

THE SHUTTLE

Winter 2015



marchmont st giles

church of scotland

1a Kilgraston Road, Edinburgh, EH9 2DW

Meeting Matters

December

13	9.50	Family Service
	10.30	Nine Lessons & Carols
	3.00	Blue Service
14	10.00	Christmas Toddler Church
16	12.30	Butterflies Plus Christmas Lunch
20	9.50	Family Service
	10.30	Nativity & Gift Service & Baptism
24	4.00	Christingle Service
	11.00	Community Carol Singing
	11.30	Watch-night Service followed by Mulled wine
25	10.00	Family Christmas Day Service
27	10.30	Morning Worship and Side Chapel Communion

January

3	9.50	Family Service
	10.30	Morning Worship
10	9.50	Family Service
	10.30	Morning Worship
17	9.50	Family Service
	10.30	Morning Worship
19	2.30	Guild : Rev Dr John Munro Working through Conflict
	10.30	Morning Worship
31	9.50	Early Family Service
	10.30	Service of Holy Communion

February

7	9.50	Early Family Service
	10.30	Morning Worship
		Articles for the February/March issue of The Shuttle should be in no later than today please.
14	9.50	Early Family Service
	10.30	Morning Worship
16	2.30	Guild : Charles Burnett - The Thistle Chapel

Front Page

The Rev Colin Dempster explores some of the religious symbolism in this well-known seasonal song.

'The Twelve Days of Christmas' is thought to have originated in France before coming to Britain where the words were translated and added to in English, around the early 17th century.

(See pages 12-13) (Reprinted from Life & Work December 2015)

Reflections

If you go to the Fairtrade Shop Hadeel in George Street, you can now purchase a nativity set with the Wise men attempting to get to the manger but stopped by the wall, which separates Israel and Palestine.



Bethlehem has always been a little forgotten; an unheard-of village just a little out of the way, and if a committee was set up to choose a village for the Incarnation, the name of Bethlehem probably would have never made the list. And there are many reasons for this.

The obvious choice is Jerusalem. The city is mentioned 611 times in the Old Testament. For centuries, from the day David captured it, Jerusalem was the most important centre of religious and civil life in Israel. Solomon erected his Temple there and the palace was there too.

Then there is the city of Hebron, which played an important part in early Jewish history. Abraham, Jacob, Joseph and later David were associated with Hebron. What about Nazareth? It is where Mary and Joseph hail from.

So why Bethlehem? Bethlehem is where David, Israel's great king, poet, and hero, was born and grew up. It was also where Naomi and Ruth travelled to and where Ruth met Boaz. There is something about Bethlehem. In Hebrew, the word means, "house of bread."

Jesus Christ, the Bread of Life, was born in a house of bread. It was a staple of life; the place identified with the ordinary people, and in some cases the least and the lost and the last. Jesus didn't come for the religious people, for the ones who thought they were acceptable or right, but for the ones who were vulnerable and only too aware of their needs.



Soon Bethlehem will attract wise men and women of today who seek to worship at the site of Christ's birth. It is on the West Bank, on Palestinian territory, with its wall, where its Palestinian residents are

continually under the constant threat of violence and abuse from Israeli forces.

Within its walls is sited The Church of the Nativity, which is administered jointly by Greek Orthodox, Roman Catholic and Armenian Apostolic authorities. All three traditions maintain monastic communities on the site. In the last few years there have been repeated brawls among monk and priests over disputes about silence, others' prayers, hymns and even the division of floor-space for cleaning duties. On one occasion one group, who were the keeper of the keys, locked the doors and wouldn't let the others in. The Palestinian police have been called to restore peace and order on many occasions.

In the middle of this most holy place, it is disturbing that the Christians can't or won't get it right. As the people of Bread, who are called to share the Light of the World, they should know better, and so should we, because we are called to remember what is important, and where is important, and who are important.

Emmanuel, God with us.

Karen K Campbell

Young Life International at Edinburgh Presbytery

At the last Presbytery meeting in December there was a very interesting and moving talk given by a representative of Young Life International who gave us an insight into their work.

The staff and volunteers enter the world of adolescents, focusing on what matters to them: fun, adventure, friendship and a sense of significance. In doing so, they earn the privilege of talking to them about something that we believe matters most of all: the truth about God and His love for them.

We were shown a video of the Minions song, Boy outside the Gate, which is relevant to all of us as we aim to step out of our church grounds (literally and metaphorically), cross that road and **reach out** to others.

OUR CHURCH FAMILY & PARISH NEWS



Congratulations to James Mair on the occasion of his Baptism on Sunday 30th November 2015.



We are delighted to welcome Angela Dean and Tanya Anderson who joined the congregation by Profession of Faith and by Certificate Of Transference we also welcome Jan Chlebowski, Kathleen Ogg, Sheena Scott, Cuillin Scott, Janet Wake and Sandy Wake.

David Charles Meston Beattie, Catherine Muir Mair, James William Mair and Neil Sommerville were ordained and admitted to the office of Elder within the congregation.



Inga Fairweather and Hazel Burns are retiring from running the Toddler Group at MSG after many years of turning up every Thursday and making snacks, putting out toys and providing a warm welcome to many new mums and babies over the years. The Toddler Group will continue "Under new Management".



MSG is providing a temporary home to a local business, SERENE Beauty Therapy, Marchmont Road, who have suffered a devastating flood from a leaking communal pipe.

Butterflies Cafe was delighted to support the Christmas Tree Lighting Ceremony organised by Marchmont Sciennes Community Council by providing mince pies and shortbread.



We give thanks for the life and service of:

Helen Stark, a resident of the parish, who died on the 5th November 2015.

Festive Family Focus

Looking back to this time last year, I was writing about Iona being a costume department (it is again), listening to the music for the Nativity play (true again) and thanking all those involved in the children and families work...still very true! No snow at the time of writing though, so something has changed.

I often wonder what else has changed in the year that I have been in post and it can be hard to quantify or measure. We still meet for Early Service and Junior Church with many of the families from last year. We still do crafts, we still find just enough folk to keep the rota's going and we eat breadsticks. However, how we do it and how we feel about it may have shifted. I wonder if we have grown together more, have settled into the new group structure and are developing confidence in it? We can certainly do a good welcome for our new families.

I have loved the opportunities and events over the last few weeks to meet and welcome new people and all ages sharing worship together such as Remembrance Sunday, the confirmations and Baptism along with our new ventures Toddler Church and Kids Club.

I am looking forward to the Christmas Toddler Church, Nativity Service this, complete with pre-show Baptism of the Inn Keeper, and the Christingle Service this year. It will be lovely to see people that I have met and seen in the Church Centre joining with us over Christmas.

Our first event for 6 to 8 year olds was a success! Enjoyed by the small number of children and team alike, including the Yeti Wrap, the Ant Challenge and Scaling the Summit obstacle relay and ice cream to name the highlights. The 'Echidnas on Everest' (Lost Sheep resources this one based on Colossians) had us sticking together and putting up with each other and discovering that baby Echidnas are called Puggles!

Watch this space for what's next!

Happy Christmas!

Bettina

AROUND THE AISLES

Butterflies will close for Christmas on Tuesday 22nd December and re-open on Wednesday 6th January 2016.

Butterflies Plus - Christmas Lunch will take place on Wednesday 16th December, 3 courses for £10.00. If you have not booked yet and would like to come then please call the office/cafe on 447 4359.

Old and New - the blue chairs which have been stored in the North Transept recently have been sold and gone to their new home at Tron Kirk Gilmerton and Moredun Church.

Finished your Christmas shopping yet? No? Have you signed up to **www.easyfundraising.org.uk** who will donate a percentage of your spend to your favourite cause (**MSG!!!!**). At the time of printing we have **£88.27** in the kitty so Keep Calm and Carry on Shopping!

Remembrance Sunday was a very moving occasion as always and greatly enhanced by the presence of the Meadows Explorer Scouts who meet in MSG on a Monday evening.

The Nativity & Gift Service will take place on Sunday 20th December and this is a chance for the congregation to help many less fortunate families have a better Christmas by buying a gift for a child and bringing it along to go under the tree. Please wrap it and write whether it is for a boy or a girl and what age group it is suitable for. There are many children on our own doorstep who are in living in less than ideal circumstances and will appreciate our help. The Fellowship & Worship Team will be very grateful for your support.

Tickets for the Hogmanay Ceilidh are on sale now from the office or the cafe. (See page 10)

Please remember to collect your used stamps - remember to leave space around the stamp - from your Christmas cards as the World Mission Dept can sell them to raise money for their 29 projects around the world. Please hand them into the office.

O little town of Bethlehem ...



It's not often that, as a member of the clergy, I get the opportunity to have Christmas "off" from work. I couldn't tell you the last time that happened and, indeed, it's impossible for me to predict when it might happen again! So, making the most of this opportunity, this year, I found myself impulsively booking a flight to Tel Aviv, to spend Christmas and Hogmanay in Bethlehem and Jerusalem. Yes, it's a bit of a busman's holiday but if you've ever been to Palestine/Israel you'll know that there's just something about the place and people that keeps drawing you back. I've been several

times and, indeed, was there only earlier this year, co-leading a pilgrimage just after Easter with a group of pilgrims from presbyteries in Edinburgh and the Lothians, and England. This time, however, I'm going on my own. Whilst not my first trip to Bethlehem, it will be my first visit there at Christmas time.

When I tell people that I'm spending Christmas there the response, generally, surprises me. "Oh, that'll be lovely" or "Wonderful!" or words to that effect are what come back to me, almost as if people have a Hallmark or Paperchase-induced notion of the perfect Christmas card scene. Bethlehem today, however (and I suspect even then), is far from romantic. The reality of human existence and the daily struggle of the Palestinian people is heart-breaking. The photograph above, taken by Cody O'Rourke (an American member of the Christian Peacemaker Team based in the West Bank), shows a scene from Bethlehem only last week (Friday 4th December 2015). If this were a scene from Edinburgh or London or even New York, we might suspect that we are looking at the remnants of fireworks in a post-celebration (but who would set fireworks off during the day?!). Of course, what we can see are, in fact, probably close to 200 rounds of tear gas unloaded by the Israeli military. The military uses an armoured truck that can shoot multiple rounds into the air at once. As you can see in this photograph, the truck drives into the crowd and fires rounds of tear gas liberally.

The barrels of the chambers on the four mounted rows that fire the canisters have different angles so that, when the rounds are shot off, they land before and after the crowd, leaving them little option for clean air.

When we sing our familiar carols this year, let's remember the reality of the situation in that land once known as 'holy'. I don't have answers to the complexity of the situation in Palestine and Israel, but I know that Palestinian Christians have asked of me: "Pray for us. Tell people our story. Come and visit us again." Or, in words from Amnesty International's website:

*The innocent imprisoned. Movement restricted.
Trade suffocated. Homes demolished.*

Human rights abuses are rife in Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories.

O little town of Bethlehem ... indeed.

Pray. Learn and tell the story. Even visit, if you can ...

The Revd John McMahon

Chaplain, Broadmoor Hospital, Berkshire
Moderator of the Presbytery of England

Bethlehem – On Saturday, 5th of December at 7:30 pm, Churches of Bethlehem rang their bells for peace. Churches all over the world were invited to join the event. (Marchmont St Giles' participated)

The Church has entered Advent, a liturgical time of waiting for the birth of Jesus Christ. As in every year, attention is focused on Bethlehem, city of the Incarnation, where preparations for Christmas are in full swing.

Considering the general atmosphere which prevails for the moment in the Holy Land, the Municipality of Bethlehem decided to maintain the calendar of planned events but with some changes. Accordingly, the traditional meal after the lighting of the Christmas tree in Manger Square was cancelled; decorations are fewer; various concerts initially scheduled did not take place. Decisions were made "out of respect for our martyrs (Palestinians of Bethlehem who died in recent weeks in clashes with Israeli forces), for their families, and for the situation itself", stated Vera Baboun, Mayor of Bethlehem.

"Bethlehem remains a city of peace," she further points out, "and during this Christmas, we must pray more than ever for this peace".

HOGMANAY CEILIDH

FOR ALL THE FAMILY



WITH DAVID VIVANCO



AT

MARCHMONT ST GILES' PARISH CHURCH



WEDNESDAY 31ST DECEMBER

7.30-10.00PM

TICKETS £7.50 UNDER 12'S £3.00

FAMILY TICKET £20 (2 ADULTS AND UP TO 3 KIDS)

INCLUDES NIBBLES AND SOFT DRINKS

NEW YEAR GREETINGS FROM THE GUILD!



By the time this goes to press the Guild will have enjoyed a scrumptious Christmas Lunch at the Braid Hills Hotel with much laughter and fun as the last “meeting” of 2015.

Our first “daylight” meeting of 2016 will be held on January 19th at 2.30 p.m. in the St Giles Room (enter by the side door of the Church), BUT PLEASE NOTE A CHANGE OF TOPIC FROM WHAT EILEEN INTIMATED at the last meeting! Our good friend Dr John Munro will be guiding us through the discussion topic “Working with conflict”. Some of you will remember his very helpful contribution a couple of years ago on a discussion topic.

Our second “daylight” meeting of 2016 will be held on February 16th at 2.30 p.m. in the St Giles Room, when Charles Burnett, well known for his fascinating talks on many matters of heraldry, will talk to us about the Thistle Chapel. Not to be missed!

Another lively meeting will be held on March 1st, back in the Church Centre, at 7.30 p.m., when the intriguing question,

“Why does an old Professor care about a chap called Rupert Bear?” will be answered by Professor Alan Murray, who is by no means as elderly as he implies, and an entertaining speaker.

“Guild members may go back in time,
And find they’re chattering in rhyme..”

Past meetings not yet reported on in The Shuttle will make an appearance in the February edition.

Happy Christmas from Marchmont St Giles’ Guild

And

A Happy New Year to All



ON THE FIRST DAY OF CHRISTMAS...

'On the first day of Christmas my true love sent to me...

'A partridge in a pear tree...'

Points to Jesus and the cross (Galatians 3: 13). In the art world, the traditional symbolism for the church as the preserver of truth, is often depicted as a partridge.

'Two turtle doves...'

Reminds us of the offering of the poor (Leviticus 1: 14; 5: 7 and 12: 6-8) made by Mary and Joseph after the birth of Jesus (Luke 2: 20-24) . Apart from the significance of a dove as a symbol of the Holy Spirit, the two turtle doves may represent the Old and New Testaments.

'Three French hens...'

The three hens can represent the three gifts of Gold, Frankincense and Myrrh, brought by the Wise Men to the baby Jesus (Matthew 2: 11). They can also symbolise the Three Persons of the Trinity; Jesus's three days in the tomb or the three virtues of faith, hope and love (1 Corinthians 13: 13).

'Four calling birds...'

The original words were 'four colley (or colly) birds', colley being an old English word for coal dust or black. The blackbird used to be known as a 'colleybird'.

The original words came from the legend that Saint Benedict was challenged by the devil in the form of a blackbird and overcame him using the sign of the cross.

However it has long been accepted that the 'four calling birds' refers to the four Gospels.

'Five gold rings...'

May be linked to the 'ringed pheasants' sometimes depicted in the early paintings of the Nativity.

It may also be a reference to the fact that seven of the 'days' refer to birds and five to people represented as the golden rings. Whatever the origin of 'the five golden rings' they are widely accepted as representing the first five books of the Old Testament known as the 'Pentateuch'.

Picture by Xavier Romero-Frias. (Creative Commons)

'Six geese a-laying...'

Are taken as representing the six days of creation. The sixth day was when God created all living creatures, including humankind (Genesis 1: 24-31).

The geese eggs hinted at could also be an oblique reference to Easter.

'Seven swans a-swimming...'

Although the swans do not appear to have any religious significance, the number seven certainly does. Seven being a divine number, representing perfection, it is also thought to refer to seven gifts of the Spirit found in Paul's letter to the Romans (12: 6-8).

'Eight maids a-milking...'

Widely held to represent the Beatitudes in Matthew's Gospel (5: 3-11), even though there are actually nine Beatitudes in Matthew. Eight is more accurately associated with the eighth day which came after the Jewish week ended on their Sabbath day (our Saturday), which we now call Sunday. There is also a link to some baptismal fonts being octagonal shaped as well as Paul's reference to the 'milk of the gospel' in 1 Corinthians (3: 2).

'Nine Ladies dancing...'

Represent the nine fruits of the Spirit in Galatians (5: 22-23). There may also be links with the nine muses of Classical Greek and Miriam dancing before the Lord in Exodus (15: 20-21).

'Ten Lords a-leaping...'

Represent the Ten Commandments. It is thought that these originate from our Lord's criticism of the Pharisees who treated the Law as their God, making each commandment a Lord, thus they had ten Lords.

'Eleven pipers piping...'

Refers to the 11 Apostles who remain faithful to our Lord Jesus after the betrayal by Judas Iscariot. The sense of 'piping' being ongoing, reminds us that the Apostles were the first to begin sharing the Gospel.

'Twelve drummers drumming...'

Again the number twelve has great biblical significance, from the twelve tribes of Israel to the twelve disciples called out to be the twelve Apostles. However it is generally thought the twelve drummers drumming represent the twelve points of doctrine in the Apostles' Creed.

While this is not an exhaustive list of possible meanings to each of the days, it hopefully helps to lift the song out of the 'silly songs' of Christmas and adds to our enjoyment of actually singing it. It also leaves room for your own creative interpretation of what each did mean.

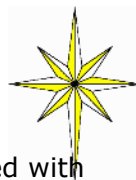


The Meaning Of Christmas

Far away in Bethlehem, a Baby Boy was born;
Born with neither riches nor with fame,
Yet Wise Men came from all around to bring to Him their gifts,
And peace was felt by all who heard His name.

Angels watched Him as He slept, and gently rocked His bed;
Their voices singing softly in His ear;

His Mother and His Father both gave thanks to God above
For the greatest gift of all, their Son, so dear



They knew His life upon this earth would not be filled with
wealth,

They also knew He would encounter strife;
But most of all, they knew that He would be a loving Child,
And teach the love of God throughout His life.

At Christmas, as we celebrate this Birth of Jesus Christ,
Let's keep in mind the truth of Christmas Day;
For it's not the Christmas wrappings, nor the gifts that lie within,
But our gift of love to others in every way...

And Finally.... The Missing Five Pound Note

Chippenham George worked for the Post Office and his job was to process all the mail that had illegible addresses. One day just before Christmas, a letter landed on his desk simply addressed in shaky handwriting: 'To God'. With no other clue on the envelope, George opened the letter and read:

Dear God,

I am an 93 year old widow living on the State pension. Yesterday someone stole my purse. It had £100 in it, which was all the money I had in the world and no pension due until after Christmas. Next week is Christmas and I had invited two of my friends over for Christmas lunch. Without that money, I have nothing to buy food with. I have no family to turn to, and you are my only hope. God; can you please help me?

Chippenham George was really touched, and being kind hearted, he put a copy of the letter up on the staff notice board at the main Fareham sorting office where he worked. The letter touched the other postmen and they all dug into their pockets and had a whip round. Between them they raised £95. Using an officially franked Post Office envelope, they sent the cash on to the old lady, and for the rest of the day, all the workers felt a warm glow thinking of the nice thing they had done. Christmas came and went. A few days later, another letter simply addressed to 'God' landed in the Sorting Office. Many of the postmen gathered around while George opened the letter. It read,

Dear God,

How can I ever thank you enough for what you did for me? Because of your generosity, I was able to provide a lovely luncheon for my friends. We had a very nice day, and I told my friends of your wonderful gift - in fact we haven't gotten over it and even Father John, our parish priest, is beside himself with joy. By the way, there was £5 missing. I think it must have been those thieving fellows at the Post Office.

George could not help musing on Oscar Wilde's quote: 'A good deed never goes unpunished'

MARCHMONT ST GILES' PARISH CHURCH

Minister email	Rev Dr Karen K Campbell karen@marchmontstgiles.org.uk	447 2834
Session Clerk email	Mr Ian Moss sessionclerk@marchmontstgiles.org.uk	662 9293
Children & Family email	Mrs Bettina Hather family@marchmontstgiles.org.uk	447 4359
Treasurer email	Mrs Jessica McCraw treasurer@marchmontstgiles.org.uk	667 4514
Property	Mr Charles W Laing	668 2595
Roll Keeper email	Ms Lorna Bain rollkeeper@marchmontstgiles.org.uk	668 1581
Organist & Choirmaster	Mr Robert Parsons	557 1257
Flower	Miss Cathie Murray Mrs Moira Murray	668 3711 229 1283
Safeguarding email	Mrs Catriona Moss safeguarding@marchmontstgiles.org.uk	662 9293
Pastoral Care	Mrs Marjory McCardel	667 7426
The Shuttle Editors email	Charles & Judith Stewart theshuttle@marchmontstgiles.org.uk	668 1970

Church Centre Booking Enquiries

Church Centre Office

(Monday - Thursday 9.00am - 1.00pm)

Email : office@marchmontstgiles.org.uk

0131 447 4359

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