

FOCUS

Portsoy Church Magazine



December 2023—January 2024

A Message from the Manse

I'm not fond of Christmas. There, I've said it. I don't love the supermarket shelves filling up with festive fayre before barely an autumn leaf has fallen. I don't love tuning in to TV channels in October only to find Christmas movies on a seemingly never-ending loop. I don't love the idea of credit cards straining under the pressure of non-stop spending.

Sometimes I think it'd be better if we only had Christmas every second year - or, even better, if we only had it once every four years, like the Olympics or the World Cup. That way, maybe we'd make Christmas special again rather than 'celebrating' it for what amounts to nearly a quarter of the year, every year. Maybe we could move it to the middle of summer every so often? That way we could enjoy a Christmas Day barbecue on the beach, just as our friends in Australia get to do every single year. How is that fair?

I remember when Christmas was a bit more low-key than it is now, and maybe you do too? When it really didn't begin until December, unlike now, when it starts as soon as summer's over, or when the John Lewis advert gets its first showing, whichever comes first. I remember when Christmas meant something.

I visited Portsoy Primary School just recently to talk to the P6 and P7 class about religious celebrations and, of course, given the time of year the conversation came around to Christmas. We played a little word association, and do you know what the children came out out with when they thought about Christmas?

But then I remind myself. Christmas **does** mean something.

Not presents, not TV programmes, not even decorations or Christmas trees. Instead, what Christmas meant to them (and I hope it continues this way) was family, friends, gathering together and...Jesus.

Yes, Jesus. The children knew that the reason we celebrate Christmas is because we're celebrating the birthday of Jesus. And birthdays come around once a year, every year (unless you're unfortunate enough to be born on the 29th of February, that is). That's why making Christmas a bi-annual event isn't ever going to happen. Because it can't. And I wouldn't have it any other way.

I said I'm not fond of Christmas, but that's not strictly true. I reserve the right to not be too keen on all the bells and whistles and tinsels and baubles that come with the season, but I suppose they're a price to pay - and it's a price I think is worth paying because yes, I love that this year, and every year, we celebrate the birth of our Saviour. Happy Christmas everyone!

Blessings

John

If you need me for anything or if you just want to call for a chat, you can reach me at the manse on 01261 838 506.



Christmas quotes 1

"Unless we make Christmas an occasion to share our blessings, all the snow in Alaska won't make it 'white.'"

Bing Crosby

Shoebox Appeal News

In case you've missed the announcements at Church and Coffee and Company a big thank you to all who contributed to the Shoebox Appeal this year. One thousand, five hundred and seventy-seven shoeboxes were sent to Evanton from Buckie this year.

Our contacts - George and Joan Flett - from Cullen, have been spearheading the Buckie Shoebox Appeal for many years, but have now decided to stand down from that role. I know that you all join me in thanking them for all their efforts over the years, and for enabling us in Portsoy to be part of the cause. George has asked me to pass on some information to all our supporters here. First he thanks us all very warmly for our support over the time he and Joan have been leading the Buckie effort. He also tells me that from the New Year, the Blythswood Shop in Buckie will be able to accept any knitted goods for the 2024 Shoebox appeal. So no need to mothball your needles and crochet hooks!

There will be more information about shoeboxes from the Buckie team once we are into next year, so watch this space!
Margaret Whewell

Funerals

10 October Rita Godzman

27 November Josephine Whyte

Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.

WELCOME TEAMS

10.00am Portsoy Church Centre

December

- 3 December Edith Stuart & Eileen Brown
- 10 December Helen D'Arcy & Yvonne McKay
- 17 December Moira McKenzie & Sheila McKay
- 24 December Margaret Whewell & Olwen Christie
- 25 December Edith Stuart & Eileen Brown
- 31 December Helen D'Arcy & Yvonne McKay

January

- 7 January Moira McKenzie & Sheila McKay
- 14 January Margaret Whewell & Olwen Christie
- 21 January Edith Stuart & Eileen Brown
- 28 January Helen D'Arcy & Yvonne McKay

February

- 4 February Moira McKenzie & Sheila McKay
- 11 February Margaret Whewell & Olwen Christie
- 18 February Cullen
- 25 January Edith Stuart & Eileen Brown

If any of the dates are unsuitable please ensure you arrange a swap.

Christmas Quotes 2

"Peace on earth will come to stay, when we live Christmas every day." — Helen Steiner Rice

I wonder if anyone reading this has experienced a "dry bones" time, or knows what I mean? Recently I was reading something which brought up the passage in Ezekiel chapter 37, commonly known as the "valley of dry bones". It touched a nerve, because many years back this passage had a special significance for me.

I was in a horribly "dry" state as far as my faith was concerned, and I can't remember now what brought this story to mind, but I looked it up, and read it, and I was the dry bones. It wasn't God asking Ezekiel "can these bones live?" - it was me asking God. And in that special moment, I felt that yes, my dry bones could rattle back to life, and God seemed to breathe new life into me. Sorry if this all sounds a bit weird and farfetched. But I hadn't read the passage for a long time, and it set the tears flowing.

There have been dry patches since then, and times of healing and forgiveness and renewal, but this will always be a special passage for me. And I'd just like to say to anyone who's maybe going through a time of dryness, keep trusting. God never gives up on us, and will send his healing and refreshing in his special time, and his special way.



Christmas quotes 3

"Remembrance, like a candle, burns brightest at Christmastime." — Charles Dickens

"God never gives someone a gift they are not capable of receiving. If He gives us the gift of Christmas, it is because we all have the ability to understand and receive it."

Pope Francis



CAN YOU CHECK SANTA'S NICE LIST ...
I'M PRETTY SURE I'M ON THAT ONE

Christmas Dates for your Diary

3rd, 10th, 17th, and 24th December
Advent Sunday Services at 10.30am

10th December

Remembering Service at 7pm
for those missing someone special

16th December

Carols and Teas at 2pm

23rd December

Advent Journey with Beyond Boyndie
at 6.30pm

24th December

Carols and Lessons at 6.30pm at Fordyce Village Hall
Watchnight Service at 11.15pm

Christmas Day

Family Service at 10.30am



Prayer Focus

By the time you read this we will have celebrated the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper in remembrance of the last meal that he held with his disciples before he left them to go to the cross and bear the agony of being forsaken by his followers. He even professed that they would do so by telling them "This very night you will run away and leave me". (Matthew 26v31) On the cross he felt that his Father had left him and he experienced a terrible separation from him and cried out "My God, My God why have you forsaken me?"

There may be times in life when we feel forgotten and alone. Times when we have hurts, fears and anxieties. A child moves away from home. A loved one passes on. We leave a job or a community and it feels as if we have left everything behind.

God never abandoned Jesus in his greatest hour of need. It was all part of His great plan to save the lost and those who were, and are, separated from Him. God won't leave us either when we desperately need Him. Our Lord knows when we are hurt and He experiences our pain. The next time we feel alone, whatever the reason, remember that God is thinking of you and saying "I love you". There is never a dark moment that you can't ask your heavenly Father for help. There is not a trial you go through without His assistance. We need God's power when we go through periods of loneliness, emptiness, depression or testing. We need the strength of the Lord not only for severe trials but for everyday living—and He promises it. We are never forgotten by God. As we experience His compassion and loving His loving care, we can go on with our lives again even as the hurt continues to heal.

Lord, in our times of loneliness, hurts and fears may we hear Your words of comfort and peace. Please help us to experience Your compassion and loving care. May we trust in Jesus our saviour, who is the Light of the world, and who removes the darkness in the midst of separation, trouble, illness or disappointment. Help us to have a sense of Your nearness at all times and to remember that You are in control and that you will never fail us.

Amen

Portsoy Church Guild

I'm sure we are all looking forward to our next Guild meeting which will be our Christmas Lunch on Thursday 7th December, to be held in the Meeting Room at the Church Centre. Thank you so much to Olwen and Gary who are kindly catering this for us. (Don't forget Thursday, not our usual Tuesday!!).

No meeting in January, but back to our usual first Tuesday in the month, when on 6th February 2024 we welcome our Guild National Vice-Convener, Flora Buthlay to speak to us. I'm sure she'll give us many insights into how our movement is run, and the influence it can have in many spheres of life. Visitors and new members are always welcome at our Guild meetings, so please feel free to join us. You will be warmly welcomed.

Here's looking forward to good fellowship and friendship in our Guild in the New Year and throughout 2024.

Margaret Whewell

Photos

The children (and mums and dads!) at the Well Cafe made poppy wreaths on the Friday before Remembrance Sunday.





We're an informal group of women aiming to have fun, friendship and a chance to explore faith together. We're currently meeting the amazing women of the Bible to find out how their stories can help us as we live our lives today.

What do I bring?

Just yourself and a willingness to chat!
Bibles not essential.

Do I need to come every month?

It would be lovely to see you, but NO, there's no expectation of attendance.

Can I bring other people?

Absolutely! We'd love to meet other people from any church and no church! Whether you have faith, you're seeking faith or have no faith., this group is for everyone.

Dates for your diary:

September 27th: The story of the Woman at the Well

October 25th: The story of Elizabeth, cousin to Mary

November 22nd: The story of Mary, the Mother of Jesus

December 13th: Christmas Social with mulled wine, mince pies and carols.

For more info, contact Kath, 07759 692968

FOCUS DEADLINE

The next edition of Focus will cover February 2024 to March 2024. Please let Johanna Sturrock have articles and any photographs for inclusion no later than Sunday 18th February. unicornathome@gmail.com.

Wordsearch



HOLY NIGHT

A D N H P W P J Q B T G F F S Q V
Y D M Q M I A A S T A R R L G F R
F X F A G R D O N K E Y A S Q L J
F S B U G S A V I O R M N F W U W
H H E A X W I X H Z I E K J A C B
E E T M B Y J R S N M V I N Z X I
M P H I N Y R O A E H H N U G L B
I H L B K Y P G S Z B N C Z O Q J
W E E Z M Z N I M E U Q E X L M E
K R H I M Z W F M E P S N P D N S
Z D E R A S K T A B A H S L D Y U
G N M Q J J J S N Y I A E S R V S
V A N F Q F A T G F T G I A Z T X
N J C U R Z Z X E U N O M N G L Z
B K Y M W I H F R A P E A C E G W

ANGEL
ANIMALS
BABY
BETHLEHEM
DONKEY
FRANKINCENSE

GIFTS
GOLD
JESUS
JOSEPH
MANGER
MARY

MYRRH
PEACE
SAVIOR
SHEPHERD
STAR
WISE MEN



Flower Rota

December

3 Olwen Christie
10 Margaret Whewell
17 Christmas
24 Christmas
31 Christmas

January

7 Edith Stuart
14 Eileen Brown
21 FF
28 Helenor Henderson

February

4 Helen D'Arcy
11 FF
18 Cullen
25 Anne McArthur

Many thanks to all who donate to the Flower Fund. This allows us to have beautiful flowers in church each Sunday, which we gift to members of the community after the service.

If you would like to join the flower rota, and place flowers in the Church for the Sunday service please let Margaret know.

More volunteers are always welcome.(01261 843125)

FF = Flower Fund

Did you know?

Christmas pudding was initially made with meat, not fruit. The first recipe for Christmas pudding dates back to the 16th century, and it was called " plum pudding."

Mince pies were also originally made with meat, not fruit. The first recipe for mince pies dates back to the 13th century, and they were called " minced pies."

Decorating Christmas trees began in England in the 16th century. Prince Albert, the husband of Queen Victoria, is credited with popularizing the tradition.

The first recorded use of the word "Christmas" was in England in 1038.



Please contact Olwen Christie (Pastoral Care Convener) on 01261 843 680 if you know of anyone who is ill at home or in hospital (especially Dr Gray's in Elgin as we are not notified).

Community Diary:

A diary of local events has been placed in the Portsoy Ice Cream Shop for use by everyone. This will enable event organisers to check that the date and time of their event will not clash with another already planned.

Please pass this on to any other local groups. To work effectively everyone will need to check the diary and ensure their own event is entered in it.

A Christian book lending library is available in the meeting room in the Church Centre

If you see something you fancy reading, just put your name in the register, borrow the book and sign it back in when you're finished.



PRAYER CIRCLE

Name:
(Not necessary)

Please pray for:
.....
.....

Please place completed slip in box at church door or hand to the minister or Edith Stuart.

Directory

Minister

Rev. John Gow

Tel: 01261 838 506

E-mail: jgow@churchofscotland.org.uk

Session Clerk

Mrs Yvonne McKay, 11 The Steadings,

Findochty, AB56 Tel: 07592 395 581

E-mail: Yvonne@therealmckay.co.uk

Treasurer

Mr Raymond Wilson 5 St Tarquin's Place,

Fordyce, AB45 2SH Tel: 01261 842204

E-mail: raymondwilsonpfp@btinternet.com

Gift Aid Convener

Mr Ian Whewell, Eynhallow, 14 South High
Street, Portsoy. Tel:01261 843 125

E-mail: ian.whewell@btinternet.com

Church Website

Mr Ian Whewell - as above

Centre Convener Mr Ian Whewell - as above
(For bookings)

Centre Caretaker

Mrs Sarah Willis, 40, Gordon Crescent,
Portsoy Tel:01261 843 928 or

07756 53 5731

E-mail: sarahsfamily@btinternet.com

Focus

Mrs Johanna Sturrock

21 Hill Street, Portsoy. Tel: 07766 390 318

E-mail: unicornathome@gmail.com

DIRECTORY (CONTINUED)

<i>Pastoral Care Group Convener</i>	<i>Olwen Christie</i>	<i>01261 843680</i>
<i>Outreach Group Convener</i>	<i>Paul Williams</i>	<i>01261 842338</i>
<i>Finance & Property Group Convener</i>	<i>Ian Whewell</i>	<i>01261 843125</i>
<i>Social Group Convener</i>	<i>Helen D'Arcy</i>	<i>01261 842340</i>
<i>Administration Group Convener</i>	<i>Anne McArthur</i>	<i>01261 842474</i>

Service Times

**10.30am at the Church Centre every Sunday
unless intimated differently**

(refreshments served after Sunday services)

For Special Christmas Services see page 7

Please join us for all are welcome

Website—<http://www.portsoychurch.org>

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Scottish Charity No: SC 000522