



**D**ear Friends.

So, you have now survived a year and a bit with me. And what a year it has been! It has been lovely getting to know you. I am only sorry that it is taking me longer to get round people than I would like because there is so much to do, and so many to see, between The Bengairn Parishes and Castle Douglas. All I can say is that I am trying to do everything but you do not need to wait for me to come to you. if you would like me to meet you please get in touch or speak to your Elder.

So now another Christmas approaches. Time to worry the presents, the gifts. What to buy? Money or something more tangible? How much? Should it just be limited to what you know you can afford? Will they like it?? Christmas should be a time of joy and rejoicing and celebrating the birth of a baby but we get ourselves tangled in knots about the presents. Then someone has the audacity to ask us what we would like for Christmas! And they are expecting an answer?? Ohh, the worry.

When I was in Pakistan we had a gateman called; Allah Ditta. What a man! He was elderly and had no-where to live so he had come to be with us. His job was important because we had over 200 girls in the hostel and we needed to be careful about who came in and out. His job was to go to the gate when it was knocked, check who it was and let them in or get Catherine, the missionary, to come and speak to them. He lived in a wee house just inside the garden wall beside the gate. He was not the most energetic of workers and was often found with his hookah smoking tobacco or bits of old rope or dear knows what. He was bouncy and cheery and loveable but full of excuses: I am sorry Miss Saab, I was washing my clothes and didn't hear the gate, I was looking at the flowers and didn't hear the gate; I needed to go and see if my friend's sister's daughter's neighbour's brother's uncle knew who could mend my shoes. One day he came to the door, he wanted to get an advance on his wages. Having not been successful - because Catherine knew it wouldn't be spent on food but something frivolous, he looked at her and smiled his toothless grin in his well worn face and said: But Miss Saab, you don't understand. My name is Allah Ditta, which means God's Gift and I am God's Gift to you! We all laughed, including him, but he still didn't get his money.

Now I could be bold and say that last year I was God's Gift to you, and maybe, like Catherine and I with Allah Ditta you will burst into fits of laughter. But truth be told, I feel that you have been God's Gift to me. I know you were the right congregation when the time came for me to move on from Kingussie. I have

thoroughly enjoyed my first year with you. And I have been blessed with so many gifts: my Elders and Board members and their commitment and dedication; those who look after the church buildings and make sure that the services go smoothly - from cleaning to flowers to music and more - oh, the list is endless. But more than that, those who are very special, who would have been wrapped in beautiful paper with gold bows, are those of you who have taken the chance and stepped out of your comfort zone to try and cope with the changes that a new minister brings, who have been prepared to try new things and give it a go. And so we have Cuppa and Chat in Auchencairn; and so we have a Worship Team who can lead worship when I am not here; so we have Elders who have had to take on new Elders' districts - becoming part of the lives of people they don't know well.

Thank you all. God made me a lucky lady when he gave me you. And you know, the people of this Parish may not completely value it, but you are also a special gift for them. For God has given you the privilege of sharing his love with them - and what more beautiful time of year to share that love than at Christmas!

God bless you at Christmas and I do hope you will be able to come to some of our Christmas celebrations.

Alison

## Congratulations

Many congratulations to our members Austin and Helen Hyslop who recently celebrated their Diamond Anniversary. We wish them both health and happiness in their new home.



## Farewell (but not entirely) to Oonagh



A few weeks ago at morning service in Kelton Oonagh Dee was presented with gifts to mark her retirement as OLM. She has served along side Rev Stephen Ashley Emery, Dr John Lochrie and our new minister, Alison, for several years but has decided that it's time for a rest.

Oonagh, however, has not completely left us. She has agreed to take occasional services when Alison is on holiday etc. so we will still be able to see from time to time what she has in that basket.

## Safeguarding:

15 of our Elders recently attended a course highlighting Safeguarding issues which may occur; the Church of Scotland's approach to Safeguarding and how to react if any issues arise. Feedback suggests that the course was very interesting as well as being quite an eye opener to what can occur.

Any member of the congregation who has reason to think that they or someone else may be having a problem whether it is someone vulnerable (child or adult) possibly being mistreated or bullied at home or elsewhere, items or money going missing, etc., can approach in confidence any Elder or the congregation's \*Safeguarding Officer for help. \*See list of contacts for details.

There are only three or four elders still to complete this training and they will have the opportunity to do so on 29 January.

## Dementia Awareness Initiative

Sylvia Livingstone has recently taken on the role of Moderator of the Presbytery of Dumfries and Kirkcudbright and she has asked us to think about and pray for the seemingly increasing number of people affected by Dementia either personally or through friends or family. Over the next year you will find collecting boxes in both churches for you to make a contribution if you so wish towards improving the lives of those affected.

## Cuppa and Chat

Cuppa and Chat has proved a success with a regular group coming along each Wednesday for company and chit chat in Auchencairn Church. We hoped to give a chance for



people who can't always get to our services to come along and share and it has been lovely to see some who perhaps find 9.30 am on a Sunday a little early. On several occasions we've been joined by holiday makers who saw our sign as they passed through the village.



We've also started a small lending library and hope to make this more widely available in the future but meantime if you would like to borrow a book you can do so any time the church is open especially before or after any service. We are a little short of children's books so if you have any you could spare and are willing to lend or give to us that would be very helpful.

Our last Cuppa and Chat for this year will be on Wednesday 28 November but we'll be back later in the New Year so look out for posters when we restart.

## Christmas is really for the children

This is what we hear so often these days whether in general conversation or in television adverts to make you buy expensive toys. A few years ago Christian Aid produced a publication entitled Celebrating Christmas. Here is the introduction to that publication.

*“The Christmas story is so well known that it is easy to forget the grim situation faced by Mary and Joseph.*

*They had travelled many miles to register for the poll tax in the Roman-occupied country where they lived. At the time of the baby’s birth they had no roof over their heads. He was born in an animal pen and laid in a feeding trough. The family struggled with problems of hunger, homelessness and physical danger when Jesus’ life was threatened.”*

The next time someone says “It’s really for the children” in your hearing perhaps you’ll remind them of the real story and refer to the many people still facing so many hardships today, but also of the hope and the love we can all have in Jesus.



**KIRKCUDBRIGHT CHORAL SOCIETY**  
Geoff Davidson, Conductor

**A Celebration of Christmas**

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Kirkcudbright Parish Church

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Sunday 15 December  
 7.30 pm  
 Refreshments in church  
 hall at end of concert

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Tickets £10 from Alison or  
 Rosemary or Thomsons  
 Newsagent, SCVS  
 or at the door

## Diary Dates: **Christmas Services**

**Sunday 8 December 9.30 am Gift Service** at Auchencairn when members bring along a gift for child up to age 16 to the morning service. Please Do Not wrap gifts so that Social Work can match the gift to the correct child.

**Sunday 8 December** at 6.00 pm **Carol Service** in Auchencairn church.

**Wednesday 11 December** at 7.00 pm **Candlelight Service** in Kelton church.

**Sunday 22 December** at 3.00 pm at **Wallets Mart. Carols in the Mart.**

**Tuesday 24 December** Christmas Eve service at 11.30 pm Auchencairn

**Sunday 29 December** Come to **Palnackie** at 9.30 am

Over the past few years services have only taken place in Kelton and Auchencairn and members and visitors from throughout the parish are welcome at either and both churches. Recently it was decided that we should try to make it easier for those not so close to the two buildings to share in worship and in September we had a successful service in Dundrennan Village Hall. On Sunday 29 December we are holding our service in Palnackie Village Hall at the usual time of 9.30 am. And hope to see as many people there as are able to come along.

## **Busy people**

Elsewhere in the magazine you will see the idea of having a hobbies and craft show but many of our members have been busy throughout the year with a view to raising funds for the upkeep of the church. Things like roof repairs and keeping the buildings water tight.

As well as our craft stall available at every service and also at the monthly sale in Castle Douglas Church Hall there will be a sales table in Kelton hall after the service on **1 December**.

We've also had the weekly Cuppa and Chat every Wednesday since mid June, concerts and the Garden Opening in the summer. The Guild and Word Alive groups continue to meet so there is a lot going on in the congregation and YOU are welcome to take part at any time.

Copies of "transform" the Autumn Magazine of the Scottish Bible Society are available in Kelton's Vestibule. This Issue 81 is their "new-look" magazine. Their previous Issue 80 was the Spring magazine entitled Alive & Active."

## Bengairn Parishes Guild.

This session, 2019- 20, we are following the theme, Walking the Extra Mile.

At our first meeting in October, Samantha, Activities Manager at Carlingwark Care Home gave us an insight on how staff and volunteers are enhancing the residents lives by music, gardening and craft work. A real success story are visits by Treasure Island nursery children, whose interaction with the residents gives pleasure to all. This was the perfect introduction to our theme.

In November Rev Alison Burnside had us think of famous and not so famous people who we think Go the Extra Mile and then had us wondering if we go the extra mile. She referred to bible readings which show that while it's easy for us to go the extra mile for our family and friends, we are actually meant to go that extra mile for the people we aren't friendly with and especially those who maybe we don't like.

An evening at the panto in December preceded by a Christmas meal at the Market Inn for members and friends is now an annual event. Members will take our January meeting when we will hear of those known to us, who walk that extra mile and in February, Blood Bikes who truly illustrate our theme will speak to us on this special service.

March is our Auchencairn Hall meeting when former Moderator of Presbytery, Lilly Stevenson, will speak on journeying together with teenage mothers in Zambia. In April we follow a lady who has gone the extra mile in Canada and India working as a doctor with the native people of Canada and then in India. We look forward to hearing of her experiences. Please come along to join us at any of these meetings, male or female, a warm welcome awaits you, in Kelton Kirk room second Wednesday of the month. 2.00 pm to 4.00 pm. As always tea is enjoyed with a chance to meet in friendship.

Margaret Shanks.



Knitter

Potter



## Hobbies and Collectors

We are thinking of holding a Hobbies Fair in Auchencairn church next summer. At this early stage we are just looking for ideas.

Do you have an interesting or unusual hobby or collection which you would like to share with others? E.g. Miniature buildings; earrings!; thimbles spinning, painting; stick making, stamp collecting, model aeroplanes etc. etc. etc. Please contact Jean (tel 01557 500268) or Nicky (tel 01556 680453) and let's see if we can fill the church!!

Artist



Stamp collector



Crook maker

Woodworker



Greetings to you all as we approach the Christmas season once more. We can now say that our Minister has settled in and we have grown acclimatised to her. Several different things have been introduced, and we have adapted to new ways of doing things.

Christmas is a season of giving and receiving so we should perhaps pause and reflect on those who give of their time and talents to bring us together and to raise funds to help with day to day expenses. Each Sunday after morning service we have tea and coffee and sometimes even cake. This is all provided by volunteers and donations received go to our funds. There is also a sales table with various articles made by members and sold in aid of funds. For the last few months we have had a cuppa and chat at Auchencairn Church on Wednesday morning which has been quite well received. In many cases all of this is done by a faithful few who carry on week by week so I would encourage more of you to try and make time to assist in this very good work and outreach. I wish you all a very happy Christmas and a fruitful new year.

Session Clerk

## Church Personnel

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Father

As we approach this time of rejoicing help us to remember and appreciate the things you have given us - love, peace, joy, freedom, forgiveness, life, rest, heaven, family.

We pray for those who have lost sight of these gifts, whose circumstances make it difficult to rejoice. Give them the faith to look forward, to accept the love and help you can offer and as we hold them in our hearts enable us to help them in any way that we can.

Amen

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## Food for thought

Recently the UN conducted a world-wide survey. The only question asked was - "Would you please give your honest opinion about solutions to the food shortage in the rest of the world?"

The survey was a huge failure....

In Africa they didn't know what 'food' meant.

In Eastern Europe they didn't know what 'honest' meant.

In Western Europe they didn't know what 'shortage' meant.

In China they didn't know what 'opinion' meant.

In the Middle East they didn't know what 'solution' meant.

In South America they didn't know what 'please' meant.

And in the USA they didn't know what 'the rest of the world' meant.

## Where are we this Sunday?

On the first and third Sunday of the month services are held in Kelton Church.

On the second and fourth Sunday they are in Auchencairn Church.

Services on the fifth Sunday vary. The next one on 29 December is in Palnackie Village Hall. All Sunday morning services start at 9.30 a.m.