



KINGSWELLS PARISH CHURCH NEWSLETTER

Advent

December 2020

View from The Manse

Dear Friends,

As each day seems to bring us new life experiences, at times unwanted experiences, I find myself wondering about how you are coping with this new emerging way of life. I have spoken to many of you, but unfortunately not all of you. One of the many lessons over these past 252 days has been just how important a brief word, conversation or interaction is. I know I will not take those experiences for granted once we are all to gather together.

Our tendency is to look to the past for signs of hope...when life was perceived as “normal” or somewhat predictable. Often, there is a rich well of inspiration to draw upon from the stories of our forebearers overcoming difficult times. Yet, as people of faith, we are also invited to look for signs of God’s presence in the here and now, with an eye towards living into a new reality. Through God’s spirit, God continues to speak and guide us into the fullness of a deeper and more meaningful way of living.

The season of Advent is a time of preparing our hearts and minds to receive the birth of Jesus into our lives. This is not an intellectual experience, faith rarely is. It is a time of looking inward, letting go of our limited understandings of God, letting go of those nostalgic memories that keep our faith static, and be willing to create space within for the birth of our God incarnate. Preparing for the birth of Jesus is dynamic and life giving, and it is full of potential and possibilities.

These next four weeks of Advent are an invitation to create room for Jesus in our lives in the here and now, in the midst of this global pandemic, in the midst of all our frustration, loneliness, and separation from one another.

Advent is a time of simplicity, creativity, and beauty. It is a time of meditation and prayer. It is a time of breaking into God's presence anew.

To assist our Aberdeen West Cluster of Churches in our virtual Advent journey together, the ministers are providing a daily Advent thought and prayer on our Aberdeen West YouTube channel and our individual churches' Facebook pages. Yes, our time of Advent and Christmas will not feel familiar, yet we will all do the best we can with our internet resources.

From 1 December – **Daily Advent Video** – 'Thought of the Day'
Access on Aberdeen West Churches YouTube or Kingswells Facebook Page

Sunday **Advent Worship Services** at 10.30am
Access on Aberdeen West Churches YouTube

Sunday 20 December at 10.30am **Online Nativity Service**
Access on Aberdeen West Churches YouTube

Christmas Eve 24 December

6.00pm Access Zoom **Christingle Service**

Book a place - llafontaine@churchofscotland.org.uk

11.00pm **Watchnight Service** live streamed from Cults Parish Church
with Shuna Dicks, Kenneth Petrie and Laurene leading worship

Christmas Day

10.00am Kingswells **Christmas Morning Service**
Live Streaming via Facebook (Visit Kingswells Church Website)

I have to emphasise that we will not be able to gather together in meetings indoors for any reason. The guidance is 6 people and 2 households. Please know that I will not risk anyone's well-being. Even though many of you have not had someone close with Covid or die of Covid, the numbers do not lie; it is a dangerous and deadly virus. We all need to follow the guidance then we will have stayed safe, protected others and saved lives.

Guided by God's spirit of creativity and ingenuity, we are finding ways to celebrate Advent and Christmas. Nightly, beginning 1 December, there will be LED candles and a lit Christmas tree in the Church building windows. Please join us by putting a light, preferably an LED, in your windows at night. In the midst of the darkness and long nights, a simple flickering light can remind us that we are not alone, surrounded by a supportive community and God's spirit.

Most importantly, please phone me or your pastoral visitor for any reason. This is the time that we must come together to support, love and care for one another. None of us are immune from the isolation, loneliness and sadness that the current situation is having on us. Many of us are missing our family and friends. Be a messenger of Christmas cheer, share the peace and love of Christmas with one another, your neighbours and those you encounter! May you be surrounded by the light and love of Christ this day. Blessing to you and yours.

Grace and Peace

LAURENCE

A Merry Christmas To You and Yours



I am Silent ..and Expectant

How silently
How silently
The wondrous gift is given

I would be silent now, Lord
And expectant
That I may receive
The gift I need,
So, I may become
The gift others need.

*Prayer for Advent, Rev. Ted Loder
Guerrillas of Grace*

Remembrance Sunday

Throughout the country Remembrance Sunday commemorations were adjusted to safeguard peoples' health during this period of the Coronavirus pandemic. Nevertheless, we were able to share our commemoration on-line with our 'cluster' churches on Remembrance Sunday when our ministers together reminded us of

the sacrifice that so many had made to secure our safety, our freedom and peace. The village's memorial at the front of the Church was the centrepiece of our remembrance when it was decorated with a display of poppies, and a wreath was laid at 11.00am by George Gordon on our behalf. 'We shall Remember Them'.



Christmas Giving Appeal



Our Education and Outreach Committee, recognising the overwhelming and unprecedented impact of Covid on our economy, redundancy and devastating financial hardship within families, appealed to us, in addition to our weekly food collection, to donate Christmas Selection Boxes for Instant Neighbour. This is to ensure that as many children as possible (and adults) will experience a wee bit of Christmas Cheer at these difficult times. Your response so far has been wonderful. To

date over 100 boxes have been donated and there is still time to donate more.

Weekly Tuesday Food Collection



Our weekly Tuesday Food Collections continue at the church between 10.00 and 10.30am. This is a community-based project. Most of your donations will be directed through Aberdeen Instant Neighbour where they are desperately needed but some will be more particularly directed discreetly towards people in crisis in Kingswells. If you would like to donate money

instead it will go towards the purchase of grocery gift cards to those who need to purchase fresh food such as milk and vegetables. If you are aware of people in need in the village, please contact Laurene in confidence on 07497756908.

Education and Outreach Group



Young Church

Although the members of young church have not been able to meet in person, we have still managed to celebrate our Harvest Festival by making some lovely wreaths and baking cupcakes.



miniature cross stitches. Plenty to keep us busy in the school holidays.

Reece made some slime cupcakes, and we love the photo of his cat supervising the proceedings.

Everyone was also busy painting ceramics and doing



All the children have drawn a Christmas card, and these will be copied and sent out with a goodie bag containing some fine pieces to people in the community and church in the joint Nosh & Natter and Seniors Christmas Celebration.



There is also going to be a joint cluster group Nativity service on the 20th December to which we have been invited to take part.

We hope everyone has a good Christmas even if it is different this year and that it's not long until we can meet up again next year.



Faye, Cally, Emily, Manasa and Reece



Nosh and Natter

Our last Nosh + Natter get together was 4th March. Little did we know then what the year would be like. We had a programme of events organised which has had to be postponed like lots of things this year. One of the highlights of our year was to be our Christmas party where we were to be entertained by Music4U, favourites of us all. However, we have good news that the event is going ahead virtually by Zoom. We are also extending the invitation to lots of people who would usually receive an invitation to the Seniors Christmas Service so it's a joint Christmas Celebration. Music4U have a showcase for us and we are all really looking forward to seeing it. It is scheduled for Wednesday 2nd December so it's possible that it will have taken place by the time you read this, if not, contact Anne Rodger at annerodger48@gmail.com if you are interested. We will be sure to tell you all about it and share photos in the next Newsletter.

Anne Rodger, Education and Outreach

Co-op Local Community Fund Kingswells Church Men's Lunch Club

If you have a Co-op Membership Card could I please persuade you to select us as your charity to support this year?

We are intending to start up a club for men to enable them to meet for lunch in a restaurant or pub and have a bite to eat and a chat – to enjoy putting the world to rights and have a bit of a laugh. This comes under the Co-op category

of Well Being and for some people who are lonely and isolated a chat and a laugh is a real tonic.

It's a matter of going into the co-op website and selecting 'Choose a Local Cause' then choosing us. We would be incredibly grateful for your support and as soon as it's safe we will get up and running.

Anne Rodger, Education and Outreach

A Christmas Prayer

Good Shepherd,

Speak once more to our hearts

And offer us vision and hope for days to come.

Go before us Shepherd King

And lead us into the future that you hold in your hands.

Lord, hear us.

Lord, graciously hear us.



Christian Aid Week 2020

Christian Aid Week 2020 was certainly a Christian Aid Week we won't forget!

The Coronavirus pandemic affected so much of our planned fundraising, but you triumphed, you persevered, and you went online. We have been so humble by the dedication that donors have shown in contributing to Christian Aid – not even a global pandemic stopped people from standing alongside the most vulnerable. In total nearly **4 million pounds** was raised, and the organisation could not be more grateful for everyone's hard work and passion.

Christian Aid's Young Activists Demand Better from UK Government



Back in February, the wind and rain of Storm Dennis didn't dampen the spirits of 23 passionate young adults, including 7 based in Scotland, as they met together for the first-ever activists' residential. During an intensive weekend of workshops, discussions and team building, the Prophetic Activists challenged themselves to put their faith into action for global social justice. With the

support of Christian Aid's Youth and Campaigns teams, the group shared insights from their own experiences as they explored issues of gender inequality, poverty and climate justice, and learned how to grow their campaign movements. Here's what they said-



“Climate activism is a central part of how I live and act out my faith. It’s something I’ve grown increasingly involved in over the past few years as I’ve learned more about climate justice and how this intersects with gender and racial justice. As a Christian, I also think of Jesus as one of the first social justice campaigners, which is why I’m so passionate about these issues.”

“When Christian Aid advertised this unique opportunity to get young people involved I was keen to take part. The opportunity has opened my eyes to new ways of campaigning while allowing me to meet and work with Christians from across the country. For me I have learnt the need to make a difference and challenge the government to do more. As a Christian I believe it is our responsibility to look after the kingdom we live in while challenging social injustice in our society.”



These are young Christians committed to living out their faith in dealing with climate change, caring for our environment, and challenging social justice in our society – are we doing the same?

Chris Maxwell

Money Matters

This has been a year like no other. Across the country businesses and organisations have suffered financially and our church is not exempt.

Rather than look back at the results for the previous eleven months I have attempted to assess the potential outcome for the financial year ending 31st December 2020.

The current best estimate is that compared to our original budget the General Fund income will be down by around £17,000 – almost equally split between congregational income and income from the letting of halls.

Fortunately, due to the lack of overall activity in the church itself there will be a number of expenditure savings – estimated to be around £7,000.

The net result is that we anticipate an overall decline of £10,000 against our original anticipated outcome which was a surplus of £3,000.

However, we are still weeks away from the end of the financial year and results may improve due to

- Increased activity in our hall letting
- Increased contributions from members of the congregation

I realise that it is not the best of times, but **I would ask all members to consider as to whether they can enhance their giving either by increasing their standing order or making a “one off” donation** over the next few weeks. For those who decide to make a “one off” donation this should be made by cheque.

Jim Henderson, Treasurer

Buildings and Fabric

This year has seen unprecedented times due to the global pandemic, and as a result with the church being mostly closed in terms of regular worship, it has had an impact on the activity with regards to fabric projects.

However, over the last year we have managed to complete some improvement projects which have included, exterior paintwork to the hall and church, door repairs to the halls, tree removal in the manse garden that were damaging a retaining wall, and the installation of a new fence to replace the trees. Banner poles have also been installed in the grass area next to the church halls.

There are some projects that have now got underway, such as an upgrade to the church sound system, and the installation of an internet connection to allow Wi-Fi in the church and halls. We are also planning to replace and relocate the church’s outside noticeboard.

Once again, thanks to everyone on the fabric and finance team for their assistance and support over the past year.

Mike Reid, Finance and Fabric

The Guild



As you might expect, the Guild and British Telecom are close mates these days! We are trying to keep in touch by phone, but it has been tricky over the summer months with longer days and less stringent rules. However, new rules prior to Christmas, will likely tie us more to our own homesteads. We also have to remember that although we cannot have meetings as usual, the Guild Office in Edinburgh is still staffed, and they continue to work as hard as ever planning for the future and need our support. Members will remember that our three-year strategy has been “ONE JOURNEY! MANY ROADS”. Last month we would have begun our third year of the theme which is entitled “THE EXTRA MILE”. Please take some time to ponder the theme.

With regard to the six Projects we have been supporting, the totals to date for each are:

- CrossReach: £57,826.84
- Sailors’ Society: £41,236.80
- Boys’ Brigade: £65,373.14
- World Mission: £37,499.38
- Malawi Fruits: £43,161.87
- Free to Live Trust: £50,918.

Total money raised: £296,016.54

This is a measure of ‘Who We Are and Whom We Serve’, the National Guild’s motto.

Zoom Book Study

Over the last few weeks, we have been focussing on Paul’s letter to the **Colossians**. Our discussions have often been intense and mind and heart searching as we have attempted to understand the context in which the letter was written and how we can apply the very practical ways that Paul suggests in developing our faith and applying our Christian practice to contemporary everyday life. In the letter Paul robustly defends the Gospel message and forcefully argues that God has revealed everything in Jesus Christ. Christ, his life, his teaching is the heart of the Gospel message. Paul reveals the truth about who Jesus is and what God does for us through our knowledge and understanding of Jesus’ life and presence with us. Learning how to practice

unconditional love in our relationships and what that demands is tough, but so important. Paul does not hold back on how he believes we should behave as Christians to each other both within the family and our dealings with all with whom we come in contact. He is bold and forthright even if sometimes we have to unravel some hidden truths that lie within his words especially as we uncover their Greek translation. Compassion is at the heart of Jesus' life and in these times, it is so much needed, and we see it in our nurses, doctors, and care workers as they give of their best in the present pandemic.

I have so much enjoyed working through this letter with my friends who have shared their thoughts and experiences, and who have contributed so much to my better understanding of Paul's message.

Shortly we will be studying something different for Advent.

Editor

God Watches Over Us



“The imagery of the shepherd is woven into our understanding of the way in which the living God cares for us: ‘I myself will search for my sheep and look after them. As a shepherd looks after

his scattered flocks when he is with them, so will I look after my sheep.’ (Ezekiel 34: 11-12)

“These words speak to us and resonate in the depths of our soul. They do so because they speak to our longing to know that, in all we face, God watches over us and searches for us when we are lost. The words speak to us, especially in difficult times, and resonate profoundly in days of darkness.

“The times in which we live are difficult indeed and dark for many. At such a time as this, we calm ourselves and listen for the voice of the One who calls us by our name. The Shepherd calls us by our name, even in the darkest of times, and comes to journey with us. The Shepherd journeys until, in God's good time, the darkness yields to the promise of the One who comes to reign as King forever.”

Church of Scotland Website

Reflections on Covid-19 and Christmas

There is great concern that as a consequence of the Covid pandemic we will not be able to celebrate Christmas in the usual way. Crucially, we may not be able to join with our family and friends in being able to share a meal, a drink or exchange gifts personally. We will not be able to worship and celebrate the birth of Christ together, join in singing carols and praying for peace in the world as a congregation. Even though through the hard work and imagination of our ministers we can share Christmas 'virtually', it cannot be the same! Some are suggesting that Christmas has been stolen from us by Covid! Now how can that possibly be?

Those of you who read 'Life and Work' will doubtless have read John Chalmer's article when he quotes from Dr Seuss's book '*How the Grinch Stole Christmas*' when Grinch despite his best efforts realises his intention to stop Christmas has failed and he says, '*It came without ribbons, it came without tags. It came without packages, boxes or bags. Maybe Christmas (he thought) doesn't come from a store. Maybe Christmas means a little bit more*'. And as John Chalmers says, 'we know this to be true.'

He goes on to suggest that 'maybe it will do us no harm, this year, to step away from some of the familiar stuff and instead contemplate the deeper meaning of what we are celebrating. Covid-19 has taken its toll on us all. But it cannot steal Christmas if we remember that all the cymbals of the Christmas narrative are a reminder that God is with us and is most assuredly where the poorest and most vulnerable are to be found.

This year then, let God be found in the way we respond to the needs of those whose lives have been most affected by this unwelcome pandemic.'

So, give and share what you can generously and remember Jesus' words, 'Truly, I tell you just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me.'

Editor

Contacts

Minister: Rev Laurene Lafontaine, llafontaine@churchofscotland.org.uk
Mobile 07497 756908

Session Clerk: Lorna Graham lorna.graham15@btinternet.com Tel. 01224 313048

Website: www.kingswells.church

Facebook: www.facebook.com/Kingswells Church

(Scottish Charity Number SC006865)