



St Columba's Bathgate and St Peter's Linlithgow



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27th December 2020
Christmas

Dear friends, when you read this, we will almost have reached Christmas Day, unless for those who receive our weekly mailings by post don't have them quite in time! Well, in spite of, or perhaps because of, this very different advent we find ourselves at the door of the stable ready to meet the Christ child once more. This year will be different, for we will have different gifts to bring to lay before Jesus, gifts come from our hearts that have surely been changed by these past 12 months. I do hope that the readings, prayers and short reflection find a place in your hearts and may the joy of the angels be in your homes this Christmastide. Those we remember whose anniversary of death falls at this time of year covers two weeks, up to 9th January.

Readings

Isaiah 9: 2 – 27

Titus 2: 11 – 14

Luke 2: 1 – 14

Prayer for our Christmas Candle

We light our last candle to remember the birth of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. As the prophets promised so long ago, you have come to us once again; and with the shepherds, we are filled with wonder and amazement. Lord, you come as a tiny, fragile baby; yet we know that you are God and you are with us. May the flame of this candle remind us that you are the light of the world and that if we follow you, we will never walk in darkness, but will have the true light of life. Come, Lord Jesus, come. Amen.

Collect

O God our Father, the light of whose Word has come among us in the Holy Child of Bethlehem: grant that the radiance of that true light, which enlightens our minds by faith, may shine brightly through our words and deeds; through the same Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, world without end.



Reflection

Christmas is here. After weeks of anticipation Jesus has come, or as Eugene Peterson puts it in *The Message*, Jesus has moved into the neighbourhood. And that changes everything. Quite frankly, after the year we have just endured, everything needs to change. One of the few good things that has emerged from the pandemic is that many people have realised that they don't want to go back to all their old ways, yes keep the best of the old, but also embrace what's good in the new. In church we have changed, circumstances have forced us to change. We haven't liked all of it, no doubt we could have done some of it better, but we will keep some of the changes and work to make them better.

And Christmas reminds us, perhaps more than any other time of the year, that in all the upheavals of life God is with us. Come, O come, Immanuel we sing – or would have done if we could have done – and this year we sing it with perhaps more intent than ever. We need God more than ever and we know from the evidence that there has been an upsurge in interest in spiritual matters and that can only be a good thing.

The birth narratives in Matthew and Luke also remind us that Jesus influenced the world long before he was out of nappies. Who were Jesus' first visitors? The shepherds, the very sort of people that God promised through Isaiah's prophecies would be who the Messiah was coming to help, the outsiders, the marginalised, the oppressed, the poor, the sick. Prompted by the angels and the heavenly host, it was they who had the privilege to be the first to see the God child. Hope of the sort they had never had before was laid out in front of them.

Matthew reserves that honour of being the first outsiders to see Jesus for the Magi, indicating that Jesus had come for the whole world and not just for the Jews. Good News indeed.

In the first two chapters of Luke we get four of the church's finest worship poems – what we know as the Benedictus, the Gloria, the Magnificat and the Nunc Dimittis. They were not in response to Jesus doing anything in his ministry, they were just in response to his very

existence, his very presence.

In our Advent Bible Study, we have looked at some of the oddities surrounding some of the details in the Incarnation stories. One of them of course is the so-called Bethlehem or Christmas Star, which many people saw on Monday, cloud cover permitting, if they went out looking for the Great Conjunction of Jupiter and Saturn, the first time that has been visible to most of the world since 1226 – or almost 800 years. Astronomers know that a similar Great Conjunction took place in 7 BC, in fact extraordinarily it occurred three times that year, and have speculated they were what guided the Magi. These oddities don't really matter because Luke and Matthew weren't trying to give us factual history, rather they were telling a story. And the story they were telling is that God is more interested in justice for the outsiders, the have-nots than in feathering the nests of the elites, the wealthy and the privileged.

What I love about the Christmas story is that it reminds us, as does the Easter story in its much more harrowing way, that God comes looking for us, it is not about us searching for God. In Jacob's dream, the ladder is coming down from heaven, not going up to heaven; as Jesus says in the Gospels, he has come to give us life in all its fullness. In Revelation He says, 'I am standing at the door, knocking.' As the famous Holman Hunt painting of that verse reminds us with the missing handle on Jesus' side of the door, God comes looking for us but we have to respond.

Why does God come looking for us so urgently? Well God is love, and love cannot really do anything else because love always wants the best. It is summed up beautifully in something I read just a few days ago. The Son of God became the Son of Man in order that the sons of men might become the sons of God. (If the words don't sound inclusive, the intent behind them certainly was). In the oddest Christmas most of us have ever experienced, what better reason could there be to celebrate? What hope we have in Jesus.

Rev Peter

Prayers

Holy Jesus, by being born one of us and lying humbly in a manger, you show how much God loves the world. Let the light of your love always shine in our hearts, and draw us to kneel in wonder at heaven touching earth. Guide your churches in ways that will draw people to you and your message of love and hope. We pray for our own Scottish Episcopal Church, especially for our Primus Mark and Bishop John and all who lead. You came as the Prince of Peace, bring peace to unity to our world this holy season, guide our leaders in ways that will find solutions to the many challenges that our world faces today, not least this ongoing pandemic that continues to wreak havoc. In these difficult times be with all who are lonely, anxious, frightened, hungry and homeless this Christmastide, be a



living hope that lightens their hearts. The Kings brought myrrh, frankincense and gold to lay at Jesus' feet, we bring you what you have given – ourselves, all that we are. Draw us ever forward out of darkness into your marvellous light, bless us and fill us with peace. You grew to be a healer of the sick, bring healing to those who are ill today, those suffering from covid and those suffering from other conditions and bless all who will be working in our hospitals and health services.

We pray for those from our church families who have asked for our prayers... ..

from St Columba's: Pam Macdonald, Carol Main, Eric Dobson, Anthea & Katie McAlpin, Geoffrey Gerrard, Kath Stutt, Rev Duncan and Marjorie Shaw, Doug and Pat Laurie, Young Harry, Paul & Janice Moffat, and Elma Webster.

And from St Peter's: Rita Manion (David's mother), Annie Gibbs (Olivia Moss's future mother in law), Barry Greig (Terry's twin brother), Anna Pink, Joe Lavery, Ronnie Adams, Bob Philip (Andy's father) Dot Pringle, Brenda Cook, Harry and Connie Payne, Father John, Ruthie Cadell, David Szkudlarek, and Jan Robson. And for all their families. We pray for those who have died in recent days and for all who mourn.

And we remember those connected with our church families whose anniversary of death falls this Christmastide. From St Columba's: George Reid, Jayne Campbell, Margaret Wood, Sylvia Mackenzie, David Peel, John McNeil, Elizabeth Watt, Mary Hamilton, Sarah Margaret Graham Service, Isa Bartlemann, Anna Foster and Anne Anderson. And from St Peter's: Verena Thornton, Margaret Robertson, Matthew Reid, Robert Anderson, James Tierney, Johnny Watson, Beryl Naylor, Catherine Yates, Herbert Gill and Diana Wallace.

Blessing

Christ, who by his incarnation gathered into one all things earthly and heavenly, fill you with his joy and peace; and the blessing of God almighty, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, be among you and remain with you always.

Readings and Collect for Sunday December 27

Isaiah 61: 10 – 62: 3; Galatians 4: 4 – 7; Luke 2: 22 – 40.

O God you make us glad with the yearly remembrance of the birth of your Son, Jesus Christ: grant that, as we joyfully receive him as our Saviour, so we may with confidence behold him as he comes to be our Judge; who lives and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, world without end.

Readings and Collect for Sunday January 3:

Isaiah 60: 1 – 6; Ephesians 3: 1 – 12; Matthew 2: 1 – 12

O God, who, by the guidance of a star, revealed your only-begotten Son to the nations: Grant that we, who know you now by faith, may at the last be led to see your glory face to face; through the same Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, world without end.

Notices

Dear Friends, difficult as this journey has been this year we are almost knocking on the door of the manager. For many of us we are approaching Christmas full of disappointment and frustration, and for some much extra food now that our Scottish Government regulations have tightened so significantly. In his message on Saturday evening our Primus Mark spoke of the hurt we are all feeling and reminded us to care and cherish one another in this Christmas and to care for all God's people in ways that speak of the joy and hope of Christmas proclaiming 'unto us a Child is born'. We are so fortunate to be able to offer public worship, albeit scaled back and also to welcome people into our services via Zoom. Our worship will be different this year but the message of Christmas never changes and that is something to hold onto very tightly.

For those who will be joining in our Zoom services this Christmastide electronic copies of the running order of the Christingle Service on Christmas Eve were sent out in last week's electronic mailing along with the worship service leaflet for the Christmas Eve Eucharist and the Christmas/Epiphany Season. **NB There will be no Church Notices or Pew Sheet next week, which is why two weeks' worth of Morning Prayer and Evening Prayer readings and Zoom codes are included this week. The next edition will be sent out/circulated in time for the service on Sunday January 10.**

By the time you are reading this notice the knitted angels will all be out and about in our communities...hopefully bringing a little cheer and hope in these darkening times with the pandemic. I dropped a bag off at Meadowvale Care Home on Sunday and the care assistant face lit up when she saw them, as did others we have handed angels to in the past few days. Many thanks again to everyone who has contributed to this project.

New Notice - St Peter's received an invitation to contribute to the Linlithgow Community News to share what we have been up to recently. Jane wrote a lovely little article that you can access at: <https://mylinlithgow.com/community-news-17th-december-festive-greetings-membership-renewal/>. It is also accessible on the My Linlithgow website.

Christmas Services at St. Columba: Thursday 24th December Midnight Mass 11.30pm Collection for Aberlour Child Care Trust Sunday 27th December 1st Sunday of Christmas 11.15am Wednesday 30th December Reserved Sacrament 10.30am (David G-S) Sunday 3rd January Epiphany @ 11.15am Other Services via ZOOM (codes on separate sheet) Thursday 24th December Christingle 4.00pm (St Peter's) Thursday 24th December Christmas Eve Eucharist 7.00pm (St Peter's) Friday 25th December Christmas Day Eucharist 10.00am (St Peter's) (The Christmas Day service will be the usual Sunday link.)

St Columba's will be supporting Aberlour Children's Charity again this year. There will be a retiring collection at the Christmas Eve Midnight Eucharist and a fundraising event when we can get back into church again.

Christmas Services at St. Peter's: Thursday 24th December Christingle @ 4pm (in church and via Zoom) Christmas Eve Eucharist 7pm (in church and via Zoom) Friday 25th December Christmas Day Eucharist @ 10am (in church and via Zoom) Sunday 27th December 1st Sunday of Christmas @ 9.30 (Rev Tim Tunley) Tuesday 29th December Reserved Sacrament @ 10.30am (Ian Wallace) Sunday 3rd January Epiphany @ 9.30am **NB - updated information** St Peter's will be supporting CHAS again this Christmas, there will be retiring collections at the Christmas Eve and Christmas Day services. John our treasurer has registered St Peter's with Just Giving and set up a campaign for the Sunday School Christmas collection for CHAS. The link is: <https://www.justgiving.com/campaign/chas>. There is an expiry date for this collection of 31st January 2021. John suggests that people should use a credit card, debit card or a PayPal account to make donations rather than making an online donation directly from their bank account as that didn't work for him.

The Joint Churches **Christingle Service** in St Peter's will be as different this year as all our other Christmas services but no less meaningful - filled as it will be with the joy of the coming Christmas day. A reminder to everyone whether in church or at home to have your own home-made Christingles at the ready, our Rector will light those in church and those joining us via zoom can feel part of the service by having your own Christingles ready to light at the same time as those in the church. Sunday morning services from St Peter's @ 9.30 continue to be Zoomed live. Those who are joining us from home are asked to ensure that your speaker volume is turned up to maximum; the Notices include a Eucharist prayer that you may like to say as you spiritually receive Communion.

IMPORTANT - PLEASE NOTE. Don't forget you now need a passcode to join the Zoom service (this is due to Zoom's security upgrade). The meeting code is unchanged at 118 321 305. The passcode is 670383. Judy Goldfinch will send round the embedded link with the weekly list of Zoom codes.

A reminder of St Columba's opening arrangements. The church will be maintaining a 2m separation between people (unless they are buddies). You will be required to:

- Wear masks and take them home for disposal
- Hand Sanitise on arrival in the vestibule area



- Give name and contact phone number on entry to the church. (The sides person will record it on the computer)
- Follow the sides person's instruction as to where to sit.
- At the end of the service remain seated until instructed to leave via the meeting room.
- Sanitise hand on way out (sanitiser opposite toilet doors by fire alarm). The accessible toilet will be open but please follow the one-way system and follow the instructions for sanitising before and after use.

A reminder of St Peter's opening arrangements. Please let Jane Ramsay know by Thursday of each week if you

would like to attend the service on either Sunday or Tuesday morning. Accessible access is available and all safety and cleaning measures remain in place. Please also contact Jane 843176 if you require to enter the church for any reason out with the service times. Thank you.

Pastoral visits – sadly, the current guidelines mean that pastoral visits to people’s homes, including for home communion, are not possible at this time, except in extreme circumstances. Hopefully this restriction won’t be for too long. Giving lifts to church to people out-with your household is still not possible either at this time, nor is travelling to a level 4 area for worship.

Zoom Coffee and Chat on a Monday morning. The next one will be held on December 28 @ 11.15. Meeting ID 5111791282 password 3i1TYq.

I am taking a few days off after Christmas and Rev Peter (07747023108), David (07901947345) and Jane (07982252666) will be on hand should the need arise.

Finally, Christmas is going to be very different for us all this year, but it is still Christmas and the message never changes...because of Christmas love is born, hope is here. Please hold onto these thoughts as we journey on into the new year, hopefully a better one for us all and for our brothers and sisters around the world. No lavish celebrations this Hogmanay, but won’t there be so many when we can safely do so! And please do remember that Peter and I hold you all in our prayers. Wishing you Peace and Joy and Hope this Christmas – and a Happy New Year.

Rev Christine



ST COLUMBA’S CHURCH FLOWERS: The flower rota is now available for 2021. If you would like to add your name to it please let David Graham-Service know by Text, email, WhatsApp group, phone or in person in church. The list will be updated and on display in the meeting room above the units. If you wish to do them yourself on your selected date - great. If you would like them done for you please speak with Maureen Young.

SEC Morning, Evening and Night Prayer Liturgies

Morning, Evening and Night Prayer daily liturgies are available at:

www.scotland.anglican.org/spirituality/prayer/daily-offices

Rev Christine and Rev Peter will be saying Morning Prayer @ 9am and Evening Prayer @ 6pm each day in their own homes and invite you to join in from yours. On Thursday mornings there will be sharing a virtual service via Zoom.

If you would like to join in, the link every week will be <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/756114372?pwd=ZXpMWndaY210empVY1daL09paGlwZz09>

Any queries please contact Rev Peter pw@woodifield.com

For the coming week beginning Sunday 27th December we enter into the week of Christmas 1.

*If you have a paper version of the big blue Prayer Book, for

Morning Prayer we will be using the form: Incarnation on p. 14. Follow the psalm set for the day in Set 1. Follow the Benedictus antiphon set for the day.

Evening Prayer we will be using the form: Anticipation on p. 49.

*If you want to do it online by far the easiest way to do it is to click

<https://www.scotland.anglican.org/spirituality/prayer/daily-offices/> which is updated three times a day for Morning Prayer, Evening Prayer and Compline

*If you just want to do the readings and collect for each day they are as follows. (The online version of Morning Prayer uses the first two readings and Evening Prayer the third, the Gospel.)

Sunday:	Isaiah 49: 7 – 13;	Colossians 1: 9 – 20;	Luke 2: 41 – 52
Monday:	Jeremiah 49: 13 – 23; 1;	Mark 10: 13 – 16;	Matthew 18: 1 – 14
Tuesday:	Isaiah 12: 1 – 6;	Revelation 1: 1 – 8;	John 7: 37 – 52
Wednesday:	Isaiah 25: 1 – 9;	Revelation 1: 9 –20;	John 7: 53 – 8: 11
New Year’s Eve:	Isaiah 26: 1 – 9;	2 Corinthians 5: 16 – 6: 2;	John 8: 12 – 19
New Year’s Day:	Genesis 17: 1 – 12a, 15 – 16;	Colossians 2: 6 – 12;	John 16: 23b – 30
Saturday:	Genesis 12: 1 – 7;	Hebrews 11: 1 – 12;	John 6: 35 – 42, 48 – 51

The Collects applies to both Morning and Evening Prayer.

O God you make us glad with the yearly remembrance of the birth of your Son, Jesus Christ: grant that, as we

joyfully receive him as our Saviour, so we may with confidence behold him as he comes to be our Judge; who lives and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, world without end.

Collect for Monday December 28 (Holy Innocents)

Almighty God, our heavenly Father, whose Holy Innocents were slaughtered at the hand of Herod: receive into the arms of your mercy, we pray, all innocent victims; and, by your great might, frustrate the designs of evil tyrants, and establish your rule of justice, love, and peace; through Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, world without end.

Collect for Tuesday December 29 (St John the Evangelist)

Merciful Lord, shed upon your people the bright beams of your light: that enlightened by the teaching of Saint John, your apostle and evangelist, we may live in the light of your truth, and come at length to the fullness of eternal life; through Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, world without end.

For the coming week beginning Sunday 3rd January we enter into the week of Christmas 2.

*If you have a paper version of the big blue Prayer Book, for

Morning Prayer we will be using the form: Incarnation on p. 14. Follow the psalm set for the day in Set 1. Follow the Benedictus antiphon set for the day.

Evening Prayer we will be using the form: Anticipation on p. 49.

*If you want to do it online by far the easiest way to do it is to click

<https://www.scotland.anglican.org/spirituality/prayer/daily-offices/> which is updated three times a day for Morning Prayer, Evening Prayer and Compline

*If you just want to do the readings and collect for each day they are as follows. (The online version of Morning Prayer uses the first two readings and Evening Prayer the third, the Gospel.)

Sunday:	Genesis 28: 10 – 22;	Hebrews 11: 13 – 22;	John 10: 7 – 17
Monday:	Exodus 3: 1 – 12;	Hebrews 11: 23 – 31;	John 14: 6 – 14
Tuesday:	Joshua 1: 1 – 9 (M), Isaiah 66: 18 – 23 (E);	Hebrews 11: 32 – 12: 2;	John 15: 1 – 16
Epiphany:	Isaiah 52: 7 – 10;	Revelation 21: 22 –27;	Matthew 12: 14 – 21
Thursday:	Isaiah 52: 3 – 6;	Revelation 2: 1 – 7;	John 2: 1 – 11
Friday:	Isaiah 59: 15 – 21;	Revelation 2: 8 – 17;	John 4: 46 – 54
Saturday:	Isaiah 63: 13 – 16;	Revelation 3: 14 – 22;	John 9: 1 – 12, 35 – 38

The Collects applies to both Morning and Evening Prayer

O God, whose blessed Son, Jesus Christ, was made human, that we might become your children: grant that we, being made partakers of his divine nature, may be shaped in his likeness; who lives and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, world without end.

Collect for Epiphany

O God, who, by the guidance of a star, revealed your only-begotten Son to the nations: Grant that we, who know you now by faith, may at the last be led to see your glory face to face; through the same Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, world without end.

Each day we pray for:

- The world: people, governments and leaders of the countries and specific issues arising in the news. Issues relating to social justice, peace, suffering and creation. And of course at this time for the devastating global covid -19 crisis.
- Our wider church, the SEC, our diocese, individual churches.
- Our community – residents in our area. For those with no faith, we pray for their introduction to the Christian faith, and for those with faith, that their faith may develop further.
- Those known to us who are unwell or in need.
- Our own church communities.



Clergy contact numbers:

Rev Christine – 07964175914; 01334769303

Rev Peter Woodfield – 07747023108

Rector's Wardens contact numbers:

David Graham Service – 07901947345

Jane Ramsay - 07982252666