



The Link

The Magazine of Haggs Parish Church

Winter 2017

Dear Friends

Already when driving I've spotted that some families are well ahead and have their Christmas trees lit and their houses decorated in readiness for what is generally described nowadays as "the festive season" This week I had a phone call from Falkirk Council informing me that while they had erected the tree that always stands in the grounds of Denny Old Church, they needed access to the church in order to be able to switch on the lights. Everywhere it seems everyone is gearing up for the big event, and let's face it, for most people – except perhaps shop assistants – it is a time of excitement and bonhomie.

Of course the children are looking forward to their visit to that VIP – the one dressed in a long red robe and sporting a bushy white beard – in order to whisper what they'd really REALLY like him to bring them on Christmas morning. Whether their parents are quite as charmed with their requests is another matter altogether.

But let's face it, most of us of whatever age, enjoy Christmas – the lights, the atmosphere of expectancy, the carols being played in many of our shops, the prospect of Christmas dinner, perhaps seeing friends and relatives we haven't met with in a long time – perhaps since last Christmas - the exciting looking parcels under the Christmas tree, parties – all come together to produce a lightness of heart and readiness to laughter that no other time of year seems able to produce.

And yet for how many of our population not just in Scotland but in the West as a whole, that is the extent of their preoccupation with the 'festive season.' Sadly to the majority, Christmas is merely a time of jollity in December and a headache come January. Most have no conception of the true meaning of what is one of the most important dates in the Christian calendar.

I heard once about a woman who was buying her Christmas cards. She picked up some and on examining them found that each card contained a scripture verse relating naturally to the Nativity. In disgust she flung them down, exclaiming – “They’re getting religion into everything nowadays!”

I received a communication from the organisation Open Doors this morning. They work supporting Christians in other lands who don’t have freedom to worship as we do, and in this issue it is drawing attention to the fact that Muslim background Christians can’t celebrate Christmas freely either. This is especially difficult for children in Bangladesh who want to celebrate openly and can have the effect of making them resent their parents. To compensate, for the last couple of years Open Doors has organised a Christmas celebration earlier in December where children and their parents can feel the joy of Christmas. They enjoy Christmas songs, stories of Jesus’ birth, drama, games and a grand feast of local food and a special cake. One of the participants expressed his happiness at being part of the festivities. “Through this event, I was able to understand the meaning of our Lord’s birth. In fact, for the first time in our lives, we were able to celebrate Christmas.”

How blessed we are in this land!

I hope and pray that all of you will have a very happy Christmas surrounded by your family and friends. I hope too that where we know of someone who will spend Christmas on their own, that they will be included in our celebrations – remember a crotchety exterior can hide a lonely interior! And even if they won’t come to our home to join the festivities, a visit bearing a nice plateful of Christmas cheer could make all the difference to some lonely, forgotten person who often isn’t used to kindness.

My husband joins me in wishing all of you a very happy Christmas and a peaceful, blessed and healthy 2018.

God bless you all.

Sandra Mathers

Locum

PS Perhaps you’d remember in your prayers the Christmas celebration in Bangladesh. It’s scheduled to take place from 14-16 December and around 100 families will attend.

Church Diary:

10th December: 9.45 a. m. Gift Service and presentation of the Prayer Tree and Knitting for African Babies.

14th December: 2 p.m. Bankview Nursing Home (TBC)

17th December: Nativity Service led by Sunday Club followed by a Soup and Sandwich lunch – donations to UNICEF

24th December: 9.45a.m Christmas Service. Watchnight Service 11.30p.m. (No Christmas Day service)



Christmas Greetings



Wishing everyone a very Happy Christmas and all good wishes for the New Year. Elma Findlay.

Happy Christmas and Best Wishes for 2018 from Ernie and Moira Martin.

Maisie Mortimer wishes everyone Peace and Joy this Christmas and a Happy New Year.

Murray and Jean wish everyone health and happiness this Christmas and throughout next year.

Bea Miller wishes everyone a Happy Christmas and good New Year.

Elizabeth and Jack Dunn wish everyone at Haggs a very Happy Christmas and a Peaceful New Year.

A very Happy Christmas to everyone at Haggs from Evelyn Goble

Marion and Archie Campbell wish everyone a Merry Christmas and a Happy Healthy 2018

With Best Wishes for a Merry Christmas and a Healthy and Peaceful New Year from Fiona Schuit

Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year from Betty Crosbie.

Wishing you and your family peace and love this Christmas, and good health and happiness in 2018 from Sue Storrar

Wishing everyone a very merry Christmas, good health and happiness in the New Year from Gwen Hamilton and Family with much love.

Nan and Allan Young wish everybody a very Merry Christmas and good New Year.

Wishing everyone health and happiness for 2018 from Isabel Shearer.

Carol and Brian Richmond sent best wishes to all for a Happy Christmas and Good New Year.

Blessings at Christmas and Health and from Lorna and David Duncan



Sunday Club

Advent means the excitement of waiting for something to happen. All of us are looking forward to Christmas as the young people of our church get ready for the great day.

This year, 17th December, we are having a mini puppet show produced by our Sunday Club and on the 10th December, gift day, the Sunday club will gift the Prayer Tree which will be placed in the vestibule of the church.

If you wish a prayer add your message to the labels provided and hang it on the tree.

These will be refreshed every two weeks. Memory hearts can be hung to remember a loved one.

Moira Martin

Haggs Knitters

Thanks again to all our busy knitting and crocheting members who have responded so generously to the appeal for jumpers, hats and blankets for babies in Malawi. Some of the knitting will be on display at church at the Gift service on December 10th prior to the collection for dispatch to Africa in the New Year.

Thank you for giving your time and talents to make such wonderful gifts.

Sue Storrar

UNICEF Jar of Grace

Christmas is a special time for children and families to come together, make memories and anticipate the joys of the coming year. But right now, this Christmastime, more than 50million children have been uprooted from their homes, witnessing things no child should see, and forced to make dangerous journeys in search of safety. These children should be safe and warm. They should be with their families. They should be in school; playing, learning and living like any other child.

Will you please support UNICEF to protect children again this year? Say a prayer for these vulnerable children and fill a jar with coins over the Christmas season.

Also come along to the Christmas 'Soup & Sandwich' lunch on Sunday 17th December after the service; when all donations will go to support the work of UNICEF. Everyone who attends will receive a free 'lucky ticket' – you could win a festive hamper!

The Jars of Grace will be collected at the end of December by Sue Storrar.

Thank you again for your faithful support –your donations will help to keep refugee children safe and warm this winter.

O Come all you Faithful...

Advent is the season where thoughts are drawn instinctively towards the small spot in the world connected with the baby in the manger of a little town, called Bethlehem in Palestine that witnessed the birth of a 'Saviour, who is Christ the Lord.'

Starting on Monday 27th November and on the following 3 Monday evenings in Advent, a small Study Group will meet in the MacLean hall at 7.30pm to use Christian Aid materials to introduce us to the life of Christians in Palestine today through Bible studies, stories, drawings and prayers. We will examine and discuss the realities of life under Israeli occupation and also the work of peacemakers, who are daring to speak out to bring positive changes in Palestine.

This Advent let us not miss this chance to renew faith, hope and love – the three key messages sent out from the manger in Bethlehem.

Come along and share this Advent fellowship –all are welcome.

1st Haggs Girls Brigade

We have certainly been enjoying ourselves since we started again, with numbers steady at around 12, we have a good mix of girls in Explorer's and Junior's. We held our annual Halloween party, a massive thank you to Chloe for arranging all the games and fun on the night. We are currently doing our badge work and learning about the GB's and also learning new games. Thank you to all the mums and dads, grans and friends how bring the girls every week. Thanks also go the officers and helpers, Alan Hobbs, Shirley-Anne, and Chloe. The Girls send Merry Christmas and Happy New Year to All. God Bless. Shona Laird Captain.

Comment:

I was very impressed with the article in the Autumn magazine by George Hoggan. It was a very thought provoking one. It's so easy to forget the influence our predecessors had in the name of our faith and how our Church matured and grew in the past.

It is sad now to see empty Churches, smaller congregations with very few younger people joining or attending the Church. Thank you George for at least making me think of my faith and reminding me of the people who made it possible.

Elma Findlay

Interim Moderator:

As you may be aware David Nicholson has been our Interim Moderator during our vacancy. Unfortunately David had an accident and broke his leg. He is now recovering at home. Since he has been with us over 2 years (slightly longer with Denny Old) his time has come to an end as Interim Moderator and Rev. Aftab Gohar from Grangemouth has been assigned. I am sure you will join with me in sending David our thanks and best wishes for a good recovery. We will hopefully see him joining with us for Services in the future. Jean McCheyne

Deaths

'Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord'

October: Mr John MacKay, Banknock
November: Mrs Jessie Christie Banknock

**The Church
of Scotland**

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