

Bonkle Church of Scotland Magazine

Christmas 2020

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Next issue – Easter 2021

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Church website – www.bonkle.org.uk



“I now establish my covenant with you and with your descendants after you and with every living creature that was with you—the birds, the livestock and all the wild animals, all those that came out of the ark with you—every living creature on earth. 11 I establish my covenant with you: Never again will all life be destroyed by the waters of a flood; never again will there be a flood to destroy the earth.”

Genesis 9:9-11

God gave Noah the rainbow as a promise of hope for the future. Our hope lies in the administration of a suitable antivirus to counteract this terrible virus. Let us pray that this may soon be available and successful in suppressing the spread of the Covid virus.

From the Manse

One of the things that ministers spend a lot of time doing, as you might expect, is thinking about Christmas! We usually start thinking about it around January, (having given thanks that we survived another Advent & Christmas season!) reflecting on what went well the previous year and what we might change for the year to come. It then drops off the radar for a few months as we prepare for Easter, but when things calm down again over the summer we spend our idle moments trying to remember what we had decided back in January and coming up with wonderfully creative and completely impractical ideas for things we could do in the winter to come. Generally those creative ideas never make it off the drawing board, and we end up doing more or less the same as usual – even (and I’ll let you in on a trade secret here) re-using the odd sermon if we’re confident that the congregation have forgotten our deeply profound and meaningful reflections in previous years. The problem is that the story is the same every year, (thankfully) but yet we feel the urge to invent new and novel variations to telling the same story. Imagine a series based on the reflections of the 4th sheep, the Magi camel herder, or even the innkeeper’s wife. (Not that the innkeeper is even in the bible study – but what would Sunday and primary school nativity plays be like without an overzealous youngster declaring “THERE’S NO ROOM AT THE INN!”) at full volume.

This year, however, has been completely different. Planning ahead for Christmas this year has felt more like a game of Snakes and Ladders where one roll of the dice can send you sliding back down a completely different path and you have to start all over again! So we have made some plans for holding services both in Church and online, and we are excited about what we’re hoping to offer to help our communities celebrate Christmas this year. Only to discover that a word from the First Minister, putting our area under Level 4 restrictions for the first half of December or a surge in local cases, could scupper some of these plans and send us back to the drawing board.

All this uncertainty has given me a new perspective on the Christmas story itself, because the more I reflect on it in this year of disruption, the more I

realise how disrupting the events of the first Christmas were for those involved.

Mary and Joseph were engaged to be married, they no doubt had their plans for what their lives would look like, until the angel Gabriel turned up and sent all their plans out the window. Then, just as they were getting used to the idea that they would have a baby, the emperor ordered a census so they had to set off away from home on the long journey to Bethlehem. Not what they had planned at all.

Or what about the shepherds, sat happily in their fields just doing their job until the angels appeared and sent them running into the village to find the newborn Jesus. And then there were the wise men, sent on a perilous journey to a far-off land because of the appearance of a new star in the sky. None of these people could have predicted or planned what would happen to them, but when the disruption came they went with it and in doing so they met God face to face.

We all approach Christmas with our own sets of expectations and hopes, rituals and traditions, and after all we've been through this year it may feel heart breaking that we won't be able to celebrate in the ways that we usually do. But perhaps this Christmas, this strange and disrupted Christmas, gives us an opportunity to learn anew from Mary and Joseph, the wise men and the shepherds, and to allow the strange turn our lives have taken to lead us closer to the God who is always with us.

Wishing you a happy and peace Christmas and New Year
Graham, Doris & Emma

The service is available on a CD, DVD or phone (01698 602250) and on the web www.bonkle.org.uk and www.facebook.com/ColtnessBonkle.
If you know of anyone that requires any of the above methods, please let us know via Graham, Ian (01698 386028) Matthew or an Elder.

Financial Review for 2020

At this time of year when my grandchildren are sending their letters to Santa for the gifts they would like to get at Christmas, I said to Lachlan you might not get everything on your list, he replied without hesitation “Granny it is Santa he will do his very best for me”. How I wish that the peoples of the world had the same simple Faith in God.

This year has been like no other that I can remember, however, I can confirm we have met our Ministry and Mission commitment to Church of Scotland of £ 21960. We have also maintained all other financial obligations, thanks to your generosity and continued support of our Church through Weekly Freewill Offerings, Standing Orders and donations from visitors.

Although our income is down this year we still approach 2021 with a healthy balance in the General Fund and our reserves remain unchanged. Fundraising had to be suspended for this year but we shall, hopefully, be able to resume sometime during the next year.

I thank everyone for their continuing prayers during these difficult times that soon we shall all meet together to worship as a Church Family, giving thanks and praise to God.

“The Lord loves a cheerful giver Remember this: whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously. Each man should give what he has decided in his Financial Review for 2020

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“The Lord loves a cheerful giver Remember this: whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously. Each man should give what he has decided in his heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.”

2 Corinthians 9:6-7.

My family wish you and your family a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

In Jesus' Name

Laureen

Guides

As we don't have any idea about what will happen in the new year, the guides plan is to continue to do zoom meetings until we know it is safe to meet face to face.

As for news, our guides have been meeting online via zoom since the first lockdown and are working on our Window of the world badge at the moment. Since we can't have our special Christingle service with the church we will be finishing up on the 11th December and next week we will have an online zoom slumber party and the following week we will finish with a Christmas party.

Keep safe

Sharon

Adult church clubs/activities

At present the halls are still closed and it may be some time before we can use them. Even if they were open, the current restrictions would make it difficult. Distancing would be very difficult and the continual sanitisation of premises and equipment would be difficult to cope with.

Our best hope is for vaccination against the virus but this is unlikely to be generally available till well into next year.

We would suggest that other clubs set up groups on Zoom, Skype, Whatsapp, Facetime, Meet etc. To better enable the members to keep in touch. Most people now have an internet connection.

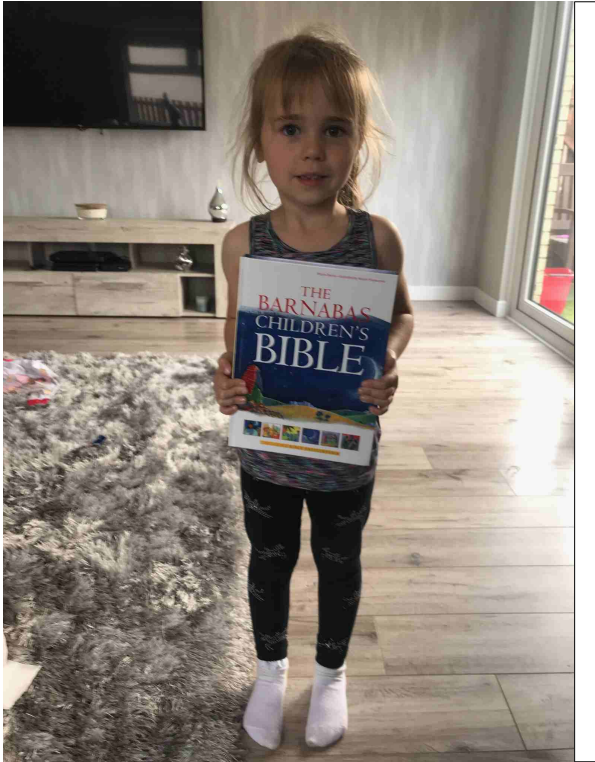
The software required is available for smartphones, table and laptop computers running the Apple, Android or Windows operating systems. It is unlikely that we will be able to meet in the hall for some time – the room with the computing facilities in it is far too small to allow distancing and it will probably be some time before the vaccine will become available.

The numbers that attended the Ladies Fellowship and Thursday Club were very low and they are unlikely to restart.

We then would have no day activity for people in the area. This is unfortunate due to the large number of elderly within the congregation and locally. Perhaps we should consider a club suitable for their needs.

You must, however, contact us before reopening as new contracts and certain precautions will likely be required. It is likely that the names of those attending must be recorded and held securely for 21 days. Regulations (face coverings, distancing, sanitisation etc.) must be adhered to. The Bonkle website will record any updates.

Sunday School



Even though normal schooling has resumed, church Sunday schools are *still not allowed* to meet. this is Olivia she was six and although the Sunday school is not on she still got her bible from Sunday school This was from my gran. Even though we've not had face to face Sunday School Olivia was still able to get her bible on turning 6.

Also I ordered the packs from the Scottish bible society and they are all ready to go for our children. Thank you for forwarding me the details.

Stephanie

Computer Club

Fortunately we had introduced club members to social networking last year so we are able to keep in contact with them.

Problem solving can be a bit difficult as, though we can see them, we cannot see their computer as they are using it but we do our best.

We can still offer help by Email (bonkleclub@yahoo.co.uk) or by phoning Marion or myself (01698 386028).

Wishaw CAP Debt Centre

I hope you are all keeping safe and well. The system of phone consultations is still in place at all stages, which allows clients to access a very similar service to that which was offered previously. Home visits continue to be suspended, and since our area is under quite tight Covid-19 restrictions so it will probably be some months before these can resume. At present we are supporting 22 people. 2 people have called into the helpline recently, one of whom was previously receiving help from us but didn't complete the process. The great news is that one client has gone debt-free!! It is always so good to hear of people finding a new financial freedom, and it is so satisfying to see people completing the process.

Our main referral agencies, such as the local DWP Jobcentre, Remploy etc have been operating a much reduced service throughout the duration of the pandemic, and this has had an impact on the number of referrals we have had. Our drop-in at the Jobcentre has been suspended, but the local foodbank forum, and the local MP's Poverty Action Network have resumed online meetings, and I attended both of these recently. We also did a leaflet drop in the Newmains area recently; many thanks to all who joined in, their dedication allowed us to cover a large area in a relatively short period of time.

After a short break during the summer, our monthly prayer meetings have resumed. They are normally held on the second Tuesday of the month at 2pm. These are now online via video. If you would like to join in, please let me know.

We also have a **WhatsApp prayer chain** which we use to pray for our clients. If you would like to join in the group, just text me your number and I'll add you to it.

The foodbank is still open, and people have been incredibly generous in donating food, money and vouchers to it. We also received funding recently and use this to provide Asda gift cards for people to top-up their parcels with fresh food. The demand has remained steady and we have been able to help those in need in the local community. It is open every

Wednesday between 1pm and 2.30pm at Coltness Memorial Church in Newmains. Referrals can be obtained via the Scottish Welfare Fund (0300 555 0405 crisis grant option). The Reverse Advent Calendar is under way, so please contribute if you can. Details are on the church and foodbank Facebook pages.

***Nicky McLaughlin (tel: 07400189398, email:
nickymclaughlin@capuk.org)***

Murillo, Canada

COVID wise we are not doing well here. Our numbers are going up daily due to the outbreaks in two nursing home so we expect to go into the Orange Level tomorrow. We will be lining up outside the shops again. Not nice in the cold weather. Christmas will be very different this year. I ventured in to the city yesterday. It was time for my car service and my dealership is in Thunder Bay Stores were very quiet but I didn't waste any time and was glad to get home after that. Our weather has been relatively mild still for this time of the year. It is too good to be true. We normally have a staff and volunteer appreciation night at our local library, but this year since the Township has closed the Community Halls for the unforeseeable future, we are having a virtual bingo. That should be interesting. and fun. So take care and stay warm and safe.

Rena McAra Patton <renamac2001@yahoo.com>



Christmas/New Year services

As you can perhaps imagine our services over the Christmas & New Year period will look slightly different to usual, given the current restrictions. Our plan had been that the children were in church every Sunday during December, but that was not possible under Level 4 restrictions limiting our attendance to 20 people (including children).

Assuming the we move out of level 4 on the 11th December, our plan is as follows. (If not we may have to amend our plans, but will keep you posted if this happens)

Dec 13th – 12.00 noon - Family Service in church (Online service and DVD/CD of “adult” service – Advent 3 – Focus on JOY will still be available if requested)

Dec 20th – 12.00 noon - Family Service in church (Online service and DVD/CD of “adult” service – Advent 4 – Focus on PEACE will still be available if requested)

Dec 24th – Due to restrictions on singing and numbers permitted in church the Watchnight service will be posted online (also available on DVD/CD at a later date)

Dec 25th – As above due to restrictions on singing and numbers permitted in church the Christmas Day service will be posted online (also available on DVD/CD at a later date)

Dec 27th – There will be no “in person” worship. The Moderator of The Church of Scotland has produced a service for churches to use, this will be available Online and by DVD/CD as usual

Jan 3rd 2021 – Our start of the year Joint Service will be held in Coltness Memorial at 11.00 am

January 10th onward, all being well we will revert to our usual pattern of worship (although we would like to continue to encourage our Sunday School in whatever way is appropriate given the restrictions which are in place at the time)