



Lasswade & Rosewell Parish Church



December Newsletter 2020

'The people walking in darkness have seen a great light, on those living in the land of darkness a light has dawned.' Isaiah 9: 2

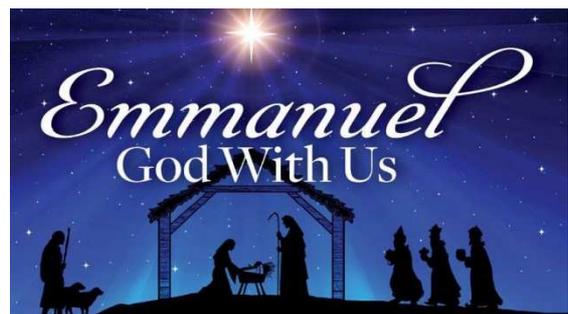
As we approach Christmas 2020, many of us may be feeling this has been a difficult and challenging year. Many have had to face months of feeling very inactive and isolated. Some have experienced the loss of loved ones and a deepened helplessness and sadness because it wasn't possible to be with them in the way we would have wanted. Some have faced risk, stress and exhaustion serving as NHS staff and care home staff, as well as in other frontline roles. Parents and children had to cope with home schooling. Some have had a long period on furlough with loss of income and real uncertainty about future jobs and livelihoods. We may now all be anxious that Christmas is going to be very different this year, and without the same opportunities to be together.

It is interesting to look back to Christmas 1918 and see how the nation then faced very difficult and challenging times. The end of the First World War in November had brought great rejoicing. After all the devastation and hardship during the war, people were very ready to get together on the streets to celebrate. And yet there was still further trauma to come. While the Spanish Influenza pandemic had been waning in 1918, armistice celebrations caused a second wave of infection and many who had come through the war succumbed to the flu. It eventually claimed the lives of 40 million people worldwide.

In that situation in December 1918 there was a fear that Christmas would need to be cancelled. It just wouldn't be possible to be together if all that did was spread the flu. However, to everyone's relief, the infection rate began to fall in mid-December. Shops and churches were able to open again and Christmas, though different, did still happen.

In Cambridge that Christmas, Eric Milner-White, aged thirty-four, had just been appointed Dean of King's College. He had previously served as an army chaplain. Reflecting on this, the terrible impact of the war and the ongoing threat of Spanish flu, the new Dean saw a need for more imaginative worship that Christmas. What could that look like for a nation that had come through so much and for so many who had lost so much? He set upon the idea of a service of Nine Lessons and Carols and this service that has become such a favourite, took place for the first time that Christmas. As Eric Milner-White said, the unfolding readings from the Bible showed the development of the loving purposes of God seen through the windows and words of the Bible.

This year as we are uncertain what Christmas will be like, we can still hold onto those same loving purposes of God at the heart of Christmas. We celebrate the birth of Jesus again and are reminded that he is Emmanuel – 'God with us'. He came to show us God's love; he came to put us right with God; he came as the Light of the World to bring peace and hope. Always Jesus is the voice and presence of peace to the weary and worn as we may be feeling right now. Always in his selfless love for us, hope springs eternal for we know we are not alone. His love builds us up and brings hope, and whether we can be face to face or not this Christmas, the love we share with each other in different and special ways also brings hope as we press on and look to the new year together in 2021. - LMS



Hopefield Connections – Elisabeth Spence, Pioneer Minister



I think I can safely say that I am having to use all my ingenuity to carry on making connections in Hopefield at present! A car treasure hunt in October seemed the ideal activity to keep every one safe as they zipped about the area from the safety of their cars looking for clues. Some folk had never seen the 'piddling pooch' up on the wall in Newtongrange!

A Pet Blessing on Zoom was another way to make a connection with people and indeed with a variety of dogs, cats, rats, rabbits, ferrets and even a pet sheep! Daily in November there has been a series of thoughts on the Hopefield Connections Facebook page called *Just Two Wee Minutes* to connect with people and give them the opportunity to stop and think for just a moment about life and living. In the same way a new group for some of the young women in Hopefield has begun where we (*I am not counting myself as one of the young women but rather the facilitator!*) come together to talk in a light-hearted way about life and living but it often uncovers deeper thoughts and ideas amongst all the laughter and stories.

The Coffee Stop continues with all the Covid – 19 regulations adhered to as you would find in any commercial take away. This has been a real blessing as people have so welcomed the opportunity to talk with each other and share time if even from a distance. I would like to thank from the bottom of my heart the people who have continued to help with this venture as it is such a service to our community.

Connections made in ways I had not anticipated this time last year but which have proved so valuable and helped everyone's wellbeing in these difficult times.

And so to Christmas - looking for ways to connect with people and to connect them with the Christmas story of the Light of the World come into the world.

The Advent Windows are making a return. With 25 willing households putting a poster up to guide us through the month until we get to Christmas Day.

The Knit & Natter Group as ever have got busy with the needles and knitted stars for me that I am then going to hang round the area so that people can take one home and add it to their Christmas decorations.



A Christingle on Zoom on Sunday 20th December will be a way of sharing the Christmas Message.

In these dark , short winter days and in these worrisome days it is even more crucial that we find ways to share not just the Christmas story but the message that the Light of the World is with us showing us how to love God and how to love each other.

From Reflection to Hope – Herbert Dryden

This has been quite a year. You will have your own memories of it. As we move towards Advent and Christmas we wonder if the Shepherds will be furloughed. Will the Three Kings be locked down and have to observe travel restrictions and therefore be unable to

buy, and deliver, their gold, frankincense and myrrh? And what about the Wise Men - will they be in bubbles and have to contemplate, virtually, the complexities of the Pandemic, Brexit and IndyRef 2?.

Plagues are nothing new. Edinburgh and London, not to mention other towns and villages in Britain and in places furth of our shores, endured their share of these pestilences and the authorities of the time had difficulty in determining what caused them. Interestingly, a lot of the population were locked down in their homes or sent away to the country - possibly taking the infection with them - and people were forbidden from entering towns or villages which were known to be infected. The medical men of the time had to cover themselves in all sorts of gear, which makes today's mask wearing look simple in comparison. However, things did return to a degree of normality.

Chambers English Dictionary explains that advent is a coming or arrival and Advent, with a capital "A", is referred to as the first or second coming of Christ and this is what we celebrate at this time of year. This year, however, I feel advent or Advent could take on another meaning when people look forward to a New Year and a time when some of the present restrictions are eased and some form of normality is restored, even although it may in some ways be different from what we were used to.

Let us, therefore, look forward with optimism and think on the words of a hymn by Mary Peters, "Though we pass through tribulation, all will be well".

Eco-congregation – Andrew Renwick

In winter the world goes into retreat. The trees stand bare, the grasses and wildflowers die back. Nature seems dormant, and in some cases that's literally the case, as hibernating creatures sleep the coldest months away. Of course, one of the reasons that nature seems dormant in winter is that we spend more time indoors, and are more likely to miss the wildlife around us. There's still plenty going on, and in some ways this is a time to pay closer attention, as we may be able to offer a helping hand.

One of the recurring images of the Kingdom of God is a banquet – a lavish feast thrown by a generous host. In Jesus' parables about feasts and wedding banquets, the guests are always human. Other parts of the Bible celebrate how God provides for wildlife too, giving the birds the food they need, or sending the rain for the trees and the wildflowers. God "provides food for the cattle," says Psalm 147, "and for the young ravens when they call."

God loves creation and provides for it. When we take the time to feed the wildlife around us, we join with God in loving the world and caring for it. We value creation the way God values it. Feeding the birds is worship, because it acknowledges God's work and declares the worth of what God has made.

So as we prepare for a Christmas that will be different this year, let us ensure we remember not only friends and family but also the wildlife around us.

You might like to try this idea for making suet cakes for your garden birds. You will need:

- Bird seed, raisins, peanuts, grated cheese
- suet or lard (at room temperature, and chopped into dice-sized cubes)

- Yoghurt pots, paper cups or similar
- Scissors and string
- Mixing bowls

First, poke a hole through the bottom of the yoghurt pot. Push a piece of string through the hole and tie it on the inside. Leave enough string to tie up the fatball later.

Distribute the suet or lard into mixing bowls. Add a handful of nuts, seeds, cheese and raisins and mash it together with your hands. Add more ingredients as necessary until you get a mixture that holds together well, then press it into the yoghurt pots. Put the filled pots in the fridge until the fat sets.

Finally, hang the bird cakes up by the string from bird feeders or from trees. It is also good to provide water for the birds to drink in a shallow dish.

Christmas Hampers - Fund Raising Team

We have several luxury Christmas hampers to raffle this December. A slight delay has occurred in the need to apply for a licence to do this, however, we are hopeful that tickets will be able to be purchased very shortly for a bargain price of £1 each from your elder. They will be in touch when tickets become available and they will also let you know when the raffle will be drawn. If this can't be before Christmas, it will be early in the New Year.

If you would like to donate any non perishable items for the hampers (e.g. groceries, tins of food, bottled items, chocolate, bubble bath etc.), these will be gratefully received. Donations can either be placed in a box at the church door or contact Margaret Gordon [07824883202](tel:07824883202) or Eleanor [0131 660 1029](tel:01316601029) to arrange pick up. Many thanks.

Christmas Services

- Virtual Nativity Service online – Sunday 13th December;
- Bereavement Service – Sunday 20th December at 4.00 pm at Cockpen and Carrington Church;
- Christingle Service online – Christmas Eve, Thursday 24th December;
- Nine Lessons and Carols online – Christmas Eve, instead of the Watchnight Service;
- Sunday 27th December – church service at Rosewell Church and Cockpen & Carrington Church; online Carol Service from Compassion UK, who sponsor children in needy families in parts of Asia, Africa and Central America;
- Sunday 3rd January - **no church services while the minister is on holiday**; online service conducted by the Moderator;
- Sunday 10th January - church services resume at Rosewell Church and Cockpen & Carrington Church; no online service while the production team have a much-needed break. You may wish to join with Revd. Louise Purden and Bonnyrigg Parish Church instead on this link:

<https://www.bonnyriggchurch.co.uk/VideoSermons>

Once again until next time, do stay safe and well and with every blessing for a peaceful and hopeful Christmas,

Lorna, your minister