005

COUNTRY:  
Burkina Faso

CHILD REFERENCE:  
BF014500037

**EVERY YEAR, THANKS TO YOUR SPONSORSHIP, ROMAIN RECEIVES A MEDICAL CHECK-UP TO ASSESS HIS HEALTH AND PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT.**

**EVER WONDERED WHAT WAS INVOLVED?**

**PHYSICAL**

All children undergo a physical examination to make sure they are growing healthy and strong. For those who need additional help or follow up, they have the Compassion staff ready and willing to see them through treatment of any kind, even if they need to be driven all the way to the hospital.





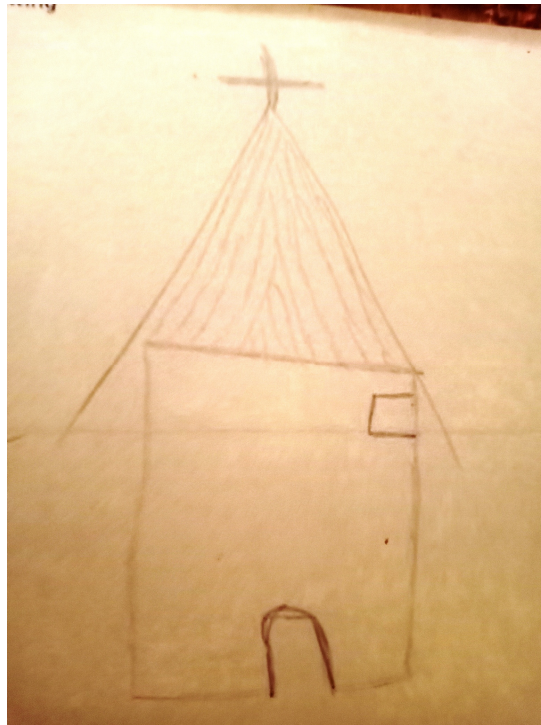
### **LICE TREATMENT**

Part of the medical check-up is a search for lice! Lice can carry deadly diseases like typhus as well as causing itchy skin and rashes. Doctors take note of the number of children affected and teach local staff and volunteers how to treat lice in children's hair.

### **HYGIENE EDUCATION**

Proactive education in hygiene and disease prevention has always been a vital part of the teaching children receive at their project. A pandemic like COVID-19 brings even more focus to appropriate hygiene practices to help protect the health of children.

To find out how Compassion is responding to COVID-19 visit:  
[compassionuk.org/corona-virus](https://compassionuk.org/corona-virus)



Dear Carolyn Marshall, hello!

Very happy to know that you and your whole family are doing well. My family and I are doing well too. I thank God for protecting you from this pandemic that has plunged many families around the world into mourning. I would like to be next door to get a better view of your garden. Thank you very much for your compliments and prayers. May God also blesses you beyond your expectations and I answer your prayers with amen. Goodbye and see you soon.

Your deposit is eligible for protection under the Financial Services Compensation Scheme (FSCS). Please see reverse for more details.

Particulars	Withdrawn	Paid In	2020	Balance
BALANCE FORWARD			17 JUL	209.00
D/D COMPASSION UK	28.00		17 AUG	181.00
SBT FUNDS TRANSFER FROM A/C 00213408		120.00	15 SEP	
D/D COMPASSION UK	28.00		15 SEP	273.00
832032		110.00	29 SEP	383.00
D/D COMPASSION UK	28.00		15 OCT	355.00
		<i>£32</i>	<i>20 oct</i>	
		<i>Total</i>		<i>£384</i>
	Total Withdrawn	Total Paid In	2020	Balance
	84.00	230.00	16 OCT	35

HOPPING IS CHANGING- WE'LL BE CONTACTING YOU MORE OFTEN  
ITS REALLY YOU. KEEP YOUR CONTACT DETAILS UP TO DATE

Thanks from Carolyn





## **The Irish Blessing**

*"May there always be work for your hands to do.  
May your purse always hold a coin or two.  
May the sun always shine on your window pane.  
May the rainbow be certain to follow rain.  
May the hand of a friend always be near you.  
May God fill your heart with gladness to cheer you."*

**Submitted by**

**Rita Braes**





### **Little Hopes and Dreams**

When all the world looks dull and grey  
The sunshine hard to find,  
We need some little hopes and dreams  
To lift the heart and mind.  
And if your hopes aren't realised  
Don't let them slip away,  
But hold them fast and keep them safe,  
There'll be a better day.

Just now and then, shut out the world  
And dream a little dream,  
And let your thoughts go wandering  
As gently as a stream.  
Keep cheerful as you journey on  
Whatever comes your way,  
With all those little hopes and dreams  
You'll find a brighter day.

**Iris Hesselden**

**Submitted by  
Rita Braes**

31st October 2020

Halloween

**“I saw a stranger yestere’en. I put food in the eating place, drink in the drinking place, music in the listening place. In the name of the sacred Triune, the stranger blessed me and my house, my cattle and my dear ones. And the lark said in her song, ‘Often, often, often, goes the Christ in the stranger’s guise. Often, often, often, goes the Christ in the stranger’s guise.’”**

*A Celtic Rune of Hospitality*

Tonight is Halloween, the time, in American parlance, for children to go out “Trick or Treating”. However, I’m still steeped in the Halloweens of my childhood in Scotland when we went out “guising”. This consisted of children going from door to door in disguise – often with elaborate costumes. Each child was expected to offer a “performance” in the form of a poem, song, or joke, and, in return, they would receive a gift in the form of food, usually apples or nuts. Though Covid-19 restrictions make such things difficult, if not impossible, this year, my memories are happy ones. The “guising” tradition goes back a long way and was first recorded in Scotland in the 16th century. A more “contemporary” reference comes from 1895 where masqueraders in disguise and carrying lanterns made of scooped-out turnips visited homes to be rewarded with cakes and fruit. In my childhood, enterprising children would already know the generous homes from past years and head there first, so they could be suitably rewarded before then less well-informed children came along. I loved guising at Halloween when I was a child. These were safe days in a small village. And it was about community, fun, kindness, generosity, affection, warmth and, above all, welcome and hospitality.

Perhaps it's a fanciful thought, but I wonder if "guising" might be rooted somewhere in the concept of hospitality as outlined in the Celtic Rune with which this Thought for the Day begins. Poor children being provided for? Need being rewarded with kindness? Communities caring for their own? I hope so. For you never know, if Christ does go about "in a stranger's guise" as the Rune suggests, then that little child who appeared on your doorstep at Halloween and sang a well-rehearsed song, might just have been the Christ who was hoping to be welcomed into your home.

A prayer for today  
Living God, may the stranger be my friend; may Christ  
receive my welcome. Amen.

**An original reflection ©Tom Gordon**  
**Also available at <https://swallowsnestnet.wordpress.com>**

**Submitted by Jackie Napier**





Drew's  
view

## **O For a Thousand Tongues to Sing**

Hymns can be beautiful in so many ways. They never lose this beauty no matter how much time passes by.

There are hymns that bring comfort when we are sad. There are also hymns that make us feel on top of the world. There are rousing hymns. There are quiet and peaceful hymns. There is a hymn to suit almost every situation that you may find yourself in.

However, hymns don't just apply to the present. They are also old friends from the past. There is a certain hymn that might take us back to our schooldays when we heard it being played rousingly on an old piano which echoed along the corridors. Even fifty, sixty, or seventy years later, we will still associate it with our schooldays.

In my case, there is a certain hymn that acts almost like a time machine and immediately takes me back to when I was eight years old. Even to this day, it still plays away in my mind at certain times. I can hear it just as clearly as I did then. You will probably think that I hear it being played on a school piano when I think back, however the source was a bit closer to my home at that time. These delightful notes were wafting all the way across the street from a church!

At that time, just as the swinging nineteen sixties were transforming into the trendy new decade of the seventies, my mum and dad and I used to live almost just across the road from Brightons Church. Back then, the church had its machine that played a selection of hymns like a carillon from loudspeakers. It sounded lovely and every Sunday morning, all the houses in Main Street that were within earshot were treated to the beautiful sound of bells sounding out hymns, just like the houses in Main Street Shieldhill were when we used to play some hymns through the loudspeakers just before the service started.

Back in Brightons, there was one particular hymn that I always waited to hear every Sunday when the bells rang out and as an eight year old boy it absolutely fascinated me. I had no idea at that time what the hymn was called, but it had a very distinct ending where the bells gradually became slower and slower and sounded almost as if they were chiming out the time, even though it wasn't yet the top of the hour.

I was completely fascinated and each Sunday at church, I listened intently to see if the mystery hymn would be sung. I could of course have just asked anybody and they would have told me which hymn it was, but I wanted to experience the surprise and pleasure of hearing the first few notes being played out on the organ and the magical feeling of knowing that my favourite mystery hymn was just about to play and all would be revealed!

Sure enough, one Sunday the number of the first hymn was read out and after the quick rustling of pages that everyone is so familiar with, the organ sounded out the first notes and there it was! The hymn that I heard every Sunday! The sounds that I knew like the back of my hand when it was being played by bells but I didn't even know its name!

And the hymn turned out to be a psalm! - None other than – “Ye Gates” which is hymn 19 and psalm 24 in our modern CH4 hymn book.

As a child, it had all the ingredients which made it a bit different from the other hymns and captured my attention. For starters, it commenced at verse seven! (In reference to the psalm of course as I later found out.) Even the first two words “Ye gates” seemed mysterious and there were quirky phrases such as “doors that last for ay.” This seemed delightfully old fashioned, but somehow reassuringly permanent in an era of mini skirts, bellbottom trousers and a time where trends were constantly changing! As the hymn unfolded, I imagined these huge gates that in my mind seemed to stretch for ever. I imagined too they would only be opened for very special occasions and just this once they were being opened for a very special person – a King of kings.

Then at the end, came the part where everything gradually slowed down – the part where the bells sounded like they were chiming out the time and another mystery was solved. I discovered what I had been hearing was the Coda with its multiple “alleluias” and “amens.” Even to this day, when “Ye gates” is sung, I am transferred back to the beginning of the seventies and to this very day, I can still hear the bells striking out each note.

Of course everyone will have an association with a certain hymn. It could be a hymn that was played at your wedding. It might be a hymn that was chosen for a child’s baptism. The list could go on and on. Just like everybody else, I am the same and have memories of milestones in my life that have been marked by hymns.

Sometimes though hymns can give me a present surprise and it can be amazing how they can apply so aptly to a moment, a situation, or a certain day. It’s almost as if God wants to reassure us that everything will be all right, but he sometimes does this with a certain sense of humour! I’m now going to leave the nineteen seventies and travel back to a certain Sunday not so long ago to the final hymn which was sung on that day. It was Sunday the 9th of February 2020.

This was a Sunday which started off with an incredible amount of noise because Scotland was in the grip of a storm. Recently it has become fashionable for the weather forecasters to give these storms names. Some names are a bit more ordinary. Others are quite fancy and on that Sunday morning we were in the grip of storm “Ciara” which was blustering across Scotland with all the sound effects that Hollywood could produce when they were creating the tornado that took Dorothy from Kansas to the Land of Oz and her eventual meeting with a wizard.

Of course, another storm was about to break in the form of a virus called Covid - 19, but at that time, most of us had not heard much about this far greater storm that was just around the corner and would change our lives, possibly forever.

Shieldhill is of course, quite high up and we feel the effects of

these storms to a greater extent. When I parked the car in Main Street just before the service, local folks will know that you have to be very careful how you open the car door in these conditions. If you don't hold on very tightly indeed, the door is liable to be blown clear out of your hands. I forgot once and almost lost a door completely!

When I got safely into church and as ten o'clock came round, we discovered that only twelve brave souls had turned up for the service which is absolutely understandable as the conditions outside could only be described as horrible! However, the outside weather was forgotten because there was such a nice atmosphere inside and Shieldhill Church weathered the storm like it has so many times before. After all, it has seen hundreds of them!

The twelve of us sang along rousing to the hymns and when we got to the final hymn there was a delightful irony. The final hymn that had been chosen was:

"O for a thousand tongues to sing!"

No problem though for our twelve brave souls. It was sung beautifully and actually sounded as if far more people were there.

Although it was dark and gloomy outside with near horizontal rain whizzing along Shieldhill Main Street, I felt a tremendous warmth as I left the church. Jesus said, "For where two or three come together in my name, I am there with them." (Matthew 18:20.) He felt very close to us on that day and you could feel his warm comforting presence in the church. We weren't aware at the time, but the service was actually a foreshadow of things to come, with limited amounts of people being able to attend church due to the pandemic and Government restrictions.

It was as if Jesus was telling us that these twelve people singing this lovely hymn meant as much to him as one thousand. I have often thought too that through this hymn that Sandra had chosen, he was trying to tell us not to worry. Even while we have been gradually reopening for a short time once a month, and everything is restricted, he is still very much

with us because we are there at church and so is he.

It has been very difficult to write this essay. During the pandemic, I've not been able to write anything. That is how the pandemic affected me. I thought, how can I write so cheerfully as I usually do when all these people have died? I lost a cousin to the virus. He was just a couple of years older than me. He didn't deserve to die in such an untimely way. It took a while and then I suddenly realised something that was so obvious but I just couldn't see it until now. My cousin would have wanted me to keep writing more than anything else. He would want me to tell people about Jesus and how wonderful he is because he is with him.

I've had people ask me where was my God when the pandemic started? But the answer to that is easy. Covid - 19 wasn't started by God. It came from more earthly sources. I tell them that God is with the medical staff who are working so hard just now, often in heartbreaking circumstances. I tell them he is with the scientists who are developing a vaccine. I tell them he is with the people who clapped every Thursday evening for the carers. I also tell them he is with the man or woman who goes out and does some shopping for his or her neighbour who is shielding. But most importantly, I always tell them that he is their God too. He is with us all.

Going back to that lovely hymn "O for a thousand tongues to sing" which was sung so beautifully by twelve people on that stormy Sunday. There may have been only twelve people singing in Blackbraes and Shieldhill church, but I know in my heart that there were nine hundred and eighty eight voices accompanying us in heaven.

What a joy that is.

**Drew Robertson**





## **Guild**

Little did we think in March and when we had a few encouraging sunny summer months that in November the Covid -19 virus would still be daily news and a global concern. We are unable to have Guild evenings and we miss the friendship and fellowship we share but we are still proud to be Guild members. Daily living has been a challenge. We pray for each other and keep in contact by phone and e-mail.

On a positive note, the church has been opening since September monthly with all the virus restrictions strictly observed. We can have limited self distancing conversations and friendly smiles behind the masks.

The six Guild partnership projects are on going and the one we are supporting this year is "Crossreach- Join the dots" tackling loneliness and isolation in Scotland. Crossreach for one hundred and fifty years, has been providing social care in Scotland from early years to golden years. This project is very relevant to our circumstances at present since during Lock Down, loneliness and isolation often resulting in mental health issues being a result of Lock Down restrictions, have been highlighted. Viv Dickenson, Chief Executive Officer for Crossreach explains "In the three years of the Guild Partnership and going that extra mile together we can combat loneliness and reduce isolation making Scotland a better place to live for many." There is an online donation site to give to this project but there is a Crossreach Christmas catalogue which can be ordered by phone 0131 454 4374. I have already received calendars reasonably priced and delivered to the door.

The Guild is an important part of the Church of Scotland and although in the seven months of Covid-19 Guild work has been reduced there are ongoing costs of services still being provided.

Funds are required as the Executive and office bearers keep in touch with groups all over Scotland. The services provided include supporting the projects and making choices for the next three years 21-24. Many of us over the years have enjoyed the annual gathering at Dundee and although we could not attend, a Virtual meeting was held which has been recorded and which we hope we can share together at the first opportunity. The Virtual Big Sing is another event we hope to share at a future date. Conferences have also taken place. "Guild News" a weekly update online is provided free. If you have an e-mail address or can access an e-mail address it can be added to the subscribers' list and you will receive it. Staff are still employed to continue these services. Annual Capitation fees are sent to Edinburgh and this year to cover these costs we are asking if our members could give £6 which can be passed on to Edinburgh. This would be appreciated and can be handed in to Barbara Currie at 78 Main Street Shieldhill. Thank you.

Guilds together locally can make a difference. We can face the future with confidence. We are already planning for the time when we can all meet together. As the weather worsens and perhaps even a short walk is impossible I found some suggestions which were in "Guild News" that you might like to note.

What is one thing you have given up during Lock Down that you will not start again and why?

Have you discovered a new skill or improved one you have?

If you enjoy knitting the Guild have forwarded a pattern of a Christmas angel that you might want to give a friend, phone number is 01324 713740.

We can have a real fun time sharing all our Lock Down adventures.

Finally national vice- convener Margaret Muir writes in “Guild News,”

“Autumn is a time of change. The green leaves of spring and summer become a glorious display of browns and golds as nature prepares for the harshness of winter.

This year not only the trees have changed colour but every day life has changed, a challenge we never anticipated. However we believe in a God who is the God of yesterday, today and all our tomorrows.



Whose we are and Whom we serve

**Lorna Coulter**



### **A Thank You Note**

On behalf of myself and our families, I would like to express my thanks for the friendship, support and prayer the late Robert and I received in recent times. Despite the circumstances we had much to be grateful for. We were blessed with a beautiful June day for his funeral and we were humbled yet proud of the many friends who stood respectfully at Shieldhill Church as he passed. His sixteen years in Blackbraes and Shieldhill Church and in the Church Guild were very happy years.

Sincere thanks and every blessing

**Lorna Coulter and families.**

## Message from the Editor



## You are now about to enter the Christmas Edition!

I know that some folks would prefer to look at Christmassy things a bit closer to the time rather than in November, so if you prefer to have a look just before Christmas, you are very welcome. I have put a cover on the next page to hide the contents!

However, if you fancy a peek just now, or want to read it all right through - of course you can!

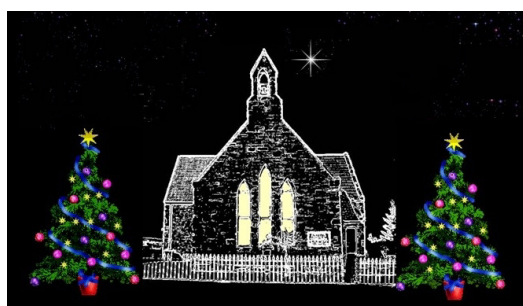
You are most welcome and have a safe and Happy Christmas when it comes.



Best Wishes  
From Drew



Blackbraes and Shieldhill Parish Church  
linked with Muiravonside Parish Church  
Christmas 2020



[www.bsandm-church.org.uk](http://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



### **Website**

Our magazines are now available on our website :

[www.bsandm-church.org.uk](http://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.





## Drew's Christmas View

### Hosanna in Ex-Chelseas!

If someone were to ask me "What is your favourite Christmas carol?" I wouldn't know what to answer as I love them all!

I would start to answer "O come all ye faithful," then would pause for a second and say something like "Hmmm..." Then I would add hastily, "No...wait a minute... definitely 'Away in a Manger'...but then again...'Good King Wenceslas looked out' is very good too!"

In other words, I would be there all day trying to come to a conclusion about which carol was my absolute undoubted favourite and the person who asked me the question would either have fallen asleep or given up and hastily departed.

As a child when I was learning some of the carols, just like other children I would sometimes misinterpret the words slightly with hilarious consequences. With pure innocence too, I would genuinely think that everyone was singing my slightly off - kilter version. I discovered just recently by sheer chance, that the technical term for misinterpreting lyrics is something called a "mondegreen." This rather unusual word really is a gift in itself for pronouncing it slightly wrongly and in the true spirit getting the words wrong I will probably keep calling it a "Monty Green!"

One example where I fell victim to a "Monty Green"...sorry... "mondegreen," was the great carol "Good King Wenceslas." For a start, all through my childhood, I thought the king in question was called "Good King Wences" and I seemed to have got it into my head while hearing it sung either at church or by choirs on tv that the folks were singing "Good King Wences last looked out." I had this vision of a kindly and jovial old king who only very occasionally looked out a large very grand window and it was quite a highlight if you could spot him!

Everything would run along fine after that until we got to the end of verse two and St Agnes' fountain is mentioned. As a child,

I always imagined St Agnes being a very quaint little village by the sea in Cornwall with a village square which boasted this wonderful fountain and this picture always flashes through my mind as that line is sung.

However there is a carol that I misinterpreted even more in my younger days and we now move on to “Ding dong merrily on High.” When it came to the chorus, I heard the folks singing what sounded like “Hosanna in ex – Chelseas!” For quite a bit of my childhood, I genuinely thought that the folks in the London borough of Chelsea were rejoicing that the baby Jesus was coming! (And probably they were!)

Funnily enough, I was always OK with “While Shepherds watched their flocks by night” which so many people seem to put alternate words to!

Back in 2011, in the winter edition of this very magazine there was a short article (it doesn’t say who submitted it, but I think it may have been Yvonne when she was editor here) detailing some other carols that have been misinterpreted by children throughout the world. I absolutely enjoyed reading it back then and was very relieved to find out that I wasn’t the only child who seemed to have come up with a slightly different interpretation of what the lyricist had planned.

One of the carols listed with misinterpreted lyrics was “Deck the Halls with Buddy Holly,” which is otherwise known of course as “Deck the Halls with boughs of holly.” I would have been thrilled by this as a child and would have imagined Buddy Holly playing these carols at a very fast pace on his guitar with the halls not just decked with Buddy himself, but by people dancing and singing to these upbeat interpretations of the carols which he would undoubtedly have come up with.

Another example explored was the popular Christmas song “Jingle Bells.” Apparently when it comes to the line, “Oh what fun it is to ride on a one horse open sleigh,” it sometimes comes out sounding like this : “Oh, what fun it is to ride with a one horse, soap and hay!” I smiled when I read this



because I actually used to sing yet another variation and I used to think that everyone was singing: “Oh what fun it is to ride on a one horse slope and sleigh!” I imagined them whizzing down a slope on their sleigh with the one horse neighing in delight and the people’s scarves flapping in the wind as they jingled their bells!

Of course, it’s not just carols and Christmas songs where things can go slightly awry. Nativity plays can be unpredictable affairs! I remember reading in a magazine (I can’t remember which one it was) but people were to share their experiences of things that had happened that had not gone to plan and although really serious at the time, were quite funny when you looked back on it.

One lady wrote about how she was one of the people who were responsible for planning and casting their local nativity play in church every year. Of course, Mary and Joseph are the most sought after roles that every child wants to play. There was one little boy who had just recently moved into the area and wanted more than anything else to be Joseph. Alas, the role had already been allocated to another little boy, but the lady planning the play thought this other boy would make an excellent inn keeper as he was quite forceful and would probably say in a loud and very authoritative voice,

“No room tonight at the inn!”

The little boy seemed happy with this and on the Sunday before Christmas, the play started much to the delight of the congregation. Everything was going well and it came to the point where Mary and Joseph arrived at the inn and the little boy who was the innkeeper was standing in his correct spot to receive them.

When the inevitable question was asked “Do you have a room?” the little boy pointed at Mary, smiled and said in his very loud voice “She can stay!” Then he pointed at Joseph, glowered at him and said in an even louder voice, “You can just go away... and... Don’t come back”!

We now move on to Christmas presents. This is an area filled

with misinterpretations and the sheer amount of Christmas presents that have to be wrapped up sometimes can lead to quite unintentional mix ups that can have very hilarious consequences.

Have you ever received a Christmas present that obviously wasn't intended for you?

One time I wrote about how when I was young, I knew a little boy whose cousin always got record tokens as Christmas presents from his aunts. The problem was that the record tokens were all bought at separate shops and not interchangeable like they probably are nowadays.

It meant he could never club them together to buy an LP (nowadays it would be a CD.) One year, the Christmas presents all got mixed up and this eight year old boy received a bottle of aftershave! He did exclaim though that it was the best Christmas present he'd ever received as it made him feel grown up and it was a heck of an improvement on the record tokens!

One time, a few years ago I received a Christmas present containing a handkerchief from a female friend. (It was a man's handkerchief - glad to say!) It even had an initial sewn onto it in blue thread. Usually the initial would be the person's first name which in my case would be "A" for Andrew if I was using my Sunday name, or "D" for Drew as I'm known to everyone.

However for some reason, the initial on the handkerchief was "R." I've often puzzled about it and I didn't like to embarrass her by asking her. Maybe she just meant "R" for Robertson. Or perhaps she had mixed the handkerchiefs up and it had been meant for somebody else.

Anyway, it was much appreciated, as she was thinking about me and had gone to the trouble of buying it. I still use it to this day.

Last of all in our examination of things that can go a bit awry at Christmas, such as misinterpreted carols, Nativity plays where the Inn becomes a bit like "Fawlty Towers" and presents such as handkerchiefs with mystery initials on them, sometimes you can occasionally receive a Christmas present that you

love, then disaster strikes! It can be especially traumatic if you are a child and this happened to me one time while we still lived in Brighton. I always called my granny "Nana" and one Christmas she gave me a football which was made of real leather - no less. I was really keen on football for a while as a child and I was over the moon.

This was a ball just like the one professional footballers used and for weeks after Christmas, the weather was unseasonably mild and I played football with my friends so much that by spring time, the ball was beginning to lose air and starting to look a bit squashed.

My bicycle pump did not fit the little adapter to blow up the ball and we soon found that it would only be a car tyre pump that would fit it. We didn't have a car at that time, hence no pump, but this was no problem at all because my dad knew some people who owned a garage just across the road. (Not the present day car servicing company that is in these premises just now along with some other shops. This was a different company who are now long gone.)

I took the ball over and the mechanic there connected up to the air compressor, gave the trigger the slightest of squeezes for just a few seconds, then...BOOM! The ball exploded into tiny pieces which went everywhere! Both the mechanic and I jumped six feet into the air. When we came back down we both knew that the ball was no more. You would think I would be upset about this, but I knew the mechanic was only trying to help. He was such a nice man and was even sadder than I was about the ball.

I later discovered that the boom was heard by my Aunty Mima a mile and a half away up in Maddiston. My dad was visiting her that evening and when she asked about me, he happened to mention the exploding ball. "So that's what it was," she said and to my dad's amazement she told him that she had heard it very clearly while out in the garden.

My granny often asked me how I was enjoying the ball, but I didn't have the heart to tell my Nana that parts of it were probably at this moment orbiting the earth.

This Christmas will be much different of course and at time of writing (mid October) I have no idea if we will be in lockdown, but when the time comes have a safe and happy Christmas. Maybe this time next year, things will be a bit better and we will be singing about Good King Wences last looking out, decking the halls with Buddy Holly, enjoying a ride on a “one horse slope and sleigh,” mixing up all our presents and enjoying a hearty rendition of “Hosanna in Ex - Chelseas!”

How I look forward to that!

**Drew Robertson**

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### **A Letter tae Santie**

I'm writin a letter ta Santie

I ken fit I'm sickin ye see.

Mam says nae tae spear for onything ower dear

“Santie's nae made o money” says she.

Bit aa that I'm needin's a rubbit,

Me and ma Dad's made his hutch

I'll gie him fine mettanstrae tae keep het,

A wee rubbit'snae sickin ower much?



**Helen Harrower.**

**Submitted by Lorna Coulter**

## The Meaning of the Christmas Wreath

Every Christmas wreath is  
more than just a decoration...  
it's a special reminder of Jesus,  
the reason for our celebration.  
The circle of a Christmas wreath  
is a never-ending ring,  
a reminder of eternal love  
from our Lord and King.  
The Christmas wreath is a sign of welcome,  
inviting all to enter in...  
a reminder of Christ's invitation  
for all to come to Him.  
The middle of a Christmas wreath  
is a bare and empty space,  
a reminder of what life would be  
without Christ's love and grace.  
So each time you see a Christmas wreath  
hanging from a door,  
may your heart rejoice in the One  
that Christmas is truly for!

**Holley Gerth**

**Submitted by**

**Rita Braes**



### **A Christmas poem**

A cauld wnter's nicht  
Starn heich in the lift  
A lass wi a bairnie  
Ahint a snaa drift

Come in through the byre  
Step ower the straw  
Draw ben tae the fire  
Afore the day daw.

The bairnie will sleep  
By the peat's puttrin flame  
Oor waarmin place lassie  
This nicht is your hame.

Come morning the snaa  
Showed nae footprints at aa  
Tho the lass wi the bairnie  
Had stolen awa.

An we mynded anither  
A lang while afore  
Wi a bairn in her airms  
An the beasts roun the door.

**Submitted by Lorna Coulter**

## **St Nicholas**

St Nicholas pops up at this time of the year but not an awful lot is known about him. One of my neighbours was the Santa in Dobbies' Stirling branch for many years, latterly he had to have breakfast with some of his clients.

St. Nicholas is thought to have been born in Lycia, one of the Roman provinces in Asia Minor. He became its Archbishop and died in the 4th century. His popularity grew in the Middle Ages and he was adopted as patron saint, among others, of Russia and Aberdeen, parish clerks, boatmen, pawnbrokers and pilgrims. However, he is best known for being patron saint of boys. This could be because of the three boys in the brine tub.

According to legend St Nicholas, on his way to the Council of Nicea, stopped at an inn. The owner had just murdered three boys and, like Sweeny Todd, had chopped up their bodies and had placed the body parts into a vat of brine to pickle. St Nicholas made the sign of the cross over the tub and the boys jumped out, singing praises to God. He then converted the innkeeper so that he would not do anything like that again.

As patron saint of boys and girls, St Nicholas's feast day was remembered by giving children small gifts- gingerbread or a toy. Our European neighbours would have someone who would dress up and pretend to be St Nicholas on December 6th, St Nicolas's Day. The children put out hay and carrots for his horse and he would leave a present for each child.

I have a Dutch friend and her family exchange gifts on 6th December and the children receive gifts from St Nicholas. On December 25th, her family visit each other and they enjoy a good meal and a good family gathering.

As he was such a useful, all-purpose saint, the Church gave him the job of looking after children, as well as all the rest. Since the earliest times people have traditionally exchanged gifts during

their mid-winter festival. The Romans gave presents during their Saturnalia festival and the people of the north worshipped the god Woden. Woden rode over the frozen land to give presents to his people. It was not desirable to have Woden delivering gifts in a Christian land and so St Christopher was given the job. Of course his name has been simplified to Santa Claus.

At the beginning of December, it is traditional for children to write letters to Santa Claus. These letters are placed in some place where Santa can collect it. When we were young, we put the letter up the chimney, today's children do not have that option. We always hung our socks along the mantelpiece.

One story that gives the origin of hanging stockings comes from a Bavarian tale.

There was a poor man who had three daughters. He was going to sell the girls and when St Nicholas heard this, he threw gold in through the open window and it fell into the stockings that were hanging up to dry.

In Bavaria, St Nicholas is a messenger and he took messages to the Baby Jesus. A representative of the Baby Jesus delivered gifts. They called him the Liebes Christkind (Dear Christ Child), which in America, became Kriss Kringle.

At the Reformation, the practice was to move away from saints and so Kriss Kringle was merged with the jolly character Santa Claus that we are familiar with today.

At first Santa Claus was a rather rakish fellow until the Americans took him and tidied him up. The picture of this jolly soul riding along on his sleigh is an American invention. Thomas Nast, in Harper's Illustrate Review of 1863 and for successive years, drew versions of St Nick from Clement Moore's poem- "The Night Before Christmas" and called him Santa Claus.

Somewhere I read that Coca Cola used a Santa Claus image in an advertising campaign in the late 1800s or early 1900s.



In 1914 in New York, it was decided to form a Santa Claus Association and letters that are addressed to Santa, are sent to the association.

Due to the present situation, our Santa suit will not have an airing as we will not be having a Guild Party.

I hope you all have a lovely Christmas, whether you have family who are in your bubble that can visit, or should you be on your own, I hope you have lovely time.

May God's blessings be with you.

**Rena**



**Editor's Note:**

In the Winter 2018 edition of this very magazine, Lorna submitted a Christmas Quiz. I know how much you all like quizzes and couldn't resist reproducing it for the 2020 edition. Dear friends, you will know all of the answers, but it is still great fun to enjoy the Christmas Story in the form of a quiz.

Have fun and the answers are on page 54 (just as formality more than anything else!)

**Test your Bible skills with this Christmas Story Quiz which was submitted by Lorna Coulter**

- 1 The Christmas Story is told in the Gospels of  
A) Matthew and Luke.   B) Mark and Luke.   C) Matthew, Mark and Luke.
  
- 2 The angel who came to Mary was called  
A) Michael.                      B) Lucifer.                      C) Gabriel.
  
- 3) Joseph was told what had happened in a  
A) dream.                      B) vision.                      C) nightmare.
  
- 4) Mary went to share the news with Elizabeth who was her  
A) cousin.                      B) sister.                      C) friend.
  
- 5) After Elizabeth was told the news, Mary responded with what we now call  
A) The Hail Mary.              B) The Magnificat.              C) The Nunc Dimittis.



# Christmas Quiz

6) She stayed with her for about

- A) three months.                      B) six months.                      C) nine months.

7) Mary then returned to

- A) Nazareth.                      B) Bethlehem.                      C) Jerusalem.

8) When her baby was almost due to be born, she and Joseph had to travel to

- A) Nazareth.                      B) Bethlehem.                      C) Jerusalem.

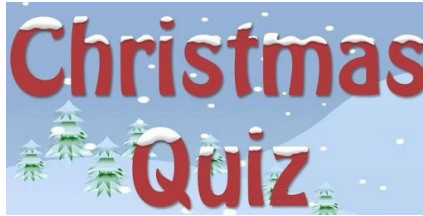
9) This was so they could take part in a

- A) family gathering.                      B) census.                      C) religious ceremony.

10) They travelled

- A) on foot.                      B) on camels.                      C) on a donkey.





- 11) Mary and Joseph had to stay in a  
A) stable.                      B) an inn.                      C) the fields.
- 12) When Jesus was born, he was visited first by  
A) prophets.                      B) kings.                      C) shepherds.
- 13) Later he was visited by Wise Men. The Bible says there were  
A) two.                      B) three.                      C) doesn't give a number.
- 14) They were led by a  
A) pillar of cloud.                      B) fire.                      C) a star.
- 15) They brought gifts of  
A) gold, frankincense and myrrh.  
B) copper, silver and gold.  
C) Gold, diamonds and rubies.
- 16) The King at that time was  
A) Caesar Augustus.    B) Quirinius.    C) Herod.

17) When he found that the Wise Men had gone home by another way, he ordered all the baby boys under the age of

- A) a year.                      B) eighteen months.                      C) two years  
to be killed.

18) Joseph had been warned about this, so they took the young child and journeyed to

- A) Egypt.                      B) Moab.                      C) Judea.

19) They were told by God it was safe to return after the

- A) abdication.                      B) change of heart.                      C) death  
of the king.

20) They went back to

- A) Nazareth.  
B) Bethlehem.  
C) Jerusalem, where Jesus grew up.

**Answers on next page**





# Answers

How did you all fare? I'm sure you got them all right and here are the answers, just as a formality more than anything else!

- 1) A - Matthew and Luke.
- 2) C - Gabriel.
- 3) A - a dream.
- 4) A - cousin.
- 5) B - The Magnificat.
- 6) A - 3 months.
- 7) A - Nazareth.
- 8) B - Bethlehem.
- 9) B - census.
- 10) C - on a donkey.
- 11) A - a stable.
- 12) C - shepherds.
- 13) B - three
- 14) C - a star
- 15) A - gold, frankincense and myrrh.
- 16) C - Herod
- 17) C - two years.
- 18) A - Egypt.
- 19) C - death.
- 20) A - Nazareth.



Three Wise Women.

Would have asked directions.

Arrived on time.

Helped deliver the baby.

Brought practical gifts.

Cleaned the stable.

Made a casserole.

And there would be

**PEACE ON EARTH!**

From a reader's letter in the magazine "My Weekly."

Submitted by Norma Jack



### **A Different Christmas**

It will be so different this year.  
Compared to last Christmas Day.  
Dear friends and family so near.  
Yet no chance for them to stay.

A different Christmas at church too.  
With no singing or mingling in the hall.  
A friendly wave from across a pew.  
Means so much to one and all.

Stay safe at Christmas, my dear friends.  
Everyone of you is cherished and loved.  
On one fine day when this virus ends.  
We will meet unmasked and ungloved.

There will be no facemasks to endure.  
No hand sanitiser to worry about as well.  
Just freedom to meet together for sure.  
How I look forward to freedom so swell.

**Drew Robertson**

