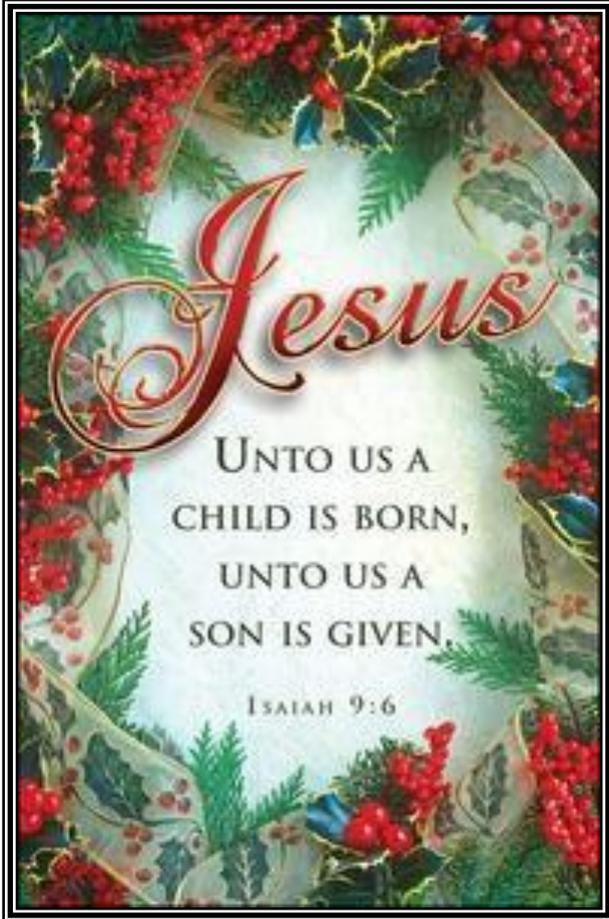


Paisley Abbey



Abbey Herald

December 2020

Over past years, for the majority of people, Christmas has been a season of excess and abundance with credit cards groaning due to the burden we have placed upon them. Early signs are that with Covid's lingering threat and lockdown restrictions in place, Christmas may revert to what it always should have been – a celebration of family, friends and a safe home.

Presents, for some, may be harder to obtain and even more sparingly purchased but may have more meaning. It is one of the reproaches against a consumerist society that Christmases past should have become a contest in opulence and display. Indulgent parents who have showered their children with toys have often had to face the reality of their expensive distractions soon broken or set aside in favour of time-honoured pot-lids and wooden spoons.

In Scotland, of course, Christmas was not really celebrated until relatively recently. Sometimes, Santa came on Hogmanay and festivities lasted well into the new year. Whereas in England, New Year was largely ignored. How things change. Nowadays, the existence of two coalescent feasts is an answer to those who complain that there is no Christ left in Christmas. Both festivals emerged from ancient ritual, just as great cathedrals arose on the sites of earlier temples. The Yule-tide log, the evergreen mistletoe, the holly and the ivy were, and are, assertions of survival in the middle of winter, promising a coming spring: the dram and lump of coal (of old) representing the wish and the hope of renewed abundance.

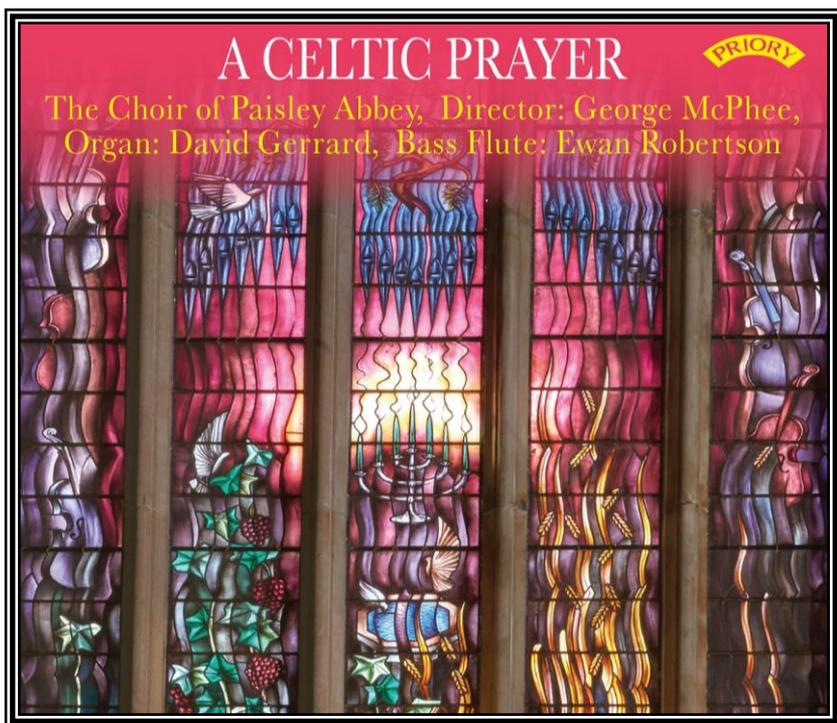
Sadly, our Christmas services this year will be much curtailed. However, worship on Christmas morning will be streamed on the Abbey website. No matter the difficulties we may face, the joy and hope of the Christmas message continues to be proclaimed and celebrated.

However, even in the midst of our conviviality and festivity it is worth giving thought that this is a time not only of enjoyment and thanksgiving but also of remembrance.

Especially of those with little for which to give thanks. If the family is the source of great joy, it can also be the cause of great pain. Love, eventually, means loss; and loss may mean loneliness of a kind very hard to bear when those all around are engaged in celebration. The Christmas story is no seasonal confection. For all its joy, its implications are in deadly earnest. The proud parents had soon to flee for their life with their newly-born child; and, of course, the Christ-child grew into a man maligned, rejected and crucified. So: let us enjoy our coming Christmas celebration to the full in whatever form it may take, being thankful for whatever largesse may be ours. But let us also be mindful for those deprived of rights and privileges that we, in our good fortune, take for granted.

Jim Gibson.
Locum Minister.





**NEW CD OF SCOTTISH CHORAL MUSIC BY THE
CHOIR OF PAISLEY ABBEY & DR GEORGE MCPHEE**

**THE CD WAS RECORDED IN JANUARY, PRIOR TO
LOCKDOWN, AND RENFREWSHIRE COUNCIL
KINDLY STOPPED THE TOWN HALL CLOCK
CHIMES DURING THE RECORDING SESSIONS.**

**PLEASE LOOK OUT FOR THE ABBEY GIFT SHOP
REOPENING ANNOUNCEMENT**

36 Marquis Drive
Aboyne
Aberdeenshire
AB34 5FD

November 2020

Dear Friends,

Carol and I thank most sincerely and from the bottom of our hearts all those who have given and contributed to gifts marking our retirement from Paisley Abbey. We have been very touched and humbled by your generosity. We plan to use the gifts which have come from the 'congregational' presentation and from people directly to have our new garden designed and 'created'. At the moment it is just mud and stones but by next summer it should be transform into a lovely oasis which we can enjoy and which will be a constant reminder to us of the many people in the Abbey with whom we have shared these past 32+ years and who have loved us and supported us and prayed for us throughout our time among you.

When we left in August, it was the hope that we would be able to return to the Abbey for a 'final service' once the Covid-19 restrictions were lifted. It would be wonderful for us to see the Abbey with a full congregation again, to hear once more the glorious music of choir and organ and to be able to 'mingle' with you socially after the service. We do hope that will be possible although we recognise it may not be as no-one knows when current restrictions will be lifted and church life anywhere will be able to return to what we once considered 'normal.'

Whatever happens, the Abbey and its people will ever remain in our hearts and we give thanks to God for the immense privilege that it has been to be among you and to share with you in the joys and sorrows, the ups and downs that are part of life's pilgrimage. As I said on the 9th of August, thank you for allowing us to be part of the Abbey's incredible story. We wish you all every blessing as you move forward into the next chapter in the life, worship and witness of Paisley Abbey.

Alan and Carol

THE SOCIETY OF FRIENDS OF PAISLEY ABBEY

Notice is hereby given that the Annual General Meeting of the Society of Friends of Paisley Abbey will be held by ZOOM at 2pm on 9 December.

RENFREWSHIRE TOYBANK

In place of the Christmas Gift Service this year we are supporting the Renfrewshire Christmas Toybank. This is a project run by volunteers collecting toys and gifts for children (ages 0- 18) who may not otherwise receive any gifts on Christmas Day.

If the Abbey is able to hold services on December 13, we would appreciate any toy donations.

RENFREWSHIRE FOODBANK

As the Abbey had to close on November 21, it was not possible to collect for the FoodBank at the end of the month so, all being well, our next collection will be on Sunday December 27.

Supermarkets have been very generous in helping during these last difficult months but there is still a shortage of Pet food, Tinned potatoes, Jam. Small boxes of laundry powder (available in Morrison's) and toiletries

They have a sufficient supply of beans, pasta and UHTmilk.

The Abbey congregation have been tremendously generous in donating in the past few months.

A very big thank you to all and best wishes for a happy and healthy Christmas.

Margaret Sharp

PARISH REGISTER – NOVEMBER 2020

Funeral

Nessie McGill

Transferred to another church

Joan Hughes

A CHRISTMAS MESSAGE FROM THE PASTORAL COMMITTEE

It will come as no surprise to anyone, but sadly this year, and for reasons that are apparent to us all, the Pastoral Committee has had to cancel plans for the Annual Festive Outing to Dobbies. We know how much this get-together is enjoyed by everyone who usually attends it and we are truly sorry that we cannot go ahead with it this year.

We apologise to everyone who will miss the visit to Dobbies and sincerely hope that a Spring or early Summer Outing can be arranged. Meantime the Pastoral Committee wishes you and the whole Abbey Congregation -

**A SAFE AND HAPPY CHRISTMAS AND
A NEW YEAR FULL OF PEACE AND JOY.**



MUSIC FOR NOVEMBER, DECEMBER 2020

29 November 2020

Kyrie
Anthem

Advent Sunday (Recorded)

Cantor: Joshua Stutter
MacMillan (St. Anne's Service)
Zion hört die Wächster singen BWV
140 J.S. Bach

6 December 2020

Kyrie
Anthem

Second Sunday of Advent (Recorded)

Cantor: Amy Spearing
MacMillan (St. Anne's Service)
The little road to Bethlehem
Head

13 December 2020

Kyrie
Psalm 126
Anthem

Third Sunday of Advent

Cantor: Mollie Kyle
MacMillan (St. Anne's Service)
Benedictus (Metrical Setting)

20 December 2020

Kyrie
Psalm 89
Anthem

Fourth Sunday of Advent

Cantor: Flora Ritchie
Leighton
Responsorial
O Jesulein suss, O Jesulein mild
J.S. Bach



PRESBYTERY REPORT

The recently approved appointment of our new Presbytery Clerk has made the Church of Scotland website, along with input from our Moderator. You can catch the story by following this link <https://www.churchofscotland.org.uk/news-and-events/news/2020/Clyde-Presbytery-appoints-its-first-Presbytery-Clerk>

It is also available on the Clyde Presbytery website.

The Ordination of Jeanette Peel as the Healthcare Chaplain at the RAH in Paisley took place on 18 November at St Mark's Oldhall Church, Paisley.

Mathew Ritchie, a graduate candidate, is being ordained and inducted to Neilston on 2 December.

John Kitson
Presbytery Elder

John has received this letter from Rev.Ian Johnson, Moderator of Clyde presbytery and he thought it would be appropriate to share it.

“Getting through the dark days of late Autumn and early Winter is always hard, and can get many down. There are many other issues in our communities, country and world that cause anxiety and make life difficult for large numbers of people (from illness and loneliness, to financial pressures, to wars and climate change). And all of that was before the global pandemic struck, and the additional stresses that it has brought. Though we may not all admit it, we are all struggling in some way.

Sunday marks the start of Advent. It is a time when we look back to the words of the Jewish prophets, like Isaiah, addressed to people who were dispirited, disillusioned and finding life hard. They spoke of God's continuing presence with them, his concern for them, and his constant and active involvement in their lives; they spoke of

God's Vision for the future, of a world of peace and justice, and his plan to bring about change; they spoke of the need for a new relationship with God. We believe that the birth of Jesus marks the start of God implementing his plan to bring about change. In Advent we look back, but we also look forward with hope, to the fulfilment of Jesus' promises, to a world renewed, a world transformed, a world grounded in a new relationship with God through Jesus.

Many of us may identify with the words of Isaiah, "Even those who are young grow weak; young people can fall exhausted." It has been hard work this year, and we are weary, but the Prophet went on to say, "Those who trust in the LORD for help will find their strength renewed. They will rise on wings like eagles; they will run and not get weary; they will walk and not grow weak." Let's pray for each other that we find that renewing energy-burst from God, and go out to live and share the hope and Good News of our amazing God with the dispirited and struggling folk around us this Advent."

Ian Johnson
Moderator



CHRISTMAS CAN'T BE STOLEN

The Very Rev. Dr. John Chalmers reflects on the message at the heart of a children's Christmas tale amid the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on the year's celebration.

In 1957 Theodor "Dr Seuss" Geisel wrote the storybook – "How the Grinch Stole Christmas". It was something of a critique of the way in which Christmas was being over commercialised and based around the Whos who inhabit the fictitious town of Whoville, it explored in rhyming verse the profound truth that Christmas is not all about money and presents and excess.

There are at least three film versions of the story- the best known of which stars Jim Carrey as the Grinch with Anthony Hopkins as the narrator of some of the original verse. The central character, the Grinch, has been bullied and hurt as a child and now lives in bitter isolation in Mount Crumpit high above Whoville. He cannot stand the folk of the town below and most of all despises the way they celebrate Christmas. To cut a long story short, on Christmas Eve, he gets an opportunity to dismantle the Christmas lights and decorations, to remove the presents from beneath the trees and raid the fridges that hold the next day's feast. He takes his haul to the top of Mount Crumpit and, while Whoville wakes up to the news that Christmas has been stolen, he readies himself to push the whole of this Christmas excess over the edge of the mountain.

Down below, the whole town is in shock and outrage – except Cindy Lou Who, who has been trying to tell everyone, including her own family, that they've got the emphasis of Christmas wrong and that the Grinch shouldn't be excluded from their celebrations. The Mayor of Whoville is furious and he pokes a finger at Cindy Lou's father accusing him of allowing his daughter to ruin Christmas by bringing the Grinch back into the town's life. Cindy Lou's father; however, holds his ground and in one of the best lines in the film he says "You can't hurt Christmas, Mr Mayor, because it isn't about the

gifts or the contest or the fancy lights. That is what Cindy's been trying to tell everyone".

If you've stuck with this story so far and managed to stay with the plot line – you may be wondering what this has got to do with Christmas 2020. Well, here's the point- there is much talk that Covid-19, with the accompanying constraints on households mixing, the continued need for social distancing and the prospect of empty churches will be the Grinch that steals Christmas 2020.

In Dr Seuss's story; however, we discover that Christmas, if we get its meaning right, cannot be stolen by anyone or anything. High above on Mount Crumpit, on the verge of destroying all the trimmings and trappings of Whoville's Christmas, the grinch, instead of hearing the anger and disappointment of the people below, hears the good folk of the town singing songs of celebration because they have realised that Christmas has a deeper meaning after all. As the strains of their celebrations reach the ears of the Grinch he realises that he hasn't stopped Christmas from coming and he says, "It came without ribbons, it came without tags, It came without packages, bows or bags. Maybe Christmas (he thought) doesn't come from a store, Maybe Christmas perhaps means a little bit more"

This, of course is what we know to be true! And maybe it will do us no harm, this year to step away from some of the familiar stuff and instead contemplate the deeper meaning of what we are celebrating. Covid-19 has taken its toll on us all. But it can't steal Christmas if we remember that all the symbols of the Christmas narrative are a reminder that God is with us and is most assuredly with us and is where the poorest and most vulnerable are to be found. This year then, let God be found in the way we respond to the needs of those whose lives have been most affected by this unwelcome pandemic.

This article first appeared in the December 2020 issue of Life and Work magazine

SAMARITAN'S PURSE

OPERATION CHRISTMAS CHILD 2020

A big “thank you” to everyone who contributed to the shoebox appeal this year. 25 boxes were collected and have been sent to the depot for distribution to appropriate countries.

In the light of the Tier 4 situation with the pandemic and the rules and regulations we have all had to follow I think 25 boxes is very generous. We are very grateful for all the donations as will Samaritan's Purse be as well.

Thank you once again.

Sue Donn



UPDATE ON THE 2020 COLLECTION FOR WATERAID

In the November issue of the Abbey Herald I reported that the sum collected for WaterAid at the Harvest Festival this year was £670.21. Since then, however, further donations have been received and our total contribution to the work of WaterAid in 2020 has risen to just over £700.00 - £705.00 to be precise.

As a matter of interest, I note from the records that our donation to WaterAid in 2016 was £375.00. £705.00 is therefore an almost 90% increase in 4 years - and that at a time when numbers attending Services have been restricted. That is impressive – and I happily pass on the thanks from WaterAid to everyone who gave so generously and made such an excellent contribution to this essential and ongoing work of transformation.

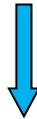
SGC



From this



To this with your help. Thank you



FOOD FOR THOUGHT

NO TIME

I knelt to pray but not for long,
I had too much to do.
I had to hurry and get to work
For bills would soon be due.
So, I knelt and said a hurried prayer,
My Christian duty now was done
My soul could rest at ease....
All day long I had no time
To spread a word of cheer
No time to speak of Christ to friends,
They'd laugh at me, I fear.
No time, no time, too much to do,
That was my constant cry,
No time to give to souls in need
But at last the time, the time to die.
I went before the Lord,
I came, I stood with downcast eyes.
For in his hands God held a book;
It was the book of life.
God looked into his book and said
"Your name I cannot find,
I once was going to write it down....
But never found the time

Author Unknown