

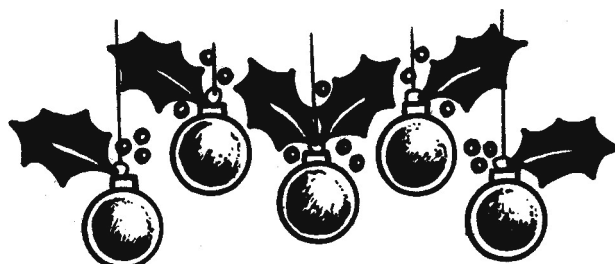


PORTREE PARISH CHURCH OF SCOTLAND



Church Office Bearers

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Session Clerk	Mr W Marshall	650405
Roll Keeper	Miss D McEwan	612266
Treasurer	Mr W Marshall	650405
Clerk to the Congregational Board	Mrs M MacKay	612690
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ROOM FOR JESUS

*She (Mary) gave birth to her firstborn, a son (Jesus). She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger, because **there was no room for them in the inn.** (Gospel of Luke 2: 7)*

When Joseph and Mary tried to find a place to stay in Bethlehem – as they were taking part in a census – they discovered that *there was no room for them in the inn.* Being in labour, Mary delivered Jesus in a stable which provided a manger – a feeding trough for animals – as the Saviour's first bed.

The words **NO ROOM** well characterize Jesus' whole life while on earth. Aside from being born in unsanitary conditions, there was *no room* in Herod's kingdom for Jesus, so soon the Holy Family became refugees in Egypt to avoid being hunted down and killed by the king's soldiers (Matthew 2:16). During His earthly ministry there was *no room* – in contrast with the animals and birds – where *to lay His head* (Matthew 8:10). Most people in Jesus' day spent more time rejecting, testing, accusing Him rather than listening to, learning from, and placing their faith in Him. There was *no room* for Jesus in the plans of the religious leaders in Jerusalem (Matthew 26:3-4), so they executed Him. In fact, it appears the only place on earth where there was *room for Jesus* was on the Cross of Calvary. In the context of the Gospels this does not seem to be any longer the pretty Christmas story painted for us in the traditions, songs, and decorations of the outward formalities at Christmastide, does it ?

Jesus is still calling all people to believe, desiring ROOM in human hearts and lives today. Christ wants to *dwell in your hearts through faith* (Ephesians 3:17). He says: *I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with him, and he with me* (Revelation 3:20). Jesus won't break in, but wants an intimate fellowship in the complete forgiveness and love of God. However, according to the cruel statistics of the 2022 Census in Britain, more and more people's reaction today is still: NO ROOM for Jesus. The carol "O little town of Bethlehem" provokes: *...O Holy Child of Bethlehem, descend to us we pray; cast out our sin, and enter in; be born in us today...*

As God approaches the door of your heart and life at Christmas may He see this sign hanging on it: **OCCUPIED – BY THE SON OF GOD, MY SAVIOUR.**

Wishing you a Blessed, Merry Christmas,

Sandor, your Minister.



SESSION CLERK'S REPORT

Two matters have dominated Kirk Session discussions since my last report in the Summer edition of our magazine - The Presbytery Mission Plan for North Skye and the Covid arrangements which have been operating in our church.

Presbytery Mission Plan : A further joint meeting of the Kirk Sessions of the four North Skye parishes was held on 01 September to decide on the final arrangement for forming two enlarged parishes from the existing four. The final proposal of the meeting was that Portree and Kilmuir & Stenscholl should unite and likewise Snizort should unite with Bracadale and Duirinish.

This proposal was then taken to a full Presbytery meeting in Kyle on 25 October when approval was sought for the Presbytery Plan for all existing eight parishes.

Before the voting took place Sandor asked permission to address Presbytery and indicated that, as a minister inducted to serve in the charge of Portree on an unrestricted tenure basis, he wished to spend his remaining years of service devoted to the people of that parish. He was at pains to explain that relations between the two parishes were excellent and would continue to be so, but he felt his loyalty was to the people of Portree.

Cllr. Calum Munro, Session Clerk for Kilmuir & Stenscholl, stated that he fully understood Sandor's position and that it would not mar the good relationship between the parishes.

Covid Arrangements in Portree Church : At a joint meeting of our Congregational Board and Kirk Session the continued wearing of face coverings was discussed.

It was felt that, as most people were now fully vaccinated against Covid, and the number of visitors to the island was much reduced, that from Sunday 30 October the wearing of face coverings should be a matter of personal choice. It was also agreed that the cleaning and disinfecting regime in the church should continue, but at a reduced frequency. It will still be sanitised before each Sunday worship.

Further Steps out of Covid : We are delighted that our Sunday School has now resumed, albeit with reduced numbers, but we hope that members of the congregation will be ambassadors for the church and encourage any young family members to come and see what takes place in this group.

A Watchnight Service, starting at 7.00 pm is planned for Saturday 24 December, and as Christmas Day and New Year's Day, both fall on a Sunday there will be morning worship held on each of these days. Full details of services is given later in the magazine.

Another important step is the plan to reintroduce from mid-December the serving of teas and coffees after morning worship.

Kirk Session hopes that all members of the congregation have a joyous Christmas and a happy, healthy and contented New Year and that more will return to Portree Church to hear the Word preached and to enjoy the fellowship of other worshippers.

God bless you all,

Bill

TREASURER'S REPORT

At the last meeting of the Congregational Board, I reported on the church finances for the period from 01 January 2022 to 30 September 2022.

As with most reports there were positives and negatives.

We are all aware that a number of our congregation have not returned to church since the first Covid lockdown. This has obvious consequences for the finances of the church.

Comparing the same period in 2022 with that in 2021 showed that while our Free Will Offering envelopes recorded a 6.5% increase in givings and the Open Plate a massive 30.3% increase, the Gift Aid donations decreased by 6.6% leaving us with an overall drop in givings of 1.9%.

The drop in Gift Aid donations is a result of the number of GA contributors falling. This results in a "double whammy" as the tax recovered from these donations has fallen by £1,000.

I would repeat my plea to members of the congregation – if you pay income tax, by joining the GA scheme we can claim back from HMRC 25% of your offerings. All this is at no cost to you and, apart from signing the GA declaration, there is no paperwork for you to do.

If you would like to link your offerings to Gift Aid, it is a simple matter of filling in your name and address on a Gift Aid declaration and adding your signature. This declaration is kept by the church.

The cleaning and sanitising of the church has to date cost us over £2,000, but we all feel that was a necessary expense for the health and safety of all worshippers.

On the positive side, we are very fortunate that, before the current crisis regarding energy prices, we had fixed price contracts for our Calor Gas and Electricity. These are capped until September 2023 for electricity and June 2024 for Calor Gas. This makes a huge difference to our expenditure.

Our biggest annual expenditure item has always been our Ministry & Mission contribution which the Church of Scotland uses for the payment of stipends for ministers, mission work throughout Scotland and abroad, and general administrative costs. The new scheme is designed to be more open, transparent and easy to understand by letting congregations see exactly what they are contributing towards the cost of their minister.

The figures issued for 2023 show that we will be paying less than we did under the previous scheme.

The re-opening of the Church Hall to community groups and the Church for funerals has brought a steady return to Fabric Fund income and we are extremely indebted to Heather Quaye and Norman Bruce for all their work in these areas.

Overall, with your continuing support for the church, we are roughly breaking even with our finances.

With grateful thanks for your continuing support.

Bill

ST NICHOLAS – A MUCH-LOVED SAINT

One account of how Father Christmas began tells of a man named Nicholas who was born in the third century in the Greek village of Patara, on what is today the southern coast of Turkey. His family were both devout and wealthy, and when his parents died in an epidemic, Nicholas decided to use his inheritance to help people. He gave to the needy, the sick, the suffering. He dedicated his whole life to God's service and was made Bishop of Myra while still a young man. As a bishop in later life, he joined other bishops and priests in prison under the emperor Diocletian's fierce persecution of Christians across the Roman Empire.

Finally released, Nicholas was all the more determined to spread abroad the news of God's love. He did so by giving. One story of his generosity explains why we hang Christmas stockings over our mantelpieces today. There was a poor family with three daughters who needed dowries if they were to marry, and not be sold into slavery. Nicholas heard of their plight and tossed three bags of gold into their home through an open window – thus saving the girls from a life of misery.

The bags of gold landed in stockings or shoes left before the fire to dry. Hence the custom of children hanging out stockings – in the hope of attracting presents of their own from St Nicholas - on Christmas Eve. That is why three gold balls, sometimes represented as oranges, are one of the symbols of St Nicholas.

The example of St Nicholas has never been forgotten - in bygone years boys in Germany and Poland would dress up as bishops on 6th December and beg alms for the poor. In the Netherlands and Belgium 'St Nicholas' would arrive on a steamship from Spain to ride a white horse on his gift-giving rounds. To this day, 6th December is still the main day for gift-giving and merry-making in much of Europe. Many people feel that simple gift-giving in early Advent helps preserve a Christmas Day focus on the Christ Child.



CHRISTMAS AND ST LUKE'S GOSPEL

It is to St Luke's wonderful gospel that many Christians turn as the year draws to a close and Christmas approaches, for it is to St Luke that we owe the fullest account of the nativity.

Luke alone tells us the story of Mary and the angel's visit to her, and has thus given the Church the wonderful Magnificat of Mary.

Luke alone tells us the story of Simeon's hymn of praise, thus giving us the wonderful Nunc Dimittis sung at many Anglican evensong services.

Luke alone tells us the story of how the angels appeared to the shepherds and how the shepherds then visited the infant Jesus. So – imagine Christmas cards and nativity scenes every year without the shepherds arriving to visit baby Jesus. Imagine school nativity plays without our children dressed as shepherds or sheep. So – thank you, Luke!

What makes it so amazing is that Luke was not a Jew ! The man who wrote the fullest nativity story was a Gentile !

Nunc Dimittis

*“Sovereign Lord.as you have promised,
you now dismiss your servant in peace.
For my eyes have seen your salvation,
which you have prepared in the sight of all people,
a light for revelation to the Gentiles
and for glory to your people Israel.*

Luke 2 : 29 - 32

CHRISTMAS DAY

Carols sound throughout the land
Heralding a special birth
Rejoicing as from Heaven's realm
Immmanuel comes to bless the earth.

So in the town of Bethlehem
The Saviour Jesus gently lies,
Mary rocks the tiny child
As angels serenade the skies.

Shepherds told the awesome story
Divinity will now reside
As He who ruled in Heaven above
Yet Lord of all comes as a child.

By Megan Carter

GOD IN THE SCIENCES

This article is the latest in a series written by Dr Ruth M. Bancewicz, who is Church Engagement Director at The Faraday Institute for Science and Religion in Cambridge.

The Incarnation: fearfully and wonderfully made

*My frame was not hidden from you when I was made in the secret place,
when I was woven together in the depths of the earth.*

*Your eyes saw my unformed body; all the days ordained for me were written in your book
Before one of them came to be. Psalm 139:15-16*

You began life as a single cell. For a few hours you were a miniscule but highly complex blob of jelly, until it began to divide: two cells, four, eight, sixteen, a ball, a hollow ball, and then something more recognisably like a living organism. You were still tiny, but developing a nervous system, a head, a body, arms and legs.

Until recently I hadn't thought much about Jesus being an embryo. Somehow, I find that thought even more shocking than His birth. How could God, who made the universe, have become something so completely and utterly vulnerable? Maybe in the past, when the development of a child happened in 'secret', it was possible just to let that part of the Christmas story go untold.

Today, when we see images of a developing child, or even embryos outside the womb, it is harder to ignore the process of Jesus developing into a baby. The incarnation meant that God's Son went through all the stages in the diagram in my developmental biology textbook: 'zygote', 'morula', 'blastocyst', implantation, and so on.

Jesus was there in the beginning, and all life owes its existence to Him. But instead of remaining aloof, He chose to become one of us. The Son of God shared the same kind of DNA as every other organism on the planet. He knows what it feels like to have a body, to feel hungry and thirsty, pain and pleasure, dark and light.

In Psalm 139, the writer is meditating on God's intimate knowledge of him, which began when he was an embryo. There is nothing God doesn't know about him, and even darkness cannot obscure him from God's sight. The incarnation means that God's intimacy with us now

GOD IN THE ARTS

extends even further. He became one of us, lived alongside us, and shared our very fragile material nature.

The transcendent God is also immanent, longing for us to relate to Him as Father. He became as fragile as we are so He could rescue us from the messes we so often find ourselves in. With His help, we can remember what it means to be fearfully and wonderfully made.

Reproduced by permission from Merry Christmas Everyone: A festive feast of stories, poems and reflection, Edited by Wendy H. Jones, Amy Robinson & Jane Clamp (Association of Christian Writers, 2018)



OUR CHRISTMAS AND NEW YEAR SERVICES



Sunday 18 December : Normal worship services at 11.00 am and 6.00 pm
Saturday 24 December : Watchnight Service at 7.00 pm
Sunday 25 December : Christmas Day worship at 11.00 am
Sunday 01 January ;23 : New Year's Day worship at 11.00 am
Sunday 08 January '23 : Normal worship services at 11.00 am and 6.00 pm



**You and your family are invited
to come and join us
at any, or all, of these services**



THE MAN WHO MARRIED MARY

The traditional Nativity scene on our Christmas cards has Mary with the Holy Babe. Around her are the shepherds and the Magi. We may also see stable animals, angels and a star ! While Joseph is often included, his presence seems to be of minor importance.

After all, we praise God for Jesus with our familiar Christmas carols, mentioning angels, shepherds, Wise Men and Mary but the name of Joseph is absent ! Why is Joseph given a low profile? For he is a man to be remembered.

Joseph was a resident of Nazareth. He worked as a carpenter and his skills would have included making furniture, repairing buildings and crafting agricultural tools. Although Joseph had an honourable profession, he would not have been a man of great wealth.

The gospel writers Matthew and Luke give Joseph a few brief mentions. After the birth of Jesus, Joseph and Mary go to the temple in Jerusalem to dedicate the Baby to God. Afterwards, they flee into Egypt to escape the wrath of Herod and much later return to Nazareth. 12 years later, Mary and Joseph go with Jesus to Jerusalem for the Passover feast. There they lose Jesus, only to find Him in the Temple talking with religious leaders!

Apart from these verses, the New Testament is silent about the rest of Joseph's life. However, we do know that Joseph was father to other children by Mary. His four sons are named, and they had at least two daughters. (See Matthew 13:55)

And we also know that Joseph was someone who quietly and humbly took on the awesome role in caring for the early life of the Son of God. Joseph would have taught Jesus many things – not just the skills of a carpenter, but the lore of the countryside which was evident in our Lord's teaching. Jesus grew up within a loving family and described God as 'Father', knowing also the good fatherly qualities of Joseph.

In the Christmas story, Joseph is placed into a situation that brought him misunderstanding and suspicion. But Joseph remained faithful in the knowledge that as long as God had spoken, the opinion of others mattered little. Before Jesus began His ministry, it is believed that Joseph died. It is likely Jesus took on many of His father's responsibilities before He left home.

In the eyes of the world, Joseph was a nobody. He was not a man of valour, fame or fortune. But he was the one who had parental responsibility for the greatest person who has ever lived !

It is sad that we often equate ordinariness with ineffectiveness. Down the ages, God has used many ordinary people to accomplish great things. God continues to use ordinary people. Like Joseph, we need to know that doing God's will is the most important thing in life. May we, this Christmas, respond to God's call to us and please Him in all that we do.



Micah 5:2-4 contains the prophecy about the birth of Jesus that was quoted by the scribes and chief priests when Herod enquired about the location of that event. Micah revealed that this was to be Bethlehem Ephrathah, or fruitful Bethlehem. Her 'fruit' was to be the Saviour of Mankind!

BETHLEHEM EPHRATHAH



Bethlehem Ephrathah
Though small you be
Your fruit shall be a ruler
Who'll rule for Me
When she who is in labour
Comes to give birth
Then shall her offspring's greatness
Fill all the earth.

For He shall be a shepherd
O'er all His sheep
In God the loving Father
In peace they'll sleep
O Bethlehem Ephrathah
His name we'll praise
For He began before all time –
The Ancient of Days!

By Nigel Beeton



THE 'WONDER' OF THE SHEPHERDS IN THE FIELDS OF BETHLEHEM

Shepherds in first century Palestine would have been attuned to the wonders and ravages of nature: star-lit nights, cold and heat, storm and calm, and the unwelcome attention of predators, both animal and human. They would have been more aware than we of human dependency on the seasons, and more respectful than us of the precarious nature of existence. Fear, as well as appreciation, would have shaped their religious sensitivities.

Some think the shepherds near Bethlehem may have been guarding sheep for the Jerusalem Temple, which used them as part of the sacrificial ritual of Judaism in those days. Yet the kind of work shepherds did and the hours they had to keep barred them from orthodox religious observance; they were regarded as uncouth and untrustworthy and were not allowed to give testimony in law courts.

It was typical of St Luke (the only New Testament writer to refer to the shepherds) to put them in the forefront of his narrative. Luke is the writer who favours the underdog: tax collectors, sinners, women, old and poor people and non-Jews all figure favourably in his account. Deliberately he sets before us shepherds as the first Christmas worshippers. They already knew how to *wonder*.

William of St Thierry wrote: "A man who has lost his sense of wonder is a man dead." The 19th Century scientist Michael Faraday wrote: "Let us consider... how wonderfully we stand upon this world. Here it is that we are born, bred and live, and yet we view these things with an almost entire absence of wonder..." This is no plea for anti-intellectual faith, but rather for the discovery of an extra dimension. Wonder is the prime ingredient of worship, and we need to recover it and use it. It takes practice.

William Blake encouraged us to look into the ordinary and see the extraordinary:

"To see a World in a Grain of Sand,
And a Heaven in a Wild Flower:
Hold Infinity in the palm of your hand,
And eternity in an hour..."

The late Michael Mayne, Dean of Westminster wrote, "A sense of the sublime leads to a sense of awe, which is I suppose that combination of wonder and fearfulness you may feel in the presence of what takes your breath away. It is not afraid in the sense of feeling scared, but rather an awe-struck sense of amazement that the ordinary is rather more extraordinary than the extraordinary... it is not the rabbit out of the hat but the rabbit out of the rabbit that is so surprising..."

So, in the astonishing story of heaven-come-to-earth in Bethlehem, of divinity in a cowshed, it is *shepherds* who receive the revelation. Not priests, not presidents, not philosophers. “An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified.”

For all they knew it might have been bad news. “But the angel said to them, ‘Do not be afraid – I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people: Today in the town of David a saviour has been born to you ; he is Christ the Lord.’” (Luke 2 : 9 - 11)



The response of the shepherds was to go and see. Not to question or even to reason. The main constituent of their belief was already *wonder*. They were accustomed to marvelling, for they were surrounded by a world of marvels. So, they went to look. And as they looked, they marvelled. Later, they were to return “glorifying and praising God for all they had seen and heard.”

I was reading it somewhere...

- (1). Once all villagers decided to pray for rain. On the day of prayer, all the people gathered, but only a boy came with an umbrella. That is FAITH.
- (2). When you throw babies in the air, they laugh because they know you will catch them. That is TRUST.
- (3). Every night we go to bed without knowing if we'll be alive next morning, but still we set the alarms to wake us up. That is HOPE.
- (4). We plan big things for tomorrow in spite of zero knowledge of the future. That is CONFIDENCE.
- (5). We see the world suffering, but still, we get married, and have children. That is LOVE.
- (6). On an old man's shirt was written a sentence: *I am not 80 years old; I am sweet 16 with 64 years of experience*. That is ATTITUDE.
- (7). Never forget where you are coming from, then, you will always remember that you are heading towards a Goal. That is FAITHFUL LIFE.

Sandor

THE GIFT OF GIVING AT CHRISTMAS

It started with the coming of the Magi, as told in the gospel of Matthew, bringing their gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh to the newly born baby Jesus. It grew with the legend of St Nicholas, who, legend tells us, saved the future of three daughters by dropping bags of gold into their house via the window, so their father had money for dowries and his daughters wouldn't have to be sold.

From these humble beginnings, an industry of gift giving at Christmas has emerged; so much so that for many people, Christmas gifts have become the main focus of the Christmas season. We despair about how commercialised it has all become. For those with children there is the pressure to supply this year's must have toy/gadget or to ensure that their children can have a 'good Christmas' to remember, and which is comparative to that of their friends. For many families this can mean debt, or going without other necessities, to make this happen. Or it leads to feelings of failure if they can't live up to this expectation. As all our budgets are being squeezed, we perhaps need to look at other approaches to giving at Christmas. Perhaps one which brings us back to remember why we give the gifts in the first place.

A growing trend is becoming evident among many younger people who now value experiences over owning things; and so 'presents' are appreciated that involve sharing – a day out, a meal, a concert etc. As we get older, likewise, we often realise that we don't need more 'stuff' – something else to be stored ...or dusted! Time is now being recognised as the most valuable commodity we can share with those we love....so spending time together in shared activities can be a much appreciated gift. The same is true of something 'home-made' – knitting or jam or baking or a bit of DIY – someone has given time to make the gift.

With children too, there is increasing popularity in models like the Five Gift Rule – where instead of competing to give children more and more or bigger and better presents, parents can teach their families to expect five gifts – something they want, something they need, something to wear, something to read, and something to share. Nor do these gifts have to be of equal monetary value. This manages both expectation as well as recognising that getting presents is not just about what we want, but about what we need or is otherwise to our benefit.

Like toddlers who often enjoy the cardboard box more than the toy, we don't always appreciate or recognise the worth of a gift we have been given. We are often not good at receiving gifts, and at the back of our mind we feel we should always give gifts of similar 'worth' – like some transactional exchange. But the worth of any gift is what it means to the recipient. Remember, the Grace of God is unearned and unmerited, and we have nothing to give in exchange for that gift. The apostle Paul, in Acts 20, tells us that in the words of the Lord Jesus that stated, 'It is more blessed to give than receive'. While this makes the case for being generous to others, there cannot be a gift given without a gift recipient; and another way we can move closer to the true meaning of the Christmas gift is to receive graciously.

There's never going to be a Christmas gift to excel the gift of Jesus Christ to the world, but we can add a bit more meaning to our gifts by focusing on what we give rather than what we spend.



Donna McEwan

SEASONS by Alison Cran

You may feel that you're never ready for Winter, but look at the journey creation goes through before it slumbers, waiting for God to shout, "Arise !"

Autumn is for casting off and shedding all within that does not line up with God's promises for your life.

1 *Jeremiah 29:11* perfectly declares what God has planned for us all.

Enjoy the colder winds that move the trees to drop their leaves, like the tears shed when we face loss. The trees do it beautifully - which calls for us to drop, with colour and fragrance, that which cannot come with us into the new.

Chase the low sunlight and shadows as they move in time, creating the view you see to change from hour to hour.

There is a pattern in each moment and God has designed a pattern for YOUR each moment. Colourful , moving , fragrant and releasing.

Look at the plants around you that *never* change. Evergreen and constant . They are like the people God has sent to show you the way because they've stood their ground.

Don't fear the withering and shedding of your leaves because it means there will be room , when the winter of your soul has passed, for God to do a new thing and bring new growth and life.

Don't lament the broken and wounded shrub that looks like dry tinder or driftwood because it's been pruned and exposed so harshly.

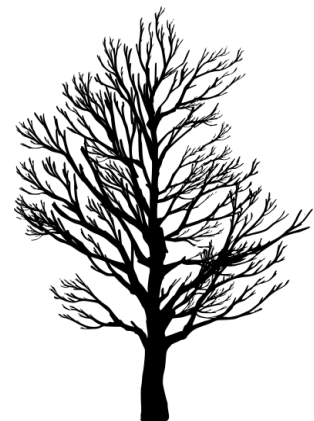
Seasons will come and go before it magnificently springs to life and its flowers bloom.

Autumn isn't loss, but preparation for what's to come. Embrace the fall of everything and anything that has to go in order for you to live again. For there is promise ahead, life and renewal, growth, and fruit.

Remain in the "fall" ...for what springs forth when God shouts "Arise!" will stand firm in the storm.

...Fragile twig and battered Reed...

You're going to come to life sooner than you think!



HAMANTASCHEN

As mentioned in a previous edition of the Church magazine, the Ladies Bible Study has been studying the book of Esther. Whilst flicking through a cookery book I came across this recipe for

Hamantaschen means Haman's pockets. They are triangular shaped biscuits traditionally served at the Jewish holiday of Purim which usually takes place in March, but I think they would also make a nice treat over the Christmas holidays. They're a change from all the dried fruit and spicy sweet treats we eat at this time of year. Their shape is said to represent Haman's hat and though they are traditionally filled with poppy seeds or dates, nowadays jam is used instead.

Hamantaschen

Ingredients

200g unsalted butter, softened
100g icing sugar
1 egg
finely grated zest of 1/4 lemon
300g plain flour
1/2 tsp baking powder
pinch of salt
1tsp vanilla paste
10 tbsp jam



Method

Beat the butter and icing sugar together until pale and creamy. Add the egg, vanilla and lemon zest mixing thoroughly. Sift in the flour, salt and baking powder and mix into the egg mixture to form a dough. Chill for at least 2 hours.

Roll out the dough on a lightly floured surface to about 2-3 mm thick and cut out using a 9cm fluted cutter into approx. 30 discs. Spoon 1 tsp of jam into the middle of each disc leaving a clear border round the edge. Brush the borders with a little water and fold one side towards the middle to partly cover the jam. Fold another third of the border over to form a neat corner with the first fold. Fold the final third over, tucking one end over the previous corner and tucking the other underneath the first corner. Gently pinch the corners to neaten.

Chill the biscuits for 20 mins, then bake in a preheated oven for about 15 mins at 170C/150C fan/Gas 3

Then leave to cool before serving

I think this would be a good recipe to try with the children in your life. Even if you get some odd shapes it doesn't matter. After all, who really knows what shape Haman's hat was!

Submitted by Heather Quaye

ALL IN THE MONTH OF DECEMBER

It was:

200 years ago, on 27th December 1822 that Louis Pasteur, French biologist, microbiologist, and chemist was born. One of the fathers of germ theory, he was best known for the pasteurisation process, which is named in his honour.

100 years ago, on 8th December 1922 that Lucian Freud, German-born British figurative artist and draughtsman was born. One of the leading portrait artists of the 20th century.

Also 100 years ago, on 14th December 1922 that John Reith (later Lord Reith) was appointed as General Manager of the BBC.

Also 100 years ago, on 30th December 1922 that the Soviet Union was founded. Officially known as the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR), it was dissolved in 1991.

90 years ago, on 25th December 1932 that the first Royal Christmas Message was broadcast on radio. King George V addressed the nation live from Sandringham.

80 years ago, on 1st December 1942 that the British Government published the Beveridge Report, which formed the basis of the welfare state.

Also 80 years ago, on 17th December 1942 that British Foreign Secretary Anthony Eden told the House of Commons about the mass executions of Jews by the Nazis in occupied Europe. Ministers and Members of Parliament condemned the massacres and held a minute's silence as a mark of respect for the victims.

65 years ago, on 25th December 1957 that Queen Elizabeth II's Christmas message was televised for the first time.

40 years ago, on 12th December 1982 that 30,000 women joined hands around the Greenham Common RAF base in Berkshire to protest against the siting of US Cruise missiles there.

25 years ago, on 11th December 1997 that Sinn Féin president Gerry Adams met Prime Minister Tony Blair at 10 Downing Street – the first Irish Republican leader to do so since Michael Collins in 1921.

Also 25 years ago, on 11th December 1997 that the Kyoto Protocol, aimed at reducing greenhouse gases and combating global warming, was adopted at a conference in Japan. More than 190 countries have signed the agreement, which came into effect in February 2005.

10 years ago, on 9th December 2012 that Patrick Moore, British astronomer, television presenter and musician died. Best known for hosting the astronomy series The Sky at Night (1957-2013) the longest-running TV series with the same presenter.

HE IS HERE

As we approach Christmas and get ready to celebrate once more the birth of Jesus, I find myself once again marveling at how God sent His One and Only Son to be our Saviour. When I look into that manger I see “Amazing Grace”.
'Amazing Grace, a beautiful hymn, written by John Newton.'



My husband David spends a lot of time listening to a great expanse of hymns and worship songs, as he prepares for each of the Sunday Services. He is acutely aware of the importance of the lyrics and meaning behind each piece of music which is played prior to the service. Hymns and songs can profoundly impact our lives. They can be “SOUL SEARCHING”, “FAITH BUILDING”, and a means by which we come to know and love our LORD and SAVIOUR.

I would like to share two songs which highlight these very facts. They are both written by Darlene Zschech.

The first is called “HALLELUJAH”. It talks about the promised Saviour, the JOY he will bring, the PEACE he offers and how WE can join with the HEAVENLY HOST as we offer our praises to him

HALLELUJAH

He is here
The Saviour has been born
The one we've waited for
Surrounded by our praises

He is here
The promise of the King
To You our lives we bring
Let Your glory be revealed

Joy to the world
Peace to all who love Him
The Saviour has been born
And all of heaven smiles

Glory to God
We bring an offering to you
Join with all the angels
Singing hallelujah

The second song is called 'THE POTTERS HAND'

This song reminds me of God's calling and perfect plan for my life. JESUS is the POTTER and I am the CLAY. Each day he calls me into his presence MOULDING ME, TEACHING ME, GUIDING ME, WALKING BESIDE ME, through life's ups and downs and FILLING ME with HIS HOLY SPIRIT.

The song also reminds me that pots can have chips, cracks and dents and so it is with me. I am not perfect, but the potter MY SAVIOUR loves me none the less with all my faults. It is through his GRACE and HIS GRACE alone that I am able to call myself a Christian.

THE POTTERS HAND

Beautiful Lord, Wonderful Saviour

I know for sure, all of my days are held in your hands,
crafted into your perfect plan

You gently call me into your presence, guiding me by your Holy Spirit

Teach me dear Lord to live all my life through your eyes

I'm captured by your Holy calling,

Set me apart, I know your drawing me to yourself, lead me Lord I pray

Take me, Mould me, Use me, Fill me

I give my life to the Potter's hand

Call me, guide me, lead me, walk beside me

I give my life to the Potter's hand.



So as Christmas draws near, let us remember that the little baby in the manger was part of GOD'S ULTIMATE PLAN. By dying on the cross JESUS is our BEAUTIFUL LORD and WONDERFUL SAVOUR.

Margaret Meikleham

Good King Wenceslas looked out On the feast of Stephen

When we sing this carol, most people naturally focus on the king and entirely forget about the man mentioned in the second line. Yet Stephen is very important in the history of early Christianity as he was the first Christian martyr. He is first mentioned in Acts 6 as one of seven men chosen by the disciples to oversee the day-to-day distribution of food whilst they concentrated on ministry and prayer. Stephen is described as “a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit.” An eloquent speaker, those opposed to what he was preaching, would try to argue with him but “they could not stand up against the wisdom the Spirit gave him as he spoke. “Full of the Holy Spirit “ they saw that his face was like the face of an angel.” He was brought before the Sanhedrin charged with blasphemy but instead of being fearful and diffident, he boldly told his accusers of how they were really the accused, not obeying the law and guilty of murdering Jesus. When he looked up to heaven and told them that he could see “the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God,” well it was all too much for them and they rushed him and stoned him to death.”

A bystander called Saul approved of their killing him.” I doubt that there are any lines more than this one that demands the reader to find out what happens next!

So why is it a good idea to remember the story of Stephen at Christmas? On the face of it ,it couldn't be more different from the cosy tale we're encouraged to love at Christmas (although if you look closely at the story of the Nativity there is a lot of darkness in it which foreshadows what will happen to Jesus). Angels, wise men ,shepherds with their lambs and, to top it all, a baby born in a stable! Yet that baby would grow up to show us in word and deed the only way to live. "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: "Love your neighbour as yourself"

In Stephen's life and death, we see these two commandments in practice ,how we should live our lives, trusting in God and always thinking “what would Jesus do? ”Indeed, in the last minutes of his life Stephen echoes Jesus' final words on the Cross .”Lord Jesus, receive my spirit. Lord do not hold this sin against them.”

Today Christians just like Stephen are persecuted the world over for their beliefs. Sometimes persecution can simply be indifference or ridicule towards Christianity .But it can also be torture, imprisonment and even death. I read of a poignant service a few decades ago where the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Pope knelt together in prayer before seven lit candlesticks representing seven modern Christian martyrs including Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Martin Luther King, and Archbishop Oscar Romero. The seventh candlestick represented “the unknown martyr,” those people whose names will never be known but who sacrificed their lives for others because of their faith in the living God.



So, this Christmas please take a few minutes to remember those who endure suffering because of their faith. They must not and do not suffer alone. Ask God to look after them, trusting in the knowledge that He never burdens us with more than we can bear. Then pray that we too may have the courage in our relatively free society here in Scotland to speak up for what we believe in.

Love came down at Christmas

Love all lovely, love divine

Submitted by Heather Quaye

Good News

(Based on Luke 2:1-14)

Good news!

Good news of great joy –
and it outweighs the bad news
of the journey,
of the rejection,
of the confusion
that made, and makes up life
for Joseph and Mary and for us.

Good news!

God's timing,
God's sovereignty,
God's plan for His people
through Jesus, His gift.
The time has come
to accept and not be afraid.
God's news is good and everlasting.
Glory to Him and peace to those
who trust and receive
without always understanding.



Luke 2:14

By Daphne Kitching



Mouse Makes

HAPPY
CHRISTMAS!

Read the Christmas story
in **Luke 2:1-21**.

Answer the questions, colour
the picture and colour one
star each day until Christmas.

Where was
Mary's baby born?
Why were Joseph
and Mary there?

What did
Mary dress
her baby in?

Where did
Mary lay
her baby
and why?

Why were the
shepherds
afraid?

What good
news did
the angel tell?



What
did the
shepherds
do after they
had seen the
baby?

Who
appeared
praising God,
what did they
say?



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

ALL • DECREE • JOSEPH • DAVID • BETHLEHEM • MARY • BIRTH • SON • LAID • MANGER
INN • SHEPHERDS • FLOCK • NIGHT • LORD • GLORY • GOOD NEWS • JOY • DAY
SAVIOUR • CHRIST • SIGN • BABY • GOD • PEACE • ANGELS • GO • SEE • TOLD • PRAISE

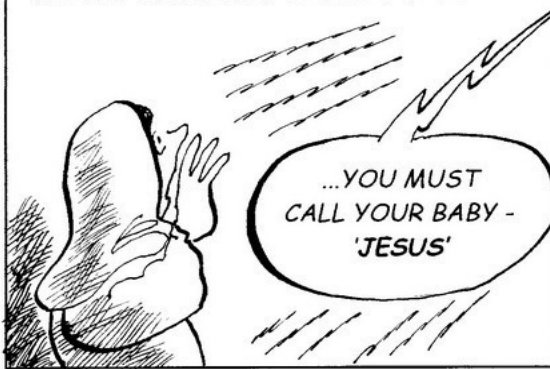
The First Christmas



JESUS WAS BORN ABOUT 2,000 YEARS AGO IN THE SMALL TOWN OF BETHLEHEM, NEAR JERUSALEM.



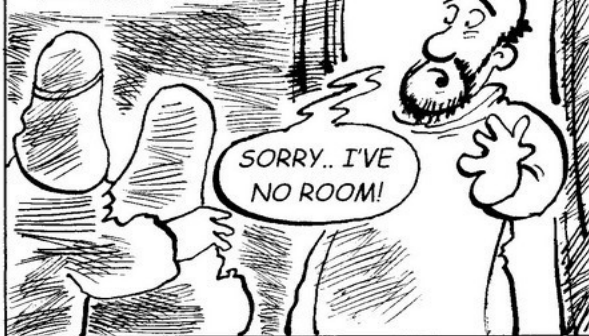
AN ANGEL HAD TOLD MARY SHE WOULD HAVE VERY SPECIAL BABY



MARY AND JOSEPH MADE THE LONG JOURNEY FROM NAZARETH TO BETHLEHEM. THEY HAD BEEN ORDERED THERE BY THE CENSUS.



BUT THE TOWN WAS FULL... THE ONLY SHELTER THEY COULD FIND WAS A STABLE...



...WHICH IS WHERE THE BABY JESUS WAS BORN.

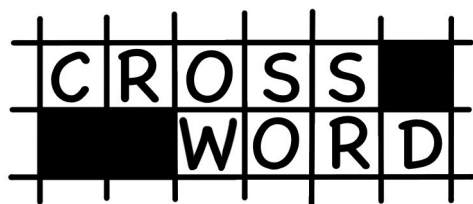


SHEPHERDS IN FIELDS NEARBY RACED TO SEE THE BABY. AN ANGEL HAD TOLD THEM WHERE JESUS HAS BEEN BORN.



THEY WERE THRILLED TO SEE THE MOST WONDERFUL GIFT IN THE WORLD!

Once you have read the story, why not colour it in.

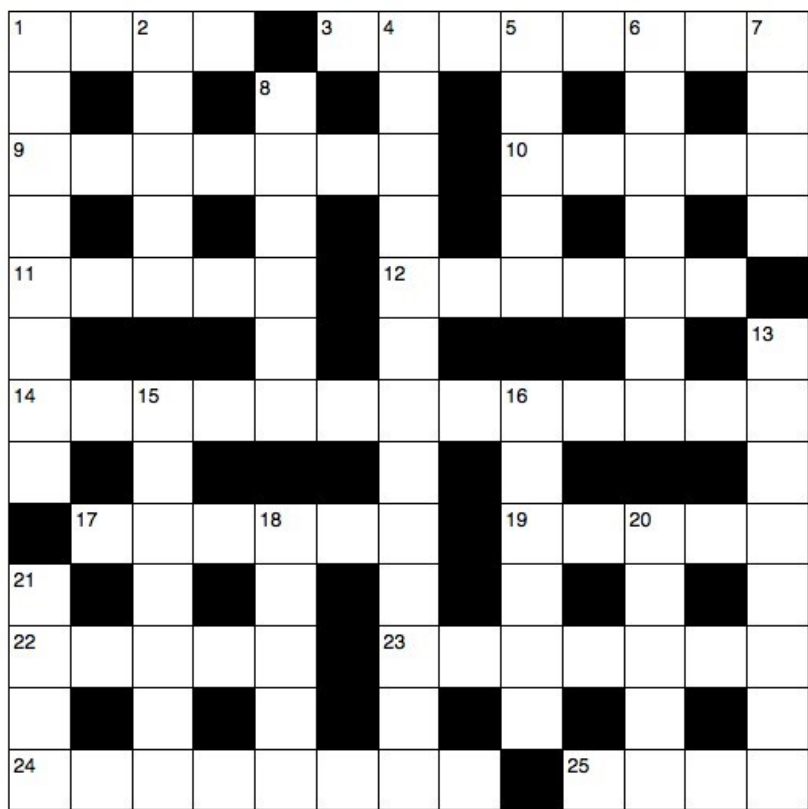


Across

- 1 'How long will you — your face from me?' (Psalm 13:1) (4)
- 3 'Let us, then, go to him outside the camp, bearing the — he bore'(Hebrews 13:13) (8)
- 9 Shy sin (anag.) (Romans 8:15) (7)
- 10 Solemn pledges (Matthew 5:33) (5)
- 11 Italian term for full orchestra (5)
- 12 'For he who avenges blood remembers; he does not — the cry of the afflicted' (Psalm 9:12) (6)
- 14 Prescience (1 Peter 1:2) (13)
- 17 Where a Hindu holy man lives (6)
- 19 'If he found any... who belonged to the Way, whether — — women, he might take them as prisoners' (Acts 9:3) (3,2)
- 22 Fragrance (2 Corinthians 2:15) (5)
- 23 Vine hen (anag.) (Jonah 1:2) (7)
- 24 Precious stone decorating the twelfth foundation of the New Jerusalem (Revelation 21:20) (8)
- 25 'Will you keep to the old path that evil men have — ?' (Job 22:15) (4)

Down

- 1 'Then Moses raised his arm and struck the rock twice with — — ' (Numbers 20:11) (3,5)
- 2 'You have heard that it was said to the people long ago, " — — murder"' (Matthew 5:21) (2,3)
- 4 One of Paul's many hardships endured as a servant of God (2 Corinthians 6:5) (13)
- 5 'We ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, — inwardly' (Romans 8:23) (5)
- 6 Changed (Daniel 6:8) (7)
- 7 'My yoke is — and my burden is light' (Matthew 11:30) (4)
- 8 Recoil (Revelation 12:11) (6)
- 13 'O Lord, you have — me and you know me' (Psalm 139:1) (8)
- 15 ' — to me the joy of your salvation' (Psalm 51:12) (7)
- 16 Express sorrow (Isaiah 16:7) (6)
- 18 'Then he said to Thomas, " — out your hand and put it into my side"' (John 20:27) (5)
- 20 'God has said, " — will I leave you; — will I forsake you"' (Hebrews 13:5) (5)
- 21 Son of Onam and brother of Shammai (1 Chronicles 2:28) (4)



SUDOKU

1	5		3					9
2		4			8			5
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	1				6		2	
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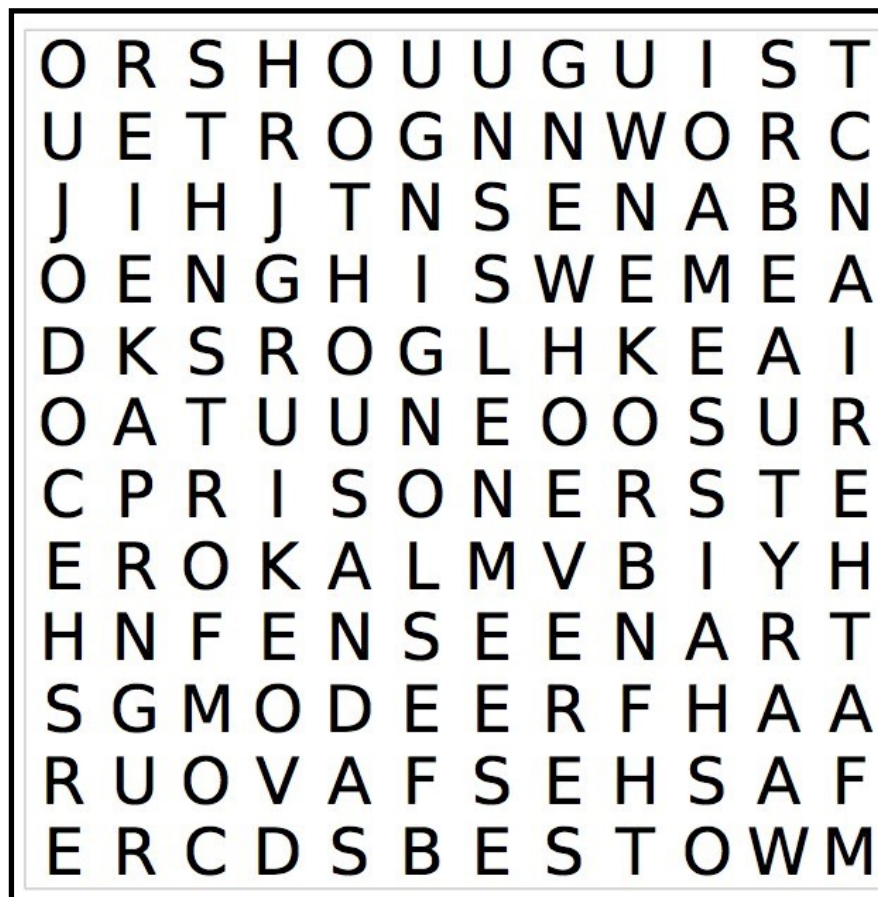
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The Solutions to the puzzles can be found on Page 44

WORDSEARCH FOR DECEMBER

Christmas is nearly here! Two thousand years ago the Jews were longing for the coming of their Messiah. The Old Testament had promised that when He came, He would preach good news to the poor, bind up the broken hearted, proclaim freedom for the captives and release from darkness for the prisoners, proclaim the year of the Lord's favour, comfort all who mourn and to bestow on his people a crown of beauty instead of ashes. Jesus did all those things. He was and is the Son of God, and whoever has seen Him has seen the Father. Whoever believes in Him will have the best gift of all – His Spirit within them, which gives them eternal life.

Messiah Broken Heart Freedom Darkness Favour Prisoners Comfort Mourn
Bestow Crown Beauty Ashes Son God Jesus Seen Father Whoever
Longing Thousand



*The Solution to the Wordsearch can be found
on Page 44*

Christmas is Really for the Children

Christmas is really
for the children.
Especially for children
who like animals, stables,
stars and babies wrapped
in swaddling clothes.
Then there are wise men,
kings in fine robes,
humble shepherds and a
hint of rich perfume.



Easter is not really
for the children
unless accompanied by
a cream filled egg.
It has whips, blood, nails,
a spear and allegations
of body snatching.
It involves politics, God
and the sins of the world.
It is not good for people
of a nervous disposition.
They would do better to
think on rabbits, chickens
and the first snowdrop
of spring.



Or they'd do better to
wait for a re-run of
Christmas without asking
too many questions about
what Jesus did when he grew up
or whether there's any connection.



(Steve Turner: Nice and Nasty 1980)

Submitted by Donna McEwan

THE TRUE MEANING OF CHRISTMAS

Season's greetings brothers and sisters and I hope that the Lord shall bless your days and protect and watch over you always. Christmas is a special time of year when families are reunited, parties are held, Christmas trees are assembled, and presents are exchanged with loved ones. While these are all pleasant things to enjoy with those we love, for Christians Christmas has a much deeper meaning and significance. It is of this significance and meaning that I write to you today brothers and sisters.

I was going through a hard time at one stage in my life. I had a roof over my head, but it wasn't my own. My accommodation consisted of a small bedroom that was poorly insulated – I can distinctly recall sitting in the room and seeing my own breath each evening in the winter. My cooking facilities consisted of a kettle.

I was in the middle of a battle against alcohol addiction and my family were not speaking with me due to the problems it had caused me. Christmas dinner that year was not a choice between choosing Turkey or Beef but rather which flavour of Pot Noodle I would choose to consume on my own. Needless to say, I was feeling pretty depressed at this prospect at the time.

Christmas is an amazing time of year because it allows us to spend time with those we love and remind them how much they mean to us by exchanging gifts. It is a reminder of the importance of cherishing every moment for those we care about for no day is guaranteed.

“Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.” - Ephesians 5:20

But Christmas can also be a time that reminds those who are on their own or have lost loved ones the pain of the past. That on this special day there is one seat absent from the Christmas dinner table that was perhaps once filled. Christmas is also a time to remember those who may be on their own or struggling.

I was fortunate to know a Christian family at the time who were aware of my struggles in this uncomfortable accommodation on my own. At this time, I wasn't a Christian and I was still drinking alcohol, but despite this I was heart-warmed when they invited me to join them for Christmas that year.

I can recall sitting in the living room with them as a warm roaring fire seemed to fill the room with a radiant heat as we chatted and watched some television. I was made to feel very welcome and indeed I felt like I was one of the family.

We then sat at the table and before the dinner the family said a prayer and (despite my not being a Christian at the time) I prayed also. Crackers were then pulled, Christmas Hats were donned, and terrible jokes were read, leading to great hilarity.

The dinner itself was a large spread and one of the nicest Turkey dinners I had ever had. After dinner, the younger children in the family played with the new presents they had received, and I chatted with the adults.

One of the remarkable things that struck with me about this Christmas was that all my problems were forgotten for this one day. I wasn't asked about my situation, my problems

with alcohol – I was just treated like a member of the family, and it wasn't brought up. I wasn't judged – quite the opposite - I was loved.

"This is my commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you." – John 15:12

After the dinner I returned home and although it might not have been as warm as I would have liked – I had a warmth in my heart from the kindness I was shown that Christmas that was of much more value.

So, what indeed is the true meaning of Christmas?

Christmas marks the most significant moment in human history. It is when God became man in the person Jesus Christ. Who in the humblest of circumstances was born in a manger in Bethlehem. Jesus would go on to lead a revolution. But Jesus's revolution was not one fought with weapons. It was a spiritual revolution of love which is still preached and practiced across the world to this day.

What was the purpose of Jesus Birth? We know from scripture that:

"For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace." - Isaiah 9:6

"And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name Jesus: for he shall save his people from their sins." - Matthew 1:21

"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." - John 3:16

Jesus was God in the flesh, paying a debt that we could not pay. That by his life and sacrifice we are given the opportunity of life eternal - if we believe in him and his works. Jesus also left us an example of Godly living and righteousness. He lived a life without sin, ministered to the sick, produced miracles, forgave the unforgivable and ultimately sacrificed himself so that those he loved might live again and inherit eternal life. Jesus spoke specifically about this sacrifice summing up his ministry:

"Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one's life for one's friends." - John 15:13

Jesus sacrificed himself for us because he loves us. And thus, this is the true meaning of Christmas – God's love for us through his son and our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. God is love and because he loves us, he sent his son as a sacrifice to save the world. That through his life, gospel and sacrifice we are saved if we believe in him.

"And we have known and believed the love that God hath to us. God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him." - 1 John 4:16

It was sitting in that warm living room beside a roaring fire, enjoying time with the family that had invited me over for Christmas that day that I felt something that I greatly needed at that time of my life – loved. Perhaps by this action they had helped to plant seeds that later in my life would help to lead me to declaring in our Church that Jesus Christ is my Lord and Saviour.

Inspiring others to the truth doesn't always need to involve preaching. Sometimes loving those who are in need can have a much greater effect in bringing an individual to faith than words alone.

So, at this time of year brothers and sisters as we praise the Lord for all he has done for us and share precious time with our loved ones, let us also remember those who through no fault of their own may be struggling. Let us show the same love the Lord has shown us to others in need at this time of year. A love that one Christmas, saved a young man from eating a Pot Noddle on his own in a cold and dark room.

"And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me." - Matthew 25:40

Wishing you all a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!

*An article by Hugh Campbell
Church of Scotland – Portree.*

When God was born

*He came to that which was His own, but His own did not receive Him
– John 1:11*

God appeared one night; the world slept on.
Infant flesh disguised the Holy One,
announced by angels singing in the sky,
'Peace on earth and praise to God on high'
but who turned up?

Shepherds came, star-gazers from the east,
outcasts, prophets, sinners, lost and least.
Kings and lawyers saw Him as a threat,
Creator, Saviour, Prince of Peace and yet
persecuted, made a refugee,
condemned to death from birth and forced to flee.

Wonder at the welcome Christ extends:
He heals, forgives, restores, makes us His friends.
As we recall and celebrate His birth
how are we to live His life on earth?

By Helen Brocklehurst

GOD IN THE ARTS

The Revd Michael Burgess continues his series on God in the Arts with a look at the cartoon for 'The Mackintosh Madonna', which normally hangs in the British Museum.

PREPARING THE WAY

This month's drawing is 'The Virgin and Child' by Raphael (1483-1520). Raphael was a talented artist from a very early age, but this drawing belongs to a time when he was in Rome from 1510-12. The finished painting is known as the Mackintosh Madonna, after its last owner.

This drawing, or cartoon, was the first stage in creating that work: it is in black chalk with heightening marks of white. When an artist made an initial drawing like this, he would then prick the cartoon with holes and then sprinkle charcoal powder over the drawing to reproduce the design on the canvas below. The pinholes on this drawing are still clearly visible. Sadly, the final painting has been damaged through time, but here in the cartoon we see that first stage: a sensitive and balanced picture of mother and child: Mary warm and caring, Jesus laughing and alive.



During Advent we think of the preparations God made for the birth of the Saviour. We celebrate God's work of creation and how He chose a people for His own. Within that people He looked for a holy remnant and then finally a loving heart in the assent of Mary to be the mother of our Lord. These preparatory steps were as vital for our salvation as the artist moving from idea to sketch to the finished work.

Each stage is important; each stage a revelation of life and love. Vasari wrote of Raphael that in his paintings 'the flesh palpitates, the breath comes and goes, every organ lives, and life pulsates everywhere.' Even this preliminary drawing displays that life and vitality. It is a life we celebrate at Christmas in the birth of a child who turns to us, as he does in this work, as a sign of joy and love.

“AUNT JOAN”

As we are slowly returning to pre-Covid living and we travel again, we returned to Florida for our holiday.

We planned to visit an elderly lady born and brought up in Conista, Kilmuir, who trained as a nurse in the nineteen forties and emigrated to Hollywood in Florida to work as a nurse there. The hospital there invited Scottish nurses to work for them.

We had visited "Aunt Joan" on numerous occasions, and she always invited us into her home, family, and love of God.

She often said, "I am blessed to have so many great things in my life - family, friends and God."

Aunt Joan passed away on the night we flew over to Florida. She was in her 93rd year.

We attended her funeral and were welcomed by her son, Pastor Bruce, and his family into their church and home. We shared stories of how Aunt Joan had a love of sweets, this stemming from as a child when she was given sweets in church, of her kindness, her concern, and her love for others.

Being part of a Church family means you are a part of something very wonderful. It means you will love and be loved for the rest of your life.

Love promotes happiness by extending good to others.

Love is patient, love is kind (1 Corinthians 13 : 4-8)

When Paul writes that " Love is patient" he urges Christians to adopt a love that is purposeful and persistent.

This advent season is the season of love, peace, and kindness, because the Lord extended all of these qualities to us when he came to die for the sins of the world.



Joan MacDonald Matheson Butler died October 6, 2022. She was born December 23, 1929 in Kilmuir, Isle of Skye, Scotland to Angus Matheson and Bessie MacDonald. She was a member of First Baptist Church Hollywood, Florida for 64 years and Family Worship Center in Indiantown, Florida for three years. She enjoyed antiques and spending time with her grandchildren and great grandchildren.

Mrs. Butler was preceded in death by her husband of 54 years, Henry T. Butler.

She is survived by her son, Bruce Scot Butler (Debbie), of Indiantown, Florida, and Angus Henry Butler (Marilyn), of Parkland, Florida; six grandchildren, Scot Butler (Carla), Andrew Butler (Lindy), Ashley Koechig (Crisman), Shane Butler, Devon Kugler, and Lauren Lopez (Danny); nine great grandchildren, Cassidy, Scoty, Hudson, Emery, Skye, Benaiah, Asher, Hayley, and Randy; and many nieces and nephews in United States, Scotland and Canada.

A memorial service will be held Saturday, October 15, 2022 at Family Worship Center.

Submitted by Kay Mackinnon

CARING CORNER



This article aims to start providing information about local support groups and services that may be helpful and that people may not know about, and we hope to build on this information in future editions of our church magazine. If you know of any groups or services that you think should be included going forward please contact us (details at end of article).

SkyeLab, Portree

This is a new community interest company based in Portree (near Jansvans). One of SkyeLab's main aims is to help support people locally to stay safe and live independently in their own homes by providing a Demonstrator Service (ie a 'Shop Window') for carers to demonstrate readily available 'consumer grade' Technology Enabled Care (TEC) devices and digital services such as Amazon Alexa and similar aids to independent living.

It also includes an NHS 'Near Me' access point as an alternative for those who for any reason would prefer not to access this service either from their own home or at the facility in Portree Hospital. The local people involved in this new venture are Campbell Grant, Ronald MacDonald and Iain McIvor from Portree, Anne Gillies from Raasay and Sophie Isaacson from Staffin, who can make contact with people throughout Skye and Lochalsh and beyond.

If you think this community facility might help you or someone you know please get in touch.

More information can be found on the SkyeLab website and sessions can be booked using the bookings section. There is no charge to the public for using the demonstrator service and help can be provided, so you don't need to be 'tech savvy' to make use of it.

<https://skylab.uk/>

Alzheimer Scotland

This is a dementia charity which is active in our area. It has a helpful website where you can find out about support available locally by putting in your postcode.

<https://www.alzscot.org/living-with-dementia>

Local support for people living with dementia can also be accessed in other ways:

- 24 hour freephone helpline 0800 808 3000
- Email helpline@alz.scot.nhs

Some of the local activities that may be of interest and help you or someone you know are online, for example Gaelic conversation and chat, Gaelic songs and chat, and online ceilidhs. If you would like help to access online activities like these but don't have the equipment at home to do so, then SkyeLab might be able to help-see above about how to get in touch.

Playlist for Life

This charity was founded by the writer and broadcaster Sally Magnusson who discovered how important a personalised playlist of music can be for people with dementia and those caring for them, when she was caring for her mother, Mamie, who had dementia.

The idea is to gather together tunes and music that are meaningful to an individual in a playlist that is unique to them. As Sally has said *"I would have given anything for someone to say 'Try this. It's not a cure but it can help. You can still have moments of happiness and flashes of joy...' No-one says that very often to families living with dementia."*

Playlist for Life has a helpful website that provides lots of help with making a playlist. Help is available in various languages including Gaelic. If you think this would be helpful for you or someone you know you can access this yourself:

<https://www.playlistforlife.org.uk/about-us/>

However if you think a personalised playlist might be helpful but you don't have access to the equipment needed then assistance can be provided by contacting **SkyeLab** (see above)

If you would like further information about anything in our Caring Corner, or to suggest groups and services that may be helpful to others please contact Catriona MacDonald (tel 07539 886659 or <mailto:catmmacdonald@aol.com>)



TWISTY THE TREE

I called my new tree 'Twisty'
I just could not resist -
The crown on which the angel sat
Had got a little twist!

We gave it lots of water
As we are meant to do
And kept it cool till it was time
To bring dear Twisty through.

Residing in our living room
Despite his twisted end
Bedecked with globes and tinsel
He was our Christmas friend!

We watered Twisty daily
And talked to him a lot
The fact he never answered back –
It mattered not a jot!

Then, soon enough, came Christmas Day
And all around our tree
Were wrapped and ribboned Christmas gifts
With love to you and me.

For twelve days after Christmas
We kept him while we could
With twinkling lights and verdant leaves
Our tree just looked so good!

But Twelfth Night came upon us,
And, though it broke my heart,
The Christmas season ended –
T'was time for us to part.



We took off all his pretty lights
We stripped our Twisty bare
We took him to the garden
And left him lying there.

Until came bin collection day
And, though it seemed a sin
We cut him into pieces, small
And put him in the bin.

The moral of my story, sad
Is (so it seems to me),
So that you don't shed bitter tears
Don't name your Christmas tree!



By Nigel Beeton

Smile Lines

Santa

I am terrified of the Santa at the shopping centre where I work. Our HR lady talked it over with me, and has discovered I am Claustrophobic.

Good home

After the christening of his baby brother in church, young Jason sobbed all the way home in the back seat of the car. His father asked him three times what was wrong. Finally, the boy replied, "That minister said he wanted us to be brought up in a good Christian home, but I want to stay with you."

Church officials

Six-year-old Angie and her four-year-old brother Joe were sitting together in church. Joel giggled, sang, and talked out loud. Finally, his big sister had had enough. "You're not supposed to talk out loud in church."

"Why? Who's going to stop me?" Joe demanded.

Angie pointed to the back of the church and said, "See those two big men standing by the door and glaring at you? They're hushers."

Visiting Father Christmas

A mother took her young daughter to visit Father Christmas in his grotto at the garden centre. He greeted the youngster merrily and asked: "And what would you like for Christmas?" The little girl stared at him, open-mouthed with horror. "*Didn't you get my email?!*"

Presents

December is the month when the children begin to discuss what to get Dad for Christmas. Some insist on getting him a shirt, others a pair of socks. But the argument always ends in a tie.

HEAVEN'S GROCERY STORE

I was walking along life's highway, a long time ago. One day, I saw a sign that read "Heaven's Grocery Store"

As I got a little closer, the door came open wide, and when I came to myself, I was standing inside.

I saw a host of angels. They were standing everywhere. One handed me a basket and said, "My child, shop with care." Everything a Christian needed was in the Grocery Store. And if you could not carry them, you could come back for more.

First, I got some PATIENCE. LOVE was in the same row. Further down was UNDERSTANDING, you need that wherever you go.

I got a box of WISDOM, a bag or two of FAITH. I couldn't miss the HOLY GHOST, for He was all over the place. I stopped to get some STRENGTH and COURAGE to help me run the race. And though my basket was getting full, I remembered to get some GRACE.

I didn't forget SALVATION, for salvation, that was free. So, I tried to get enough of that to save both you and me. Then I started up to the counter to pay the grocery bill, for I thought I had everything to do my Master's will.

As I went up the aisle, I saw PRAYER and I just had to put that in, for I knew that when I stepped outside, I would run into SIN. PEACE and JOY were plentiful, they were on the last shelf. SONGS and PRAISES were hanging near, so I just helped myself.

Then I said to the Angel, "Now, how much do I owe?"

He just smiled and said to me, "Just take them everywhere you go!"

Again, I smiled at him and said, "How much do I really owe?"

The Angel smiled again and said, "My child, Jesus paid your bill a long time ago"

Submitted by Mary Cameron

A Christmas Prayer

Father,

Thank you for creating us and for loving us so much that you sent Jesus to become one of us and to be our way to you. This Christmas may we know the love, peace, comfort and joy that only You can give, no matter what our circumstances. And may we reflect Your light and love in this dark world to bring glory to You. In Jesus' name. Amen.

By Daphne Kitching

THE POPPIES OF REMEMBRANCE



In late 1914, WW1 erupted across Northern France and Flanders. Great swathes of previously green fields and forests were blasted and bombed, leaving them bleak and barren, with seemingly every living thing destroyed.

But then in the Spring of 1915, something beautiful began to come out of all the destruction. Tens of thousands of bright red Flanders poppies began to put out tentative shoots across the endless vistas of mud. These resilient little flowers had actually flourished in the middle of so much chaos and destruction, because their seeds grow when exposed to sunlight, through disturbances to soil.

We all know that these endless fields of cheerful poppies, growing in the midst of such misery and destruction, were what inspired the Canadian doctor, Lieutenant Colonel John McCrae, to write the now famous poem 'In Flanders Fields'.

And it was McCrae's poem which inspired an American academic named Moina Michael to adopt the poppy in memory of those who had fallen in the war. She got it adopted as an official symbol of Remembrance across the United States, and worked with others who were trying to do the same in Canada, Australia, and the UK.

A French woman, Anna Guérin who was in the UK in 1921, caught the same vision, and planned to sell the poppies in London. There she met Earl Haig, the founder of the Royal British Legion, who was persuaded to adopt the poppy as its emblem in the UK.

The Royal British Legion, which had been formed in 1921, ordered nine million poppies and sold them on 11 November that year. Ever since then, the red poppy has been a symbol of Remembrance, of support for the Armed Forces community, and also of hope for a peaceful future.



ANNA GUÉRIN AND THE STORY OF THE FIRST POPPIES

When the British Legion chose to use the poppy as a symbol of Remembrance in 1921 it proved an immediate success, but the story of the woman behind its adoption is less well known.

Anna Guérin was born in France in 1878 and became a teacher

In 1911 she came to Britain with her two daughters but when the First World War broke out, she moved to the United States where she immediately began fundraising for those made destitute by war.

Moina Michael, inspired by **John McCrae's poem 'In Flanders Fields'**, is often cited as the originator of the poppy as a symbol of Remembrance having convinced the American Legion Auxiliary to adopt it as their symbol in 1921.

But Anna Guérin was simultaneously promoting the idea of the poppy as the symbol of Remembrance and by the end of 1920 she had been responsible for Poppy Days in several US states and was turning her attention further afield.

In September 1921 she arrived in Liverpool and set out for London convinced that she could persuade the fledgling British Legion to accept her idea.

She also knew she could help it to organise the appeal nationwide.

Her experience of fundraising and working with women's groups, many of whom were war widows, had convinced her of the value of using women as volunteers to create a network of distribution and collection.

At a meeting Madame Guérin offered to fund the manufacture of a million poppies in France which the British Legion accepted.

Then on 6 October 1921 Earl Haig announced that he wished 11 November to be known as Remembrance Day and that it would be a "Poppy Day"

The Legion decided to have additional poppies manufactured in Britain and commissioned eight million.

Anna Guérin travelled to France to ensure that her poppies were made and delivered on time. The poppies were simple, bright-red pieces of fabric with a green stalk and a little banner that read on one side 'British Legion Remembrance Day' and on the other 'Made by the Women and Children. The devastated areas of France.'

Meanwhile Earl Haig's poppy, which was made in Britain, had five petals, black stitching in the middle with little beads and a leaf.

The idea of adopting the poppy as Britain's symbol of Remembrance was an immediate success and when the nine million poppies ran out, people improvised with other flowers.

The British Legion opened the **Poppy Factory** to manufacture poppies the following year, but Anna Guérin's work left a deep-rooted legacy for generations to come and she continued to provide poppies to New Zealand until 1928.

Although the design of the poppy has changed over the years, it remains a symbol of both Remembrance and hope for a peaceful future to this day.



Published in the Royal British Legion's Website

THE KNOTS PRAYER

Dear God;

Please untie the knots that are in my mind,

My heart and my life.

Remove all the have nots and the can nots

And the do nots that I have in mind.

Erase the will nots, may nots, might nots

That may find a home in my heart

Release me from the could nots, would nots

And should nots that obstruct my life.

And most of all, Dear God

I ask you to remove from my mind, my heart and my life

All the "am nots" that I have allowed to hold me back,

Especially the thought that I am not good enough.

Anon

Submitted by Irene Dendle

Published previously in Anchored Magazine

For those who like more traditional poems, here is a famous one by the American poet Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, written in 1863.

I HEARD THE BELLS ON CHRISTMAS DAY

I heard the bells on Christmas day
Their old familiar carols play,
And wild and sweet the words repeat
Of peace on earth, good will to men.

I thought how, as the day had come,
The belfries of all Christendom
Had rolled along th'unbroken song
Of peace on earth, good will to men.

And in despair I bowed my head:
'There is no peace on earth,' I said
'For hate is strong, and mocks the song
Of peace on earth, good will to men.'

Then pealed the bells more loud and deep:
'God is not dead, nor doth He sleep;
The wrong shall fail, the right prevail,
With peace on earth, good will to men.'

Till, ringing, singing on its way,
The world revolved from night to day
A voice, a chime, a chant sublime,
Of peace on earth, good will to men.

By Henry Wadsworth Longfellow



Quotes for the month of December

Some observations on Christmas ...

The hinge of history is on the door of a Bethlehem stable. - *R Sockman*

As the print of the seal on the wax is the express image of the seal itself, so Christ is the express image – the perfect representation – of God. - *Ambrose*

The nature of Christ's existence is mysterious, I admit; but ... reject it and the world is an inexplicable riddle; believe it, and the history of our race is satisfactorily explained. - *Napoleon Bonaparte*

We know how God would act if He were in our place – He has been in our place. - *A W Tozer*

Christ is the great central fact in the world's history. To Him everything looks forward or backward. All the lines of history converge upon Him. - *C H Spurgeon*

God became man to turn creatures into sons; not simply to produce better men of the old kind but to produce a new kind of man. - *C S Lewis*

The mystery of the humanity of Christ, that He sunk Himself into our flesh, is beyond all human understanding. - *Martin Luther*



Some thoughts to ponder at this 'giving' and family time of the year...

Our children await Christmas presents like politicians getting election returns - *M Cox*

Charity gives itself rich; covetousness hoards itself poor. - *Anon*

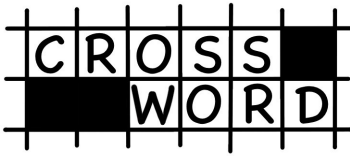
A part of kindness consists in loving people more than they deserve. - *J Joubert*

The word 'alms' has no singular, as if to teach us that a solitary act of charity scarcely deserves the name. - *Anon*

Joy is the gigantic secret of the Christian - *G K Chesterton*

Kindness is a hard thing to give away. It keeps coming back to the giver. - *Ralph Scott*

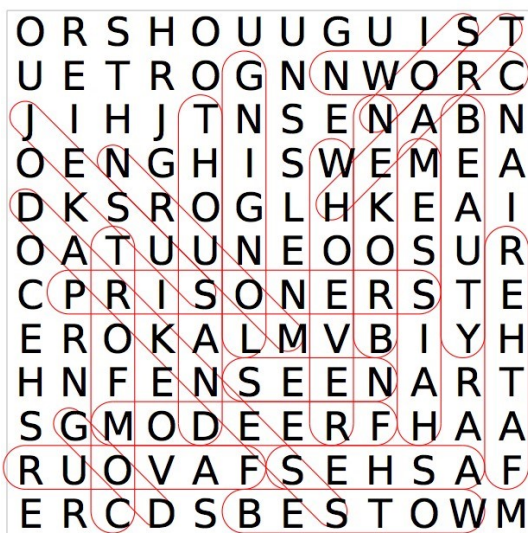
SOLUTIONS TO PUZZLES ON PAGES 24—26



ACROSS: 1, Hide. 3, Disgrace. 9, Sonship. 10, Oaths. 11, Tutti. 12, Ignore. 14, Foreknowledge. 17, Ashram. 19, Men or. 22, Aroma. 23, Nineveh. 24, Amethyst. 25, Trod.

DOWN: 1, His staff. 2, Do not. 4, Imprisonments. 5, Groan. 6, Altered. 7, Easy. 8, Shrink. 13, Searched. 15, Restore. 16, Lament. 18, Reach. 20, Never. 21, Jada.

WORDSEARCH



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9	7	1	6	4	3	2	5	8
8	2	3	7	1	5	6	9	4
4	6	5	8	9	2	3	1	7

And finally, if a little in advance

The New Year

If we put our hand in God's hand
As we enter this New Year
Not knowing what the future holds
But that our Friend is near

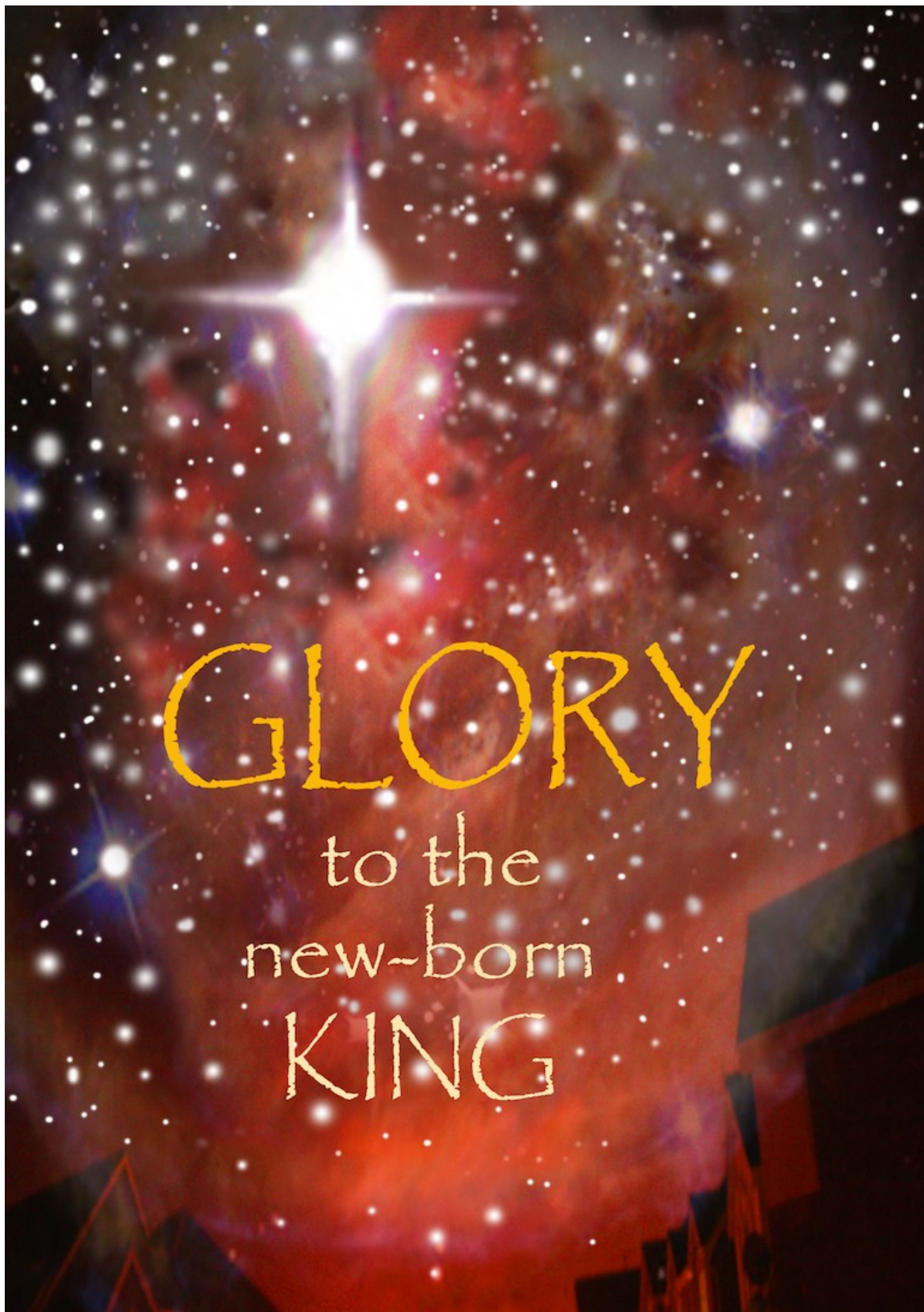
We shall not fear what lies ahead
If He is by our side,
Nor wander from the pathway
If He will be our guide.

The Sinless One from heaven came
To dwell with us on earth,
He sought and bought us with His blood
And offered us new birth.

Now as we travel through this year
He knows the things He's planned,
So let us trust and know just this –
Our times are in His hands.

By Megan Carter





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