

Columba News



February
2021
No. 238



Winter blast



Winter is still with us but Spring is just round the corner. Snowy scenes at Dumfries House last month

Waiting to welcome you

Sundays	Team	Leader
February 21	Team 8	Mrs L. Sharp
February 28	Team 9	Mr D. Campbell
March 7	Team 10	Mr I. Campbell
March 14	Team 11	Mrs A. Cuthbert
March 21	Team 12	Mrs E. Kerr
March 28	Team 1	Dr H. Hunter
April 4	Team 2	Mr J. McConnachie
April 11	Team 3	Mrs M. Howie
April 18	Team 4	Mr H. Peters
April 25	Team 5	Mrs J. Murnin
May 2	Team 6	Mr M. Whiteford

From the manse

February 2021

Dear Friends,

The writer and broadcaster, Johnston McKay, tells the wonderful story of officiating at the annual service for the Battle of Britain held in St Giles' Cathedral, Edinburgh.

As a young minister and assistant at the cathedral, he conducted the service for four years, though he never preached on those occasions. McKay always invited a veteran or chaplain to do that.

After the fourth occasion, a senior officer in the RAF asked McKay why he had never preached at the service.

He said that he would find it difficult to preach at the service because the Battle of Britain had taken place before he was born. The officer replied, 'Mmmmm. You're in trouble come Christmas!'

In one sense, the RAF officer made a quick and humorous point.

However, in another sense, he missed the point.

The meaning of Christmas is not found in an historical event – two thousand years ago. The meaning is found in the present moment, in our lives: Christ is born in us. Christmas is not an historical event like the Battle of Britain.

At its best, religion is not the doctrines and dogmas of earlier generations but spiritual meaning and encounter now – for us, in our lives.

The Resurrection, like Christmas, is a spiritual encounter that happens in the soul.

The ways in which we 'frame' God will be informed by our understanding of reality. Our understanding of reality, of the universe and what it is to be human, is markedly different from those who lived 150 years ago never mind 1500 years ago.

The former Archbishop of Canterbury, Rowan Williams, said, 'God' is a one word poem. In other words, God is always mystery, elusive, metaphorical.

In his poem, *The Other*, the Welsh poet, the late R S Thomas both describes God and does not describe God, which is the only way it can ever be:



The Other

There are nights that are so still
that I can hear the small owl
calling far off
and a fox barking
miles away. It is then that I lie
in the lean hours awake listening
to the swell born somewhere in
the Atlantic
rising and falling, rising and
falling
wave on wave on the long shore
by the village that is without
light
and companionless. And the
thought comes
of that other being who is
awake, too,
letting our prayers break on him,
not like this for a few hours,
but for days, years, for eternity.

Through these days of virus, sensational headlines, vaccines and lockdown restrictions, bring to mind the Other who also lies awake at night, who listens to your thoughts and delights in shared silences.

Every blessing,

Scott

Revd Dr Scott S McKenna

At the time of writing, government restrictions on visiting homes may become more limited but, hopefully, that will ease. Going forward, if you would like a visit from me or our Associate Minister, David Ness, please don't hesitate to be in touch. We will follow guidelines and visit you when we are permitted to do so. Simply call the manse (01292 226075) or email me (scottsmckenna@aol.com). David's telephone number is 01292 471625. The purpose of the visit may be a pastoral matter or simply an opportunity for a chat.

Many thanks

Jean Stewart wishes to thank members of the congregation who purchased her knitted garments and marmalade.

On behalf of the Sunday lunch cafe £200 was donated to Whiteleys Retreat at Alloway.

Whiteleys is deemed an essential service and continues to welcome local families for respite.

Anyone who has enquiries about Jean's knitting can contact her on 01292 263343.

Jean Stewart

It's now a waiting game for the Men's Club

Another year, another Lockdown. Big sigh - and relax at the Men's Club!

Nothing much seems to have changed since the last Edition of Columba News, except..... just like waiting for a bus, along comes three vaccines to combat 'The Virus'!

Whether one agrees with the method of roll-out or not, the vast majority of our members are in line for their 'jabs' within the first two months of this year and we all pray that this is the beginning of the end of The Virus!

We are all keenly awaiting the evenings when we can get together again and renew, face to face, the fellowship, worship and friendships that have been in abeyance for nearly a year now.

It certainly looks like our meetings will have to wait until September '21 at the very earliest.

We hope and pray that everyone is keeping as well as they can throughout these trying times and look forward to Ayr, St. Columba re-opening to full capacity.

A quote from Billy Graham - "*Comfort and prosperity have never enriched the world as much as adversity has.*"

Stay safe.

John Ferguson
Secretary

A big thank you

It is now close to a year since our Church was projected into a lockdown situation - a situation for which we had no chance to prepare. We found ourselves in unprecedented circumstances with no clear ideas of how to move forward and with very uncertain knowledge of what lay ahead.

As I write, we are in lockdown once more and the prevalence of the virus is much greater than it was twelve months ago. However, there is a significant difference now because we have found ways to move forward and we are able to see that what lies ahead holds the promise of better times.

As we look forward to better days, it is right to acknowledge the contribution of faithful members who have continued to support the Church in spirit and in practice. I know you will be aware that your financial support has been, and will continue to be, crucial in these difficult times, but can I also say that your part in keeping the Church community alive has been greatly appreciated throughout the year. Whether you have done this by speaking to Scott, to Irene or to your Elder, by reading the magazine, by watching services online, by 'dialling up' a sermon, by visiting the website or by attending services when possible, your involvement has constituted a strong and reaffirming message that the Church is there and it is active, even when the doors are closed. I extend my grateful thanks to you for that.

For many, the contact with the Church has been through Irene in her 'satellite office'. Over the year there has been much appreciation of her postings on Facebook, whether these be reflections, prayers, pictures or a sharing of experiences and there has been much laughter as she has conversed with a multitude of members on the phone, week in and week out. She has a unique knowledge of so many of our members and she has become very much a part of the heart and soul of Ayr St Columba.

Our recorded services have attracted many positive comments, both locally and in various locations around the world! It is amazing to think of these being viewed and appreciated in far off lands. That said, it is really no surprise because the quality of these services is so good. We are treated to first class sermons, beautiful hymns and wonderful music every week.

We are extremely fortunate to be able to enjoy the talents of Scott, Rachel and Matthew in this way, but, of course, we can only do this because our recording team have quickly developed commendable skills in

videoing and in editing. Anne Mills takes the excellent recordings made by Alastair Swan and Keith Fullerton and produces what you see on screen. Photographs taken by Alastair, by Tom Mills and by others are used at various times in the recordings and they add that little bit extra to each service. It is praiseworthy work and these good folk are making a real difference to us in these most trying of days.

I hope that when people see the recordings they take time to notice the flowers in the Church. Anne Drennan's work is exemplary and she has shown tremendous ingenuity and commitment to the task over the many months of lockdown and restrictions. The displays at Harvest time and at Christmas were truly marvellous and we congratulate and thank all the ladies involved in creating these.

An unsung hero of these times is John Stewart. John has been heavily involved in all the services to date, both those in the Church and those online. He has prepared the Sanctuary meticulously and he was responsible, with the help of a few friends, for the wonderful Christmas Tree which adorned the sanctuary over the festive period.

Using the wonders of modern technology, it has been possible to hold various meetings at which all participants remain in their own homes. This means that the interests of the Church are being discussed and decisions are being taken where necessary. Through Zoom, there have been meetings of the Kirk Session, the Review and Planning Committee, the Book Group, the Questioning Faith Group as well as a new Committee looking at the place of our Church within the Presbytery. There have also been several individual discussions. Many of these meetings have been led by our Minister who has established himself as a knowledgeable, able and respected leader in a wide range of church matters. Having been faced with an extraordinary situation so early in his time with us, Scott has responded so well and has taken us forward strongly.

It is good to know that we have many things to look forward to once the vaccine allows us to meet again and enjoy the physical fellowship of our Church community once more.

Bob Bartholomew
Session Clerk

Copy deadline for the April issue will be

Sunday, March 28

Copy should be emailed to editor.columbanews@gmail.com

New advertisers should also send their copy to the editor Norman Reid

Scott's sermon preached on Sunday, 3 January, 2021

Epiphany

For a brief moment, let us travel in our dreams back two thousand years across time and space to the mythical land of Shir.

Lying at the extreme eastern edge of the known world, there was a community of wise men, an Order of Mystics, who studied the stars meticulously interpreting all that was written there. According to the ancient Greek Syriac Church, twelve magi, not three (as Tissot



above), journeyed through the darkness of the desert from their home in Shir to the cave of the Christ-Child in Judaea, in the small village of Bethlehem. The magi were men of wonder – astrologers, sages and kings – who prayed in silence.

In the Syriac tradition, the star of Bethlehem was Christ Himself who, having arrived in the cave ahead of the travellers, transformed Himself into a luminous infant. After they knelt reverently before the manger, the holy men rose and returned to Shir; they told their people that they too could experience the Presence of Christ, the Word and Wisdom of God, if they receive the spiritual food which Christ offers. Whether it is three magi or twelve, the overture of Matthew's Gospel imprints upon us the importance of journey: spiritual journey and the inner quest for God.

Recently, the planets, Jupiter and Saturn, crossed paths in the night sky. The two largest planets in our solar system have not been this close for eight hundred years and it will be another four hundred years before the next conjunction. Was such a conjunction the star of Bethlehem? In the ancient world, stars and moons were living beings; their souls were believed to be divine. The appearance of a star in the night sky marking a great birth was not unusual; the star of Bethlehem may have been Christ Himself, a conjunction of planets or mythology typical of the period. Whichever it is, personal journey and spiritual pilgrimage lie at the heart of the story.

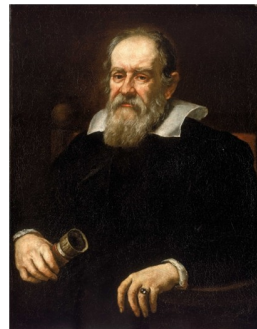
The writer of Matthew's Gospel begins provocatively in the opening story. Having journeyed through alien lands to the city of Jerusalem, the

magi ask of Herod the Great, 'Where is the child who is born king of the Jews?'

The magi presented themselves in Herod's palace before a ruler who was known for his brutality, paranoia and petulance; he had murdered two of his own sons because he feared they were plotting against him. It was said, 'It is better to be a pig in Herod's household than a son!' The scandal of Matthew's story is that Herod the Great *was* the King of the Jews: he had been given that title decades earlier by the Roman Senate at the request of Mark Antony. St Matthew's overture, the opening drama, tells us that the Gospel is about two kings, and their competing claims. Like the birth narratives involving Jesus, Mary and Gabriel, the story of the wise men is a polemical text: it is a clash of two kingdoms.

For me, the poetic narrative of the magi is one of journey: a journey away from the status, power, glory, egotism and seduction of this world into a life of the Spirit, of finding God, relaxing in the Eternal and cherishing the Sacred. It is also a journey of continually extending our understanding of the Divine. In 1831 in the midst of a cholera pandemic, the second one in six years in which many hundreds of thousands of people died across the world, the British Parliament called on the King, William IV, to declare a day of 'fasting and humiliation' as an attempt to overcome the spread of the disease. In our spiritual journey, we look to the advances of science and technology for relief of disease, not a supernatural deity. Extending our understanding of the Divine is crucially important: no system of religion can stand still.

The astronomer, Galileo, (right) described the laws of mathematics as the language of God. He said that God had written two books: the Bible with its many meanings and nature with its fixed laws. The mathematician, Pascal, believed God to be within: in the heart, the soul, the consciousness; what is essential, what is of the essence in life, is invisible to the eye. He said, 'The heart has its reasons, which reason does not know. We know truth, not only by the reason, but also by the heart'. For the historical giants Galileo and Pascal, these were new ways of thinking about God.



In November 1654, Pascal had an intense religious experience. As if in a dream, he gazed on the crucifixion for almost two hours. Later, he wrote of fire, joy and peace. For Pascal, it was an epiphany, a light in his darkness, that God is hidden in the weakness of Jesus: God is present in per-

sonal crisis; not in abstract philosophy but our everyday experience: in the comfort of prayer, the solace of Scripture, the hand of friendship, and the therapy of tender silence. On our journey, in what ways do we think of God, extend our vision of God?

Christians ethics also evolve over time: the place and role of women in society and the church, so too that of children and, in more recent times, same-sex relationships.

The MSP, Ruth Davidson, formerly leader of the Conservative Party in Scotland, said that:



In ten years of elected politics, I have made more mistakes than I can ever hope to remember — some through overreach, some by omission, others by nothing more than blunder. But the mistake that eats away, demanding redress, is voting against assisted dying.

Sometimes, amid complex arguments and conflicting evidence, you know — simply know in the essence of your being — that something is plain wrong. It's time to change the law.

Davidson said that it was her experience of IVF that has changed her mind. She said:

The systems and processes of egg retrieval; choosing donors through any number of characteristics from height to family medical history; embryo implant and even being able to guarantee against twins, makes a mockery of the mystique of kismet surrounding birth. And if birth can be so demystified (for the over 50,000 people who undergo IVF treatments in the UK every single year) then what rule of fate exists for death and why is there such imbalance?

In her support for assisted dying legislation for those terminally ill, she spoke of 'a tortuous clash of head and heart, faith and intellect, [and the] right to life versus injustice of suffering'. Ethical choices are rarely clear-cut between good and evil but, more usually, between two goods. In this case, between the need to protect the vulnerable and the right to personal

dignity and choice. The story of the wise men, the magi, is about journey: not merely for Christmas cards but deep spiritual searching and hard ethical choices.

Spiritual journey can be furthered by moments of simple meditation. The Franciscan friar, Richard Rohr, teaches the importance of slow, gentle breathing, of finding calm in the midst of life's current uncertainty, chaos and stress. In silence, we are encouraged to go to the innermost self and, in the soul, say:

My deepest me is love
my deepest me is whole
my deepest me is limitless
my deepest me is infinite
my deepest me is compassion
my deepest me is sacred
my deepest me is mystery
my deepest me is forgiveness
my deepest me is beauty
my deepest me is God.

From the satellite office

While all around remains closed, work continues in the Satellite Office, serving the Congregation to the best of our ability, where my aim is to keep everyone in touch with the Church.

It is always a privilege to speak on the phone and read your emails. Some days there are upwards of 80 of them – emails that is!

One of the worrying by products of the lockdown is scam and fake email purporting to come from people we know. So, the advice to everyone is always check the sender's email address and do not open anything suspicious.

We have been living with restrictions for a very long time and for many it has been extremely anxious, but we have survived thus far and many have already had their first vaccine – there is light at the end of this very long tunnel.

We have found new ways to fill our days – walks on the prom, by the beach, in the parks; we have renewed our love of reading; some have watched many box-set films; jigsaws and knitting; we are making bread; creative cakes; mastering cross-words and sudokus – and we know that we are fortunate that we have so much from which to choose. In the Office I try to be aware of those who do not have this freedom of choice or the support to keep their spirits buoyant and we are happy to keep in touch. I send out sermons and intimations every week by post – if you know of anyone who might benefit from contact with the Office, please let me know.

Thank you to everyone who takes time to comment on our Facebook posts on the Ayr St Columba and the Ayr St Columba Lochside pages – it is encouraging to



know that the pages are being read! Thank you too to those who are watching the recorded services on Sunday morning. You will have noticed that it is now easier to access this service via the website and the FB pages. If you watch, do not forget to click on the like “thumb” on the YouTube channel.

Our Sunday School staff have been busy with St Columba Kids online and you can see their posts on our FB page – well done all our teachers keeping our young people connected!

Where will I be when the next magazine is produced – that is just guess work, but let us hope there will be fewer reported cases of Covid, more and more people will have been vaccinated and we are beginning to look forward with real hope.

Irene

MESSAGE FROM THE TREASURER

The past 10 months have been a very difficult period financially for the Church. Extended periods of lockdown and restrictions on numbers attending services have resulted in income from offerings being significantly affected, especially in Open Plate donations. In attempting to minimise the resultant adverse impact, expenditure incurred has been drastically reduced as far as possible, but the Church’s cash position has nonetheless deteriorated.

I wish however to take this opportunity of sincerely thanking all members who have continued to donate through Standing Order mandates, and to those members who have handed in their Free Will Offering envelopes when Sunday services were possible. I would also like to thank the many members of the congregation who have forwarded cheques, some in lieu of Free Will Offerings, and others merely as a donation to Ayr St Columba. I regret that given the numbers of cheques that I have received, I have been unable to individually acknowledge receipt, and I apologise for that.

The October mailshot was a great success, yielding in excess of 60 additional monthly Standing Order mandates together with approximately 50 new Gift Aid Declarations.

The ongoing financial stability of the Church is of paramount importance, and the use of Standing Orders by members makes a considerable difference. Should you now wish a S.O. mandate or G.A. Declaration, then please contact the secretary, Irene, or myself.

Many thanks to everyone who has donated to ASC, in whichever form, over recent months.

Keep safe.

Tom



St Columba's Kids

The Zoom Sessions have been taking place every week since we entered Tier 4 before Christmas.

Each week we have been meeting on Zoom to explore God's word through Scripture, songs, craft, prayer, and games. Each week at the end of the session the instructions are posted on the church Facebook page so that everyone can do it in their own time after getting shown how to do it during the session.

We have been hunting through the house for scavenger hunts, playing quizzes on our story, and for the first time since March we can actually worship God through music once again as we do some of our action songs over Zoom from the safety of our own homes.

We have been exploring the theme of spending times in God's presence through exploring his word in the scriptures in different ways, whether through videos, hearing someone tell it to us, reading, or playing games.

A number of our children are now using the Bible App for Kids on tablets and phones at home in order to explore God's story through stories from the Bible which are told in an i

nteractive way and have activities for each story. The team at St Columba's Kids has been working hard as a team to deliver these online sessions and cannot wait until we are back together in person.

If you have a child or know of someone who does who would like to sign up to register their child to take part in St Columba's Kids: The Zoom Sessions while we are not able to meet in person, then please message the Facebook page or contact Irene in the office.

Stuart McKinlay
Sunday School Co-ordinator

Nativity at a Distance



This year we weren't able to do a nativity in person so we embraced technology and produced the Nativity At A Distance.

This video version of the Christmas story saw our children from St Columba's Kids recording sections of the Nativity account at home with their families and these were then all put together.

We were chapping on the doors of wendy houses, living rooms, kitchens, and even the front door in the pouring rain to find out if there was room at the inn.

Parents became costumiers, lighting designers, directors of photography, prompts, musical directors, and cameramen in order to create the various sections. From a brother and sister soaking wet outside chapping on the front door, to the angel Gabriel half the way up the stairs wrapped in a duvet and underlit by a desk lamp, to the wee brother diving like a premiership footballer, to the end-



less outtakes of one family buckling in laughter as mum stood in as innkeeper and the cat tried to get a walk on part, through to the shepherds sheep, which were cats and cuddly toys wrapped in white towels, we produced a nativity like no other and everyone was excellent!

Away in a Manger closed our nativity as everyone sang at home and then the last lines via Zoom, which has become our new method of meeting over the years although for us all singing at the same time it can be a challenge)!

Filming these segments provided fun and memories for the



families involved as they all worked together to recount the events of that first Christmas.

It was wonderful to enjoy exploring this event that is so central to our faith as Campbell, one of our narrators reminded us at the end: In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

He was with God in the beginning.

Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. In him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind.

The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.



Ayr Presbytery news

Ayr Presbytery Meeting held online by Zoom on December 1, 2020

Mauchline and Sorn Parish Churches: Presbytery noted that the Rev Allan Vint preached as nominee on 14 December 2020 (For 251 Against 1) and that the Call to the Rev Vint has been sustained.

Union of Presbyteries Update: Presbytery noted an update paper on the proposed Union of the six Presbyteries in the south and west of Scotland. Presbytery will require to hold a pro renata meeting to fully discuss matters prior to a united motion from the Presbyteries involved going to the General Assembly in May 2021.

Local Church Review: Presbytery agreed to suspend Local Church Reviews scheduled for 2021 until further notice.

Presbytery Budget: Presbytery approved the budget for the year ending 31 December 2021 and Congregational assessment of £1.1312 per £100 of average Christian Liberality.

Property Inspection Levy 2021: Presbytery approved the following property levy charges for 2021, which stay at the 2015 rate of £486 per Charge, £243 per Congregation in a linked Charge and £162 for each of the Congregations in a triple linkage.

2021 Discretionary Allowance: Presbytery agreed reductions in Ministry and Mission contributions to the following churches:

Maybole: £6,000 - assist with outstanding loans

Dalmellington: £1,000 - purchase equipment for new Mission Development Post

Patna Waterside: £1,000 - purchase equipment for new Mission Development Post

New Cumnock: £6,000 - essential fabric repairs to Church, manse and halls

Tarbolton : £2,000 - assist with upgrade to sound system (Phase 1)

Annbank: £5,000 - assist with disabled ramp and toilets for all within Church and to make the Church a hub for community activities

Alloway: £4,000 - assist with a new toilet block in Bandawe, Malawi

Ayr St Andrews: £2,000 - assist with purchase of video recording/ streaming equipment to enhance outreach to the elderly and housebound
Ayr St James: £3,000 - support mission work in the parish including online worship, food bank and Junior Church by zoom

Troon Old Parish Church : Presbytery approved the application to create a dedicated food bank storeroom to accommodate food banks associated with the South Ayrshire Foodbank. The cost of the works will be approx £5,000 which will be met in full by a private donation.

George Park
Presbytery Elder

TAKING AN ECO LOOK by Andrew Muirhead

Sustainable diets and climate change **Does eating organic food help?**

My wife recently said to me, “You are less tolerant of food likes and dislikes, than anyone I have ever met.”

Neither of us are in the first flush of youth, so this was quite a statement!

The picture on the right is part of an advert on the back of Waitrose magazine. I have removed the name of the oven brand being advertised, which allows for 2 heat zones in the same oven. This advert may reflect “normal” eating habits in the UK, but is unlikely to have much traction on me.



In the last few years, I have developed food preferences. These are based on the impact my diet has on the environment, my health and that of others.

Agriculture is responsible for a substantial proportion of greenhouse gases. This issue is complex because land used for agriculture may involve deforestation and loss of biodiversity. In addition, fossil fuels are used to

make fertilisers and pesticides. Animals and some crops may release methane, a powerful greenhouse gas, into the air. Fossil fuels are also used in food processing, for transport and to manufacture packaging.

The UK Governments are committed to net zero emissions in only a few decades time. This must require change in our diets. The obvious ways to reduce the climate impact of our food is to eliminate food waste, make a major reduction in consumption of animal products and reduce the amount



of processed food we use. Reducing packaging and eating locally produced seasonal food will also make a modest contribution.

Organic food is expensive! It is also frequently difficult to distinguish from “normal” food. Surely this

is an indulgence for people with more money than sense. Furthermore, the carbon footprint of a kilo of organic beef may be even higher than that of intensively farmed beef. Is there really a case for organic food?

For those of us who are concerned that climate change is a threat, the plight of the environment in general is a worry. Modern intensive agriculture uses pesticides which are damaging the populations of pollinators and other fauna. Nitrogen fertilisers are also used on arable land, causing topsoil to be washed away. Topsoil contains much more carbon than all of the world’s forests combined and more fresh water than all rivers and lakes combined. It also contains a vast living mass of organisms. Topsoil is essential for farming. When treated with nitrogen fertilisers, instead of natural fertilisers and crop rotation, the soil washes away and the organisms diminish. We do not know if the carbon in the top soil is released into the atmosphere or if it all settles in the seabed after it is washed away. According to Pimentel et al, the world has lost half of its topsoil in the last 150 years. The UK has lost even more according to the UK Parliament’s environmental audit committee in its submission of 2016. In 2014, one UN official has stated that there may be fewer than 60 harvests left. This was reported in the December 2014 issue of Scientific



American, so perhaps that is 54 more harvests from now.

Without topsoil and pollinators, farming will cease to be viable as topsoil cannot be created in a reasonable timescale and pollinators are required for many of our crops. Wildlife is valuable and high standards of farm animal welfare are attractive. Both improve with organic farming. The timescale for topsoil loss is similar to that of climate change and we must therefore tackle both.

Organic farming is based on a series of standards and is enforced by in-



spection. Organic farming still comprises only a small proportion of all UK farming. If we look at the cost of average UK diets made up of purely organic produce, it will be high, maybe too high. If we commit to a sustainable diet by reducing consumption of animal products and move to organic at the

same time, the cost is more reasonable.

Conventionally farmed dairy and beef allows the use of “routine” antibiotics. This means that cows and other farm animals are routinely given antibiotics in order to prevent infections even if they are not ill. As they may be in very close contact with one another this policy makes sense to the individual farmer. Unfortunately, liberal use of antibiotics encourages the development of resistant organisms which can transfer to humans. This is one reason why antibiotic resistance is developing more rapidly than new antibiotics. Infections in humans are becoming more difficult to treat as a result. The threat that resistant organisms pose to our health is, in my opinion, greatly underestimated. I am a former senior doctor who was involved in treating people with complex infections. Organic farming allows antibiotics to be used only if an animal is ill. The reduced number of animals allowed per acre allows organic farms to maintain healthy livestock without mixing antibiotics into animal feed.

I used to feel virtuous when I bought free range chicken and eggs as opposed to normal poultry products. I now carefully avoid these because the free-range chicken is usually fed on imported grain, often GM crops heavily treated with fertiliser and pesticides. A high price is paid to producers of grain used for animal feed and this provides the commercial incentive

for burning forests in Brazil and damaging arable land elsewhere. Organically farmed chicken uses only organically farmed animal feed and no incentive to burn the rainforests. Organic eggs are a more expensive than free-range but the meat is much more expensive and with good reason.

Organic farming provides the highest standards of animal welfare. It is unmatched by any other certification system.

It is no longer sustainable to rely on animal products to provide us with an important proportion of our calorie requirements. Animal farming is very inefficient because only some of the calories in animal feed are converted into meat, milk or eggs. Farming that relies on chemical fertilisers and pesticides is not sustainable. We can change to organic, mainly vegetarian food and need to do this rapidly if our descendants are to have adequate food supplies.

References

Pimentel et al, (1995) Environmental and economic costs of soil erosion and conservation benefits, Science 267, 5201: 1117-1123

Maria Helena-Semedo speaking at the world soil day forum 2014 covered by Chris Arsenault Reuters, Scientific American. <https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/only-60-years-of-farming-left-if-soil-degradation-continues/>

Klein et al, 2007 Proc Biol Sci 274; 303 Review article on the importance of pollinators

Farm assurance Schemes and animal welfare; How the standards compare 2012: https://www.ciwf.org.uk/media/5231255/standards_analysis_main_report.pdf

Andrew Muirhead

Volunteer, Living Lighter project. This is a Scottish Government funded project designed to gain support for reducing carbon emissions.

Please contact me if you would like to promote ecological matters in Ayr St Columba. Any contribution of any type will be appreciated. It need not be a big commitment.

Email a.g.muirhead@gmail.com

Mobile 07526662044

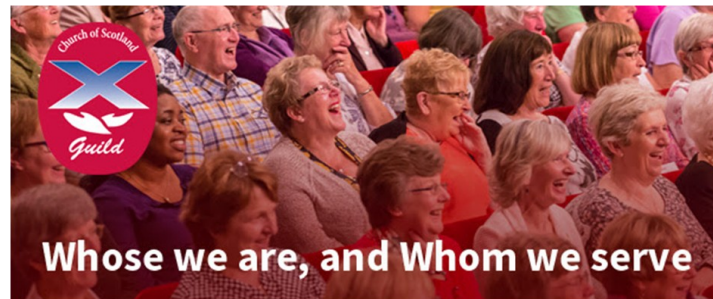
Copy deadline for the April issue will be

Sunday, March 28

Copy should be emailed to editor.columbanews@gmail.com

New advertisers should also send their copy to the editor Norman Reid

The Guild reports



It is incredible that nearly a year has passed since we had our annual general meeting on 16 March, 2020. Whoever thought that night that we still would not be meeting together in fellowship a year later!

My thanks go to our Committee who insisted in helping to keep in touch with everyone and I know they enjoy phoning their individual group of members on a regular basis. Our members do enjoy being kept in touch with the Guild.

Our Treasurer, Elizabeth, has balanced the books for the year January to December 2020 and thanks to our members' generosity we were able, after Capitation Fees were remitted to the Guild Office in Edinburgh, to make our usual donation to our Church's Over 80's Flower Fund as well as £700 to Ayrshire Cancer Support who were experiencing a vast reduction in donations due to the pandemic. We still have a balance in hand which we will set aside for Guild Projects once the new set of 6 options is published in April. Hopefully our members will be able to have a say in which projects we decide to support during the next 3-year term.

For your information, up until the end of 2020, the amount collected by the membership of The Guild nationally for the 3-year term ending 2020-2021 is undernoted:

Crossreach	£77,259.31	Boys' Brigade	£80,873.90
Sailors' Society	£59,957.91	Journeying Together	£59,687.21
Seema's Project	£76,394.97	Malawi Fruits	£66,019.25.

This totals £420,192.55, just short of half a million pounds, of which St Columba Guild contributed over the three-year term, £2,600. Had we been able to hold our Annual Coffee Morning last Autumn, this amount would have been greater. Well done to all our members for their hard



work over the last few years!

At this point, I do not know when we will be able to convene as a Guild, but I do hope it will be in September 2021. If not, we will meet when it is safe to do so. In the meantime, I wish you well.

Dorothy Bone, Convener

Abbas Rest Christmas Appeal

It seems a long time ago now since the Christmas edition of Columba News was circulated to the congregation with details of the work Abbas Rest is doing in Malawi.

The church was still open then and members of the congregation who were able to attend church, brought envelopes with donations for Abbas. Other folk sent their envelopes through the post or handed them to elders to be forwarded to the “counters”.

You have as usual come up trumps! To date, your wonderful generosity has raised £1300! This figure includes £200 from Oasis- thank you! On behalf of the charity, I cannot thank you enough!

This amazing donation will help ensure the charity’s work continues.

At a time where we’ve not been able to hold coffee mornings and other fund raising events, it is particularly valuable.

Also, Tom, our treasurer is happy to wait till the end of February before lodging the cheque in case anyone who hasn’t given a donation would like to do so now. The WMO committee would like to add their sincere thanks to Tom and Margaret for all their hard work in counting the donations. It must have taken a while and we are very grateful indeed.

The work of Abbas is ongoing. We, the Scottish Trustees, continue to hold zoom meetings with the project manager in Malawi, Chikondi. We have recently had photos of the distribution of maize to the orphans, their guardians and grandparents. There is always a gap each year between the planting of the maize and its harvesting- usually January to April. These months are called the “hunger months” when many folk struggle to have enough to eat. Our intervention is therefore of vital importance.

You can see a selection of photos on the website.

Once again the generosity of St Columba congregation has shown itself to be exceptional. Thank you so very much.

Muriel Wilson

Congregational and Parish Register

December - January

"I am with you always to the end of the age"
Matthew 28:20



Elizabeth 'Betty' Dickson	Goukscroft Park, Ayr
Charles Hamilton	Dunlop Terrace, Ayr
Fiona Gilchrist	Midton Road Ayr
Ilona Gilchrist	Midton Road Ayr
Graham Waterston	Arrol Drive, Ayr
Annie O'Halloran	Templeton House, Ayr
Donald Irving	Templeton House, Ayr
Hugh Lamb	Campbell Street, Ayr
Agnes Wood	Templeton House, Ayr



Tuning in to our services

In recent months, St Columba Church has been providing services online:

Website:

Full Service (see 'Worship Services' tab) Sermon (script and audio) at www.ayrstcolumba.co.uk

Facebook:

Full Service

YouTube:

Full Service

on our YouTube Channel

Dial-a-Sermon: Audio 01292 851074



Who to contact

Minister:

Rev. Dr. SCOTT S. McKENNA.
scottsmckenna@aol.com
Tel:- 01292 226075

Associate Minister:

Rev. DAVID T. NESS, LTH,
17 Winston Avenue, Prestwick.
Tel:- 471625

Session Clerk:

ROBERT A. BARTHOLOMEW,
30 St Leonard's Road, Ayr. Tel:- 265794

Depute Session Clerk:

WALTER MUIR, 1 Corsehill Place, Ayr
Tel:- 282931

Treasurer: TOM CAIRNS,

15 Longhill Avenue, Ayr KA7 4DY
Tel:- 443271

Director of Music:

MATTHEW HYNES,
20A Academy Street, Ayr KA7 1HS
Tel:- 870449

Gift Aid Convener:

PETER G. MACDONALD,
23 Dongola Road, Ayr. Tel.- 264059

Free Will Offering Convener:

GRAEME SAVAGE,
27 Newark Crescent, Ayr. Tel.- 445347

'Columba News' Editor:

NORMAN REID,
4 Hawthorn Drive, Ayr. Tel:-262144
editor.columbanews@gmail.com

Church Secretary:

IRENE E. BARTHOLOMEW,
30 St Leonard's Road, Ayr
Office 269524

irene@ayrstcolumba.co.uk

Beadle and Church Officer:

JOHN STEWART,
6A Ronaldshaw Park, Ayr.
Tel:- 07847639528

Church Office: Carrick Park, Ayr.

Tel:- 269524 Office hours: 9am-noon, Mon,
Tues, Thurs and Fri

Church Services (Midton Road):

9.30am - Family Service;
10am Sunday School,
11.15 - Morning Worship;
6.30pm - Evening Services
(Last Sunday of the month)

Church Services (Lochside):

10am Morning Worship

Webmaster: Iain Bartholomew,
email: website@ayrstcolumba.co.uk.
www.ayrstcolumba.co.uk

What's on in the halls

MONDAY

5.30pm **RAINBOW BROWNIES**

Aynsley Bell, 07914 842118

7.30pm: **THE GUILD** (fortnightly):

Mrs D. Bone, 441651

7.30pm: **MEN'S ASSOCIATION** (fortnightly):

Mr T. R. Swinn, 441896

7.30pm: **LADIES FELLOWSHIP**

(fortnightly):

Linda Sharp, 286951

WEDNESDAY

2pm: **HOLY COMMUNION** (4th Wed):

Church Office, 269524

2pm: **FITNESS with FRIENDS:**

Mrs Margaret Doncaster, 477381

5.45pm: **9th AYR BROWNIES,**

Mrs E. MacDonald, 445529

7.30pm: **GIRL GUIDES:**

Susan Christie. 442374

7.30pm: **9th AYR RANGER GUIDES**

(every second Wednesday):

Susan Christie, 442374

THURSDAY

10.30am: **OASIS CAFE:** Mrs Rene Kidd

10.20am: **LADIES BADMINTON:**

Mrs Elizabeth MacDonald 445529

2pm: **MEN'S ASSOCIATION GAMES:**

Mr R. Park. 268788

6.30pm: **CUB SCOUTS:**

Mr D. Hope, 263376

7.30pm: **SENIOR CHOIR:**

Church Office 269524

FRIDAY

6pm: **BEAVER SCOUTS:**

Fiona Wilson, 290414

7.30pm: **SCOUTS:**

Jereon Bolte, 07511489755


SATURDAY

4pm: **MESSY CH4URCH**

(last Saturday of the month):

Irene Bartholomew, 269524

Church Charity Number: SC014338







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Remember your Consent Form

Ayr St Columba is currently collating details of the congregation to give us easier communication with the members.

If you still have a **Consent Form** we are appealing for you to fill it in and send it to the roll keeper as soon as possible.

The details you give us will be kept confidential, and will only be used by the church and ministers to make it easier to make contact with **YOU** especially during this pandemic.

The Kirk Session has appointed Mrs Margaret Doncaster as the roll keeper for the church and any changes to members' details should be conveyed to her.

Many thanks

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Stated Annual meeting and Trustees' meeting

**March 16
2021
on Zoom**

Commences at 7pm

**The congregation can get further
details on how to attend the Stated
Annual Meeting on Zoom by contacting
the Session Clerk at
sessionclerk@ayrstcolumba.co.uk**

*Copies of Ayr St Columba's draft accounts
will be available on the website or a printed
copy can be requested from the church
secretary from Tuesday March 2*

