

The Kirk Quair

December 19 - January 20



St Andrew's
In the Grange
Church of Scotland



For many people the hymn: *“Away in a manger, no crib for a bed”* is their favourite Christmas Carol. Some attribute this hymn to Martin Luther; but there is nothing corresponding to it in any of his writings. The earliest known source according to the Handbook to the Church Hymnary, is an American Lutheran publication. It seems likely, therefore, that it was probably written in America for the four hundredth anniversary of Luther’s birth in 1883. Nevertheless, whatever its origins, it is sung by children and adults alike and sits at the very centre of any Nativity play or service of lessons and carols.

Christmas is a time when we often make an effort to keep in touch with friends and family and to spare a thought for those less fortunate than ourselves. We exchange cards and presents and we go out of our way to wish complete strangers: “Happy Christmas” or do you prefer to wish them a “Merry Christmas?” But if you think about it, there are countless numbers of mothers this Christmas who have “no crib” to lay their baby. The old idea of the bottom drawer in the bedroom making a perfect crib is undoubtedly still true but what about those who have no bed; warm clothes; clean blankets; or fresh water let alone an endless supply of nappies for their baby. For such Mums, Christmas, like most other days, is neither Happy nor Merry, so spare a thought and say a prayer for them.

Luke’s Gospel tells us that when Mary had her baby, she laid him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn. No Christmas Nativity would be complete without Mary and Joseph, a baby Jesus, Shepherds, Wise Men and of course a Heavenly Host of Angels, not forgetting the animals and yet the Bible makes no specific mention of the animals. Nevertheless, Christmas cards and Christmas carols depict the animals, such as *Away in a Manger* where we sing about the cattle lowing. There’s even a song called *Little Donkey* about the beast that

carries Mary to Bethlehem in our vision of the Christmas story. These are things we have all grown up to know and to love. It may be the creative imagery of hymn writers and carol singers but it invites us to picture the scene and to be part of the Christmas story where, in *Away in a Manger*, we too can sing: “Be near me, Lord Jesus; I ask you to stay close by me for ever, and love me, I pray.”

For me, the Nativity is about the people and the animals who make up a story. It has been described as the greatest story ever told. It has survived more than 2000 years. It doesn't fade with age or the retelling. It is an annual reminder that God sent his Son to be the light of the world. The word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory; full of grace and truth. A baby born in a lowly stable. May the joy of the angels, the humility of the shepherds and the peace of the Christ child be God's gift to you and to all you love this Christmas time and always.

Grace joins me in wishing you all a very happy, merry and peaceful Christmas and all health, strength and prosperity for the New Year. With all good wishes and every blessing David



Not all Christians can celebrate Christmas openly...

UK-based Release International has made Pakistan its focus for prayer this year, and is deeply concerned for Christians in that country.

There's not much for them to celebrate, “Most Christians in Pakistan are poor, illiterate and vulnerable to abuse, especially young women and girls. Believers face discrimination in education, employment and the law. Pakistan's blasphemy laws have been used to make false allegations against Christians, often to settle personal vendettas.”

“Yet despite the persecution in Pakistan, the church remains strong in faith and hope,” says Release CEO Paul Robinson. “Will your church support them in that?”



Pause for thought

When I told my children the story of how the Wise Men brought gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh for the infant Jesus, my six-year-old daughter was not impressed. "Mum, a Wise Woman would have brought nappies."



StAG News

The StAG Choir

Advent Study Group

“Do you think we could have a Bible Study Group?” “Let me think about it and see what might be possible.” I scanned the Amazon shelves and discovered that currently there are at least three Advent Study Guides written by three Church of England Bishops: The Archbishop of York – *Wake up to Advent*

- The Bishop of London – *A Good Advent*
- The Bishop of Leeds – *Freedom is Coming – From Advent to Epiphany with the prophet Isaiah*

So much choice? A bit like Christmas I suppose!

A short Advent Bible Study series will be run over 3 weeks in Advent on Monday 2nd; 9th and 16 December. 7 - 8 pm in the Upper Room. All Welcome.

Christmas Collections

The retiring collections after the Christmas services will be for the Prialux Premature Baby Foundation which maintains two properties in Southampton, at an annual cost of £30,000, for the use of families with babies or small children in hospital there.



As reported last time, our newly formed choir gave their inaugural performance at the Harvest Service in September. Eight intrepid volunteers, under the direction of Neil, sang “The Harvest all is Gathered in,” a piece which Neil composed specially for the occasion.

The intention is to have some fun and it is hoped that more volunteers will come forward to enjoy themselves at Christmas. Neil assures us that enthusiasm, not high quality is required and he can be contacted in Church on Sundays or at neil.houston2812@gmail.com



Coffee Morning

Attendance at the coffee morning and cake stall on Saturday 26th October could have been better but those of us who were there had a good chat and a great choice of scrummy cakes. We managed to raise £350 for Leprosy Mission.



First Sunday in Advent &

Ordination of Elders

This morning, as we celebrate the first Sunday in Advent, we are pleased to be ordaining five new Elders; Alison, Carolyn, John, Neil and Stephen.

We pray that God will grant them wisdom and bless and guide each of them in their new ministry.

Visiting preacher

On 27th October, we were delighted to welcome as our guest preacher, one of our minister's former colleagues, Rev. David Barrett, Assistant Chaplain General 1st UK Division,

CrossReach Christmas Cards and Calendar

The CrossReach Christmas Card and Calendar Catalogue is available with the online shop open at 9am to 5pm Monday to Friday.

Look out for videos and read how you can make a difference to social isolation and to loneliness. Visit shop.crossreach.org.uk to order online or ring the hotline on 0131 454 4374

CoSY Nativity Service



Rehearsals for the CoSY Nativity Service have begun and there will be a lot of hard work and preparation before it "goes live" on Sunday 15th December. Wicked Herod has been usurped by a donkey. Guess who! During the service we will once again be laying gifts of biscuits, sweets and donations for fuel vouchers for Guernsey Welfare at the foot of the Christmas Tree.



Christmas Lunch



After the CoSY Service, we are off to the Jerbourg Hotel for the Congregational Christmas Lunch at 12.30 for 1 pm. If you want to come please sign up on the list in the Narthex. The cost is £21 (£13 for children). As usual the first course will be served and then each table will be called to the buffet for the main course.



There will be a raffle in aid of the Salvation Army Christmas Lunch. Donations for the raffle, please, to Sally or Charmaine.

No guarantees but we hope the elderly gentleman in the red coat will be dropping in to see us. Ho Ho Ho !



BEYOND OUR SHORES

*From our Foreign
Correspondent in
Buenos Aires*



In November, Janette and I went to Argentina for a reunion of our Fraser family from Arbroath. In 1882, the family expanded their textile business to Buenos Aires making alpargatas shoes (rope soled shoes, or espadrilles.) The Scottish community in B.A. founded a school, a hospital, several pipe bands, even a soccer team and, of course, a St Andrews Church which we visited. An enormous building - at one time 700 folk attended services there. Nowadays services are conducted in Spanish.

The Fraser family business no longer exists in Arbroath and has greatly diminished in Argentina. Nevertheless, 135 of us Frasers from all over the world gathered to visit the old factory, listen to the Pipe Band of the River Plate and hear in detail about the goings on of our great grandparents. One such Fraser from Argentina returned to Great Britain pursued by his mistress who assassinated him with a hat pin stab to the head.

A LOT ... AND CLOSER TO HOME



There has been a good response to the appeal for contributions towards the purchase of new chairs for the Methodist Church in Alderney and we have been able to donate £400 which is greatly appreciated.



With pipe bands and bagpipes in mind

I find that distance lends enchantment to bagpipes.
William Blezard

Bagpipes - the best way to terrorise your neighbours without getting an ASBO

From the Editor

I think we are all aware by now of the introduction of the General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) which came into force in May last year and affect us all, our magazine being no exception. This edition may seem a little strange at first sight because from now on, like editors of other church magazines, I will be omitting surnames and other contact details unless consent has been given. How different it is from not so many years ago when we moved to Lincolnshire and found folks who had been neighbours all their lives referring to each other as Mr and Mrs. To address each other by Christian names would have been unimaginable!



On the subject of names, some of us “oldies” will be familiar with a chap known as “Woodbine Willie”, Geoffrey Anketell Studdert Kennedy, an Anglican priest who volunteered as an army chaplain at the outbreak of the First World War and was awarded the Military Cross for “conspicuous gallantry” at Messines Ridge where he ran into no man’s land to tend to the wounded. He was renowned for giving Woodbine cigarettes as well as spiritual aid to injured and dying soldiers. Not such a familiar name, until recently, is the Tartan Pimpernel, Donald Caskie. If you didn’t see the piece about him in *Life and Work* or weren’t at the evening service in October, turn to page 11 to read about his amazing achievements.

As mentioned in *StAG News*, we will be supporting Guernsey Welfare again at our CoSY service this year and in the next article of our charity series, Ethel reminds us about their excellent work and how careful they are to ensure that the system is not abused.

This is the time of year when we think about what has been and what is yet to come but, in this edition, there is rather more emphasis on the former with thought provoking reflections on remembrance and Psalm 118 by our minister but, hopefully, we have not entirely overlooked the forthcoming festivities and, now once again, it’s time for me to wish you all peace, joy and hope this Christmas and a very Happy New Year.

Ed



Guernsey Welfare



As I walk into the Kirk carrying a bottle of tomato sauce, a tin of soup or maybe a jar of pasta sauce, I respond happily to the odd looks, "It's for Guernsey Welfare Food Bank". Some, who are in two minds about contributing because they think people may be "playing the system", can be placated (slightly) on learning that the recipients are getting food for their children directly rather than through vouchers with which the doubters (wrongly) think they can purchase anything. Vouchers are still issued but the Food Bank, originally of only non perishable food, now includes frozen goods donated by the Co-op and Waitrose which means fewer vouchers. Freezers have been donated but space for them is limited. Storage is a problem so that offers of furniture, carpets, household goods, linen etc. can't always be accepted, if not required immediately. (Guernsey Welfare is willing to put things on E Bay but this has to be organised and the paid staff of 2 social workers and 1 food bank assistant are part time and the result is less than expected or very time consuming.)

The Christmas Appeal "Cash for Coal" is distributed in vouchers for coal, gas or electricity, nothing else will they buy. Vouchers are issued also for clothing and footwear for children for specific shops who understand the policy is for shoes, not for a pair of socks and change. The Appeal covers treats for children: sweets, chocolate, biscuits - please do NOT wrap as everything which is donated and goes out to families is known and regulated by a team of volunteers, including me, who take the food bank voucher, issued by the social worker, showing how many adults and, or, children there are. We will allow them to select goods - we are given values - and within reason in every sense, they have their choice. Some people are clearly in dire circumstances, whereas others, you would never guess. Anyone found cheating the system will quickly lose their privileges. Job loss, bereavement or illness are usually the cause of the need, though immaturity, lack of knowing how to manage money, overspending on ready meals, not knowing how to shop and cook passed down the generations, can lead to debt and its consequences. G.W. has run cookery and basic money management courses as well as family events. An irregular newsletter goes on to our Notice Board to keep us aware. When Guernsey Welfare began in 1896, it was very low profile because people felt embarrassed by charity. Today the Bible uses the word "love" - I think the

word "care" is most appropriate for charities and with that in mind I say a big "Thank You" to those who lay gifts under our Christmas Tree on 15th December. Ethel

Remembrance Sunday

Last year, we marked the centenary of the end of the first World War. This year, 80 years since the outbreak of World War II, Charmaine writes: **"A Poem for Remembrance"**

The days are dark, the weather wet and cold
It's time to remember, the young ones and the old.
They fought the fight for freedom, security and peace
Wounded and maimed, they suffered, for them there's no release.
Men and Women fought this fight
So, you and I could be all-right.
The lucky ones they made it through
With bodies maimed and limbs anew.
Some holes in flesh from wounds received
Atrocities, never to be believed.
These Injuries they live with, their minds apart in pain
Our Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen, in our memories **MUST** remain.
So let us, stand-up, be proud and say
We wear this poppy for you today.



A retiring collection for the Royal British Legion raised £261.



"THAT'S BETTER"

The Great Wall of China has been restored. Here is a before and after photo
Next time you are at church, have a look
at the wall and railings between us and



our neighbour whose house was, in fact, our manse many years ago. The photos show how much the wall has deteriorated and how much better it now looks after some welding, a little cement and several licks of paint

A Reflection on Remembrance. One hundred years have now passed since His Majesty the King declared that there should be a 2-minute silence to remember all those who died in the Great War. It was a war that was to end all wars but sadly that day has yet to come. In World War One, millions of souls were lost for a few metres of soil. Today it is hard to imagine what it must have been like living, fighting, dying in the mud of Flanders. It was a place where men counted their lives in minutes or hours, not days! We may find it hard to imagine what it was like but we are asked to remember and to go on remembering as, on Remembrance Day all over the country, people of different faiths, culture and backgrounds stop what they are doing for 2 minutes in an Act of Remembrance.

At Remembrance Tide, we honour the memory of those who were killed by never forgetting them and never forgetting what they were fighting for when they died. We remember, too, the work that goes on with veterans, the wounded, the bereaved and all those who struggle to find any real sense of peace in body, mind or spirit. We should also remember all those who this day will face danger in the course of their duty. That is perhaps where our thoughts of remembrance and our need for healing come together.

For some, remembering the past is no longer possible. For some, remembering the past is too painful to contemplate. For some, remembering the past is all that they do every minute of every day. The act of remembrance, for some, is a daily occurrence which haunts by day and by night. Some veterans find it very difficult to forget and to put the past behind them.

Let us pray for healing in remembrance. Let us pray for all who can no longer remember what they did yesterday, let alone all those years ago. Let us pray for healing for all those men and women, boys and girls, who find remembrance and recalling past events too painful to contemplate. Let us pray, too, for healing for those who play back time and again an endless catalogue of events and experiences which should have been laid to rest many years ago.

To remember can be a healing process but it can also be a heavy burden to many and to them God calls: "Come to me, all you who labour and are overburdened, and I will give you rest. Shoulder my yoke and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls." AMEN

Revd Donald Caskie – The Tartan Pimpernel

An edited version of a Reflection on Psalm 118: 24 from the evening service on Sunday 27 October 2019.

“This is the day that the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it.”

“What God may hereafter require of you, you must not give yourself the least trouble about. Everything He gives you to do, you must do as well as ever you can. This is the best possible preparation for what He may want you to do next. If people would but do what they have to do, they would always find themselves ready for what comes next.”

So wrote the Reverend George Macdonald, a Congregational Church Minister, who was born on 10 December 1824 in Huntly, Aberdeenshire and who, in the late 19th century, became an eminent Scottish author, poet and Christian Minister.

Do what you have to do today is preparation for whatever God calls you to do tomorrow. It is too easy to live in the past and to dream dreams about the future but, in so doing, we rarely enjoy the present, the “here and now”.

Some of you will be familiar with the name Revd Dr Donald Caskie, Minister of the Scots Kirk in Paris during World War Two whose exploits during the war have been marked by a memorial plaque, recently unveiled in Nice, to commemorate his role with the French Resistance. He served as a Chaplain to a Military Prison in Nice and, under the code name of Monsieur Le Canard or Donald Duck, contributed to the escape from the port of Marseille of countless numbers of British Airmen who had been shot down.



The ‘Tartan Pimpernel’ as he came to be known was a crofter’s son from Islay in the Inner Hebrides who is reported to have saved more than 2,000 men during WW2. The book called “The Tartan Pimpernel” was recently re-published and is well worth reading. By doing what you have to do today is preparation for whatever God calls you to do tomorrow....



In praise of Good King Wenceslas

When I was a choir boy many years ago, writes David Winter, ‘Good King Wenceslas’ was a popular carol. A man sang the King’s lines, a boy sang the Page’s, and the choir filled in the narrative. It was not of course technically a Christmas carol but one for which most people know as ‘Boxing Day’ – the ‘Feast of Stephen’, the first Christian martyr.

But you don’t hear Good King Wenceslas these days. It fell foul of political correctness. The king was wealthy and very kindly, helped a poor man, but the last verse was the problem. It called on ‘Christian men, wealth and rank possessing’. To help the poor and be blessed in doing it. All very patronising, class-conscious, and chauvinistic. So, it has simply disappeared.

I think that’s a pity, and I also think it’s a serious misunderstanding of the carol. It relates to the good deeds of a tenth century Duke of Bohemia, Wenceslas I, and concerns a king and his page, and a poor man freezing and potentially starving whom he saw from his window.

The king didn’t, as he might have done, simply order some minion to take the man some food or fuel. He decided to do it himself assisted by his young page. Together they braved the bitter wind and snow in order to take pine logs and food to this humble dwelling. That is not patronising but true Christian grace.

Yes, the last verse does express a Victorian view of characters but that’s when it was written. No one should condemn the carol and its message. Who would shrink from following its example? I’m afraid texting a token ten quid to a charity does not quite qualify.

Love requires action, if we don’t see that then we have missed the point. That is the message of this lovely carol.

Smile lines

What did the reindeer say before launching into his comedy routine?
‘This will sleigh you.’

If athletes get athlete’s foot, what do astronauts get? Missile toe.

A Celtic Prayer from the Northumberland Community,

Nativity

The virgin is a mother.
The earth can greet her King.
As stumbling shepherds spread
the news,
And shimmering angels with-
draw in wonder,
The tiny baby searches for her
breast.
Mary smiles, and cradles His re-
ality.
Now Jesus is Emmanuel;
Heaven's champion is God-in-
flesh.
Christmas has come.

Harper Collins 2015

A Mother's Prayer



I hope my child looks back on
today
And sees a mother who had time
to play
There will be years for cleaning
and cooking
But children grow up when you
are not looking
Tomorrow I'll do all the chores
you can mention
But today, my baby needs time
and attention
So, settle down cobwebs; dust go
to sleep
I'm cuddling my baby and ba-
bies don't keep

A few more seasonal smile lines

Chimney

Why doesn't Father Christmas suffer from claustrophobia when he
climbs down the chimney? Because he has had his flue jab.

Bakery

Did you hear about the bakery that was burgled at Christmas? Every-
thing was stolen!

Biscuit

As we were putting out biscuits for Father Christmas on Christmas
Eve, one fell on the floor. When I picked it up and placed it back on
the plate, my four-year-old was horrified. "You can't do that!"
"Don't worry," I assured him. "Father Christmas will never know."
He shot me a suspicious look. "So, he knows if I've been bad or good,
but he doesn't know the biscuit fell on the floor?"





Church Calendar



December

Sunday	8	9.30	CoSY Practice in Church
		10.30	Morning Worship
Monday	9	19.00	Advent Study Group in Upper Room
Sunday	15	10.30	CoSY Nativity Service and Tree Gifts
			Congregational Lunch at Jerbourg Hotel
Monday	16	19.00	Advent Study Group
Sunday	22	10.30	Service of Lessons and Carols
Tuesday	24	16.30	Pyjama Service
		21.00	Watch Night with Bethlehem
Wednesday	25	10.30	Christmas Day Family Service
Sunday	29	10.30	Morning Worship led by Worship Team

January

Sunday	5	10.30	Morning Worship with Communion
Sunday	12	10.30	Morning Worship & Sunday School
Sunday	19	10.30	Morning Worship & Sunday School
Tuesday	21	19.30	Kirk Session meets in the Upper Room
Sunday	26	10.30	Morning Worship led by the Worship Team & Sunday School

February

Sunday	2	10.30	Morning Worship with Communion & Sunday School
Sunday	9	10.30	Morning Worship & Sunday School
Sunday	16	10.30	Morning Worship (Half Term)
Sunday	23	10.30	Morning Worship with Worship Group (Half Term)



Church of Scotland

St Andrews in the Grange, Guernsey

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Sunday service is held at 10.30 am each week with a creche available for the very young. Details of activities for older children are given in the Church Calendar.

The Sacrament of Holy Communion is celebrated on the first Sunday of each month except at Eastertime when it is on Easter Sunday.

Car parking is available, by courtesy of the States of Guernsey at the Lukis House car park, 80 yards down the Grange and also at Healthspan (windscreen stickers must be displayed at the latter). Both car parks are on the same side of the road as the Church .



Footnote !



The Christmas Caterpillar

Sometimes, upon a Christmas day

I wonder if there's any way

That Christmas might be quite a treat

For those who have a few more feet!

I really love my Christmas socks

That fill, each year, my Christmas box

O Santa, festive stocking filler,

I wish I were a caterpillar!

