

BLACKBRAES & SHIELDHILL
PARISH CHURCH

MAGAZINE



CHRISTMAS 2010

**From the Manse
November 2010**



But the angel said to them, 'Do not be afraid. I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. Today in the town of David a Saviour has been born to you, He is Christ the Lord. This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger.' Luke Ch2, v10-12.

Dear friends,

As we approach Christmas please feel free to come along to the variety of services which will be held in our Church.

Firstly, the Annual Memorial Service takes place at 3pm on Sunday 5th December. This is a short reflective service for those who have lost a loved one, whether a long time ago or recently. There will be music, readings and prayers and an opportunity to lay a flower in memory of your loved one on the communion table, after which a candle is lit. Over the last two years people have appreciated this short service and have gained strength and comfort from it in the lead up to Christmas which can often be a difficult time for those who have been bereaved.

There will be a short Carol service on Monday 13th December at 2pm in Muiravonside Parish Church. This is especially suitable for those unable to sit for the duration of a normal Sunday service. Tea, coffee and mince pies will be served afterwards. If you know of anyone who would enjoy this short afternoon Carol Service then please bring them along.

The Christmas Family/Nativity service will take place on Sunday 19th December at 10am. The children and young people will be taking part in this service and will be re-telling the Christmas story. This is always a happy and joyous service and a great celebration of the good news of Jesus birth.

The Family Christingle Service takes place on Sunday 19th December at 4pm in the afternoon. This service is especially



for children and those who are young at heart. Together we make up an orange Christingle and sing carols but the most wonderful part of this service is when everyone stands in a circle with their Christingle lit, and the Church lights are then switched off. The atmosphere in the Church is wonderful as the candles glow in the darkness symbolising Christ the light of the world. The highlight of this service is seeing the joy and delight in the children's faces as their Christingle shines in the darkness. If you have children or grandchildren, nieces or nephews then please bring them along so that they can enjoy this special service which helps to make Christmas for children even more special and exciting and creates treasured memories for them which they will carry into adulthood.

The Watchnight service takes place on Christmas Eve with tea and coffee served in the church hall from 11pm. This year, as I will be conducting the Watchnight service at Muiravonside, Mrs Sandra Mathers, our locum during the vacancy, will be conducting the Watchnight service here at Blackbraes and Shieldhill Parish Church and we look forward to welcoming Sandra back to conduct worship.

On Boxing Day, we will be having a service of lessons and carols at 10am. Please come along and enjoy singing all our well-loved and favourite carols.

All the services will be recorded so if you are unable to get to Church, then you can receive a recording of the service and enjoy it in the comfort of your own home by telephoning Mr Bill McKinnon - 636639.

Every blessing to you all in this special Christmas season.

***Your minister and friend,
Louise***

Tea, coffee and a chat are always available in the hall after services – please stay if you can.

Guild Diary January to March 2011

19 Jan	Scot's Night - compere David McClements
2 Feb	Guild project "A New Hunger" - Sandra Mathers
16 Feb	Local MSP Mrs Cathie Peattie
2 Mar	"Venice Carnival" - Rev Dr Mary Henderson
16 Mar	AGM and Topic Night "Can we forgive and forget."
30 Mar	Music with Peter McQuade

Rendezvous Dates

9 February, 9 March and 27 April.

Annual Ceilidh

18 March - music with John Morgan

David and Rena Leishman would like to say a big thank you to the minister and congregation for the good wishes and beautiful bouquet given to us on the occasion of our Golden wedding

Thank you and God bless



Baptisms

*'Whoever welcomes a little child like
this in my name, welcomes me.'*

Baby Nathan Alexander McIntosh
and his father Mr Stuart McIntosh
25th April 2010

Baby Alesha Smith
7th November 2010

Marriages

'Love one another, as I have loved you.'

Ruth Harbinson to Ross Davidson
on Saturday 14th August 2010

Deaths

*'The Lord will protect you as you come
and go, both now and forevermore'*

Mrs Jean Baxter
Mr William Davidson
Mr John Gray
Mrs Hannah 'O' Donnell



Dreaming of a Green Christmas

Christmas is a time of indulgence but it need not be a burden on the planet. Just remember the 3 wise words: REDUCE, REUSE, RECYCLE. Here are a few suggestions from Forth Environment Link in Stirling to help us all 'green up' our dream Christmas.

- ❑ Plan your food shopping. Think in terms of meals make a list, and stick to it. This will reduce food waste, not only helping the environment but saving the average household up to £430 a year (see www.wasteawarelovefood.org.uk for further information).
- ❑ Buy local, seasonal produce. For instance, visit a farmers' market and treat you and yours to quality rather than quantity.
- ❑ Gifts do not have to cost the earth. Reuse or 'regift' unwanted toys, games, CDs, clothes and books. Visit local charity and recycling shops such as Good Green Fun in Springkerse, Stirling.
- ❑ Use old Christmas cards as tags. Use recycled wrapping paper and ribbon or string to wrap your gifts.
- ❑ Conserve energy by turning down the heating, especially when you have a full house and a full stomach.
- ❑ Fairy lights look pretty but switch them off when no one's around to enjoy them! At least 15% of household electricity is lost by leaving items plugged in or on standby.
- ❑ Buy a natural Christmas tree, either in a pot to be reused again and again, or one grown sustainably which can be recycled in your garden or through the council; check out their website for details.
- ❑ Bake Christmas biscuits to hang on your tree or decorate with traditional, natural materials such as holly and pinecones. These can be composted once the festivities are over.

We hope these ideas help you have a healthy, happy and sustainable Christmas. Time and goodwill are the most valuable gifts we can give to those around us and surely best for the planet we all share.

For further information contact Donna Rodgers at Forth Environment Link: 01786 449215 or email donna@forthenvironmentlink.org



The McRoberts Male Voice Choir

The McRoberts Male Voice choir D.V will make their annual visit to Blackbraes and Shieldhill church on Saturday 19 February 2011 at 7pm.

The choir looks forward very much to this engagement, especially the lovely supper provided. The choir motto is "Jesus none other name" and there are 12 members in the choir. We practise weekly on Fridays in each other's homes. Every year in May, the choir joins with the west of Scotland choir for a Festival of Male Voice Praise. At each practice, the choir spends the first hour in prayer. We pray for forthcoming engagements, for the sick, for absent members and any prayer requests which have been submitted.

Entry to the church event is free, but there is a retiring collection when we support a worthwhile charity. In February we will donate the collection to Alzheimers Scotland. This charity is close to the heart of Rev Louise McClements, her husband David and other church members.

Do enter this date in your diary and support the choir and a worthy cause.

Robert S Thompson





Notes From A Shieldhill Garden

“He sets the time for birth and the time for death, the time for planting and the time for pulling up.” Ecclesiastes: chapter 3, verse 2.

There is a nip in the air, Autumn has rained its way towards Winter and so, like all gardens in the Shieldhill area, there are puddles, mud and soggy leaves. Leaves can be gathered and put into black bin bags. Put some holes in the bag and eventually you will be rewarded with leaf mould and that can go right back into the soil. Between the showers I have been digging up tender plants and taking them indoors. This is the season too for pulling up spent, summer annuals and adding them to the compost heap. The compost heap is a snug place and provides a haven for all sorts of creepy crawlies. Toads, frogs and hedgehogs have at one time or another found lunch in my heap.

There are lots of red berries on the hawthorn, holly and cotoneaster. Already the blackbirds have been enjoying these tasty berries. A small flock of bullfinches stopped by in one of my birch trees. These birds have suffered a drop in numbers nationwide and so it was nice to see them. Autumn is the time of year that many of our birds molt. They tend to hide away at this time because they try to hide from predators as they don't feel too perky. This can mean that you won't have seen so many of them about. As the new feathers grow and the weather becomes colder, they will begin to come back into gardens.

Providing food will attract birds into your garden. Garden centres, pet shops and supermarkets all sell wild bird food. It is big business. A plant with berries, leaving some seed heads on flowers or turning over a spadeful of earth will also provide bird food. Bread crumbed up, some cooked potato, an apple that has been left in the bowl can be fed to the birds. They don't like curry, salty things and rice needs to be cooked. Put the food out in the morning so that it is all eaten up before night. This certainly is the time for death in the garden but not without hope. There is

the promise of spring bulbs that will begin to poke their noses out shortly after Christmas.

That leaves me just to wish a very Happy Christmas to all the readers of this magazine.

Rena Moore



Charity Night

The Apprentices would like to thank all those who supported their fundraiser at The Three Kings – a fantastic night with much singing, dancing, laughter and sore feet. Viva Las Vegas will never be sung like that again!

An incredible £1440 has been raised for Christian Aid’s work in Kenya. This will make a huge difference to people’s lives, and we really can’t thank everyone enough.



Website

Our magazines are now available on our website www.bsandm-church.org.uk. If anyone would prefer to access them this way, instead of paper format, please let your Church Elder know.

As well as saving paper, and trees, an advantage of using the internet is that you would receive the magazine in colour. It could also be enlarged if you need to see it in large print.



South Africa Link



I am glad the Guild are focussing on AIDS as it is such a tragedy. I want to give your donation to a lady who has lost all her siblings to AIDS and is trying to bring up all their children – there are 9 of them all under 15! She can't get a job but is a skilled hairdresser – for African hair she does all that beautiful plaiting with beads etc. So she came to me to help her with her plan. She asked if I could lend her some money to buy equipment and rent a room, so she could set up a hairdressing salon. I think that it will work for her. She just needs enough funding for equipment and to feed her and the kids for a few months until she gets to be known and her skills seen.

I really admire her so much. She is just a young woman, early 30s, and has taken full responsibility for these 9 children. She is a widow. Her husband was killed in riots many years ago and she is a lovely young woman who could have got herself another man had it not been for all these kids. Two of the older ones are quite disturbed by the death of both parents and she struggles with them behaviour wise but ploughs on trying to get them educated in order that they can make a life for themselves.

This unfortunately is a much too common story from AIDS, where many parents have died and only the children are left. Many of them end up in the streets begging and stealing in order to survive! Sometimes it is so depressing. The problem is so huge that we wonder if it can ever be addressed. But the care and generosity from your congregation continue to give us hope because if we can together assist even one family, and see them getting fed and maybe an education, then we all together are doing a great thing. It may seem like a needle in a haystack but we are only a small cog in Gods greater plan and we are trying to follow His will.

Thank you all those who donated, you are doing so much good.

Sandra Duncan

Nativity Word Scramble

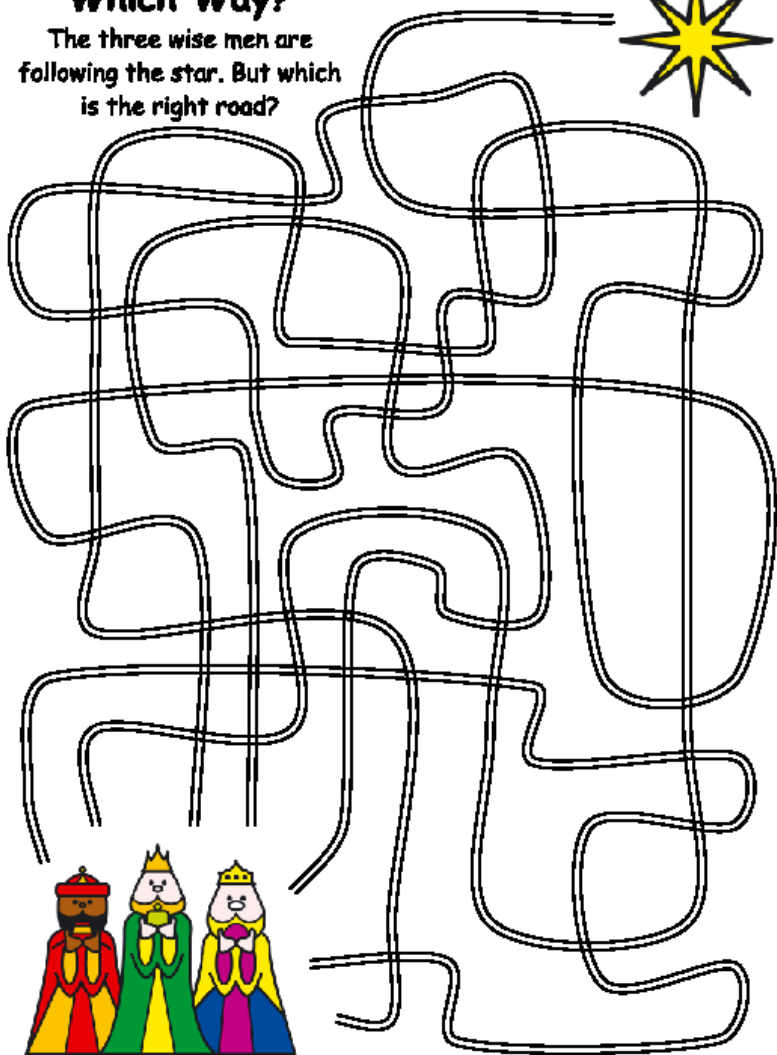
1. STRA _____
2. MAGREN _____
3. MYAR _____
4. SEPHE _____
5. DOEYKN _____
6. AEGLN _____
7. JPHOES _____
8. JSSEU _____
9. KIGSN _____
10. STBALE _____

All these words come from the Christmas story. Can you unscramble them?



Which Way?

The three wise men are following the star. But which is the right road?



www.ActivityVillage.co.uk - Keeping Kids Busy

Wee White Snow Globes

Wee white snow globes are wonderful things,
at Christmas so many of them are all around.

Wind up the neat wee key below till it tings,
and hear Christmassy songs in a tinkly sound.

Wee white snow globes are wonderful things,
each one of them has a unique little scene.

Shake with vigour and music tring-a-lings,
as snow falls with gusto, all pristine and clean

Wee white snow globes are wonderful things
in a shop, I decided let's wind up all three!

A cacophony of tinkly sound resounds and rings
and even busy shop assistants react with glee!

Wee white snow globes are wonderful things,
here with us all at this special Christmas time.

When we celebrate the birth of a King of kings,
a Saviour for mankind, whose love is divine.

By Drew Robertson





The Perfect Christmas Present

Sometimes it can be very difficult to choose the perfect Christmas present for someone who is very special, but at the same time has everything. I was faced with this dilemma some years ago, when I was in my first year at St.Andrews University.

At that time, I happened to have an aunt who loved St.Andrews. She had visited the town whenever she could in former days, (she was now practically housebound.) My aunt had been so thrilled when I told her I would be studying there for three years. She knew the beautiful Fife town like the back of her hand and had been very supportive during my first few months there. She used to tell me little known facts about the town that a stranger wouldn't know, such as the network of little known paths and shortcuts that could take a person from one side of the town to the other very quickly.

I enjoyed many a pleasant hour when I visited her each weekend and as the weeks went by and the shops started to get things in for Christmas, I knew I had to buy her a present that related to St.Andrews, but was totally unique. This was actually far more difficult than it would seem. Over the years, my aunt had amassed lots of ornaments and paintings – most of them associated with St.Andrews. Each week I visited her, she would show me some of her vast collection of St.Andrews memorabilia, including anything from egg timers with the town's coat of arms, right up to an eighteen piece dinner set with the St.Andrews crest on each item. I knew then that something very special was required. I was so sad that she was unable to travel to a town that she loved more than anywhere else in the world and yet I could go to it every day. So for the next few weeks, I racked my brains... and came up with absolutely nothing! It was driving me mad

until one day, the answer finally came from the most unlikely of places – the University itself.

Come November, I was in the process of settling in and still getting to know people, when I chanced upon an exciting upcoming event. One of the many pleasurable events that happen in the busy social calendar is the annual college photograph, which is taken in early December, out on the lawn, in front of the grand buildings of St Mary's College which houses the Divinity Department. I was immediately hooked as I have an interest, if somewhat amateurish, in photography and at the same time, must admit I was thrilled at the notion of having some sort of souvenir to keep of my first year at St. Andrews.

“Do come along and join in to keep the tradition going!” the publicity poster cheerfully urged. It also added that apparently this photographic event was indeed a tradition that went all the way back to the 1920's - an impossibly long expanse of time even for someone like myself, a mature student, to contemplate. I would be a part of history no less! I also realised in a rare but very welcome flash of inspiration that my aunt would love something like this.

I had just found the perfect Christmas present that I was searching so elusively for.

Sure enough, on further investigation, I came across some of the older photographs on display in a cabinet up in the quaint old tower room in St Mary's, where the computers are now situated, looking very out of place in such ancient surroundings. The collection on this particular display went as far back as 1978 and the photographs were always taken in near enough the same position out on the lawn. The buildings never change of course, but the fashions certainly do. As I gazed at each one, I experienced a certain sense of travelling back in time to familiar surroundings that were somewhat different. You could almost hear the “ABBA” music from the

1978 photograph, as the participants proudly posed in their flared trousers and long sideburns.

This really exciting event was still a month away and I never really gave the upcoming photograph session much more thought as I worked my way through a busy schedule of lectures and tutorials. Because I didn't live in St. Andrews, but travelled back and forward, the only people I knew well there were a few people who were in my tutorial group. I hadn't even rechecked the date and time of the photograph, as I now had my first essays to complete and the deadlines were steadily and stealthily creeping up on me like they do with all of us. As these dates drew near, the declining attendance at lectures and the increasing look of fear on the grim faces of the few people who were there gave a fair indication that like me, these folks had other things on their minds as well.

December came around at break neck speed and on a Tuesday morning, the usual tranquillity in St Mary's gardens was broken by a cacophony of out of place banging, as well as the clattering of wood being moved about, which of course heralded the construction of something. Immediately everyone gazed from the windows of the computer room in St. Mary's Tower in a state of naked curiosity, as nothing exciting usually happened on these peaceful and sleepy lawns. A hushed speculation broke out amongst the spectators as to what could possibly be happening. Was some kind of open-air concert scheduled? They definitely were knocking together rows of seats.

"Oh, it'll be for the photographs!" one girl said and with their curiosity satisfied, everyone got back to work.

I was angry with myself. As usual I'd forgotten all about something which to me was very important. It must have been brought forward. Or had I got the date wrong? Surely it was next week? I was even planning to bring my St Mary's divinity robe with me just for the photograph and this

morning to cap it all, I wasn't very well dressed. I had thrown on my faded white tee shirt and comfortable but extremely ancient trousers. I could imagine the reaction of my aunt, who was a stickler for looking neat and tidy at all times, when I presented her with the photograph.

"Oh my goodness Drew, how scruffy you look!"

Or worse still, she would pick out someone completely different and exclaim disbelievingly "That can't really be you!" when I pointed out where I was in the photograph and she adjusted her glasses, peering in disbelief. No, I had definitely blown it this time! The one redeeming factor was that I had my dark fleece jersey in case it rained, so at least that would cover up the tee shirt! But as for the trousers...?

I couldn't even remember what time the photo was scheduled for, but knew it was sometime after lunch and half past one came to mind. I had lost the little leaflet with all the details and the publicity poster had disappeared from the notice board. The few people I asked didn't seem to know and the college office was closed for lunch, so I rushed off to have a quick lunch as well to console myself

When I got back, people were already gathering for the photograph and my plans of being in the middle rows or better still, the back, with the tee shirt and offending trousers out of sight, did not look like coming to fruition. It looked like the whole of Drew Robertson would be exposed for the world to see and it wasn't a pleasant sight I can tell you! There was no sign either of my two close friends Ann and Irene, who really wanted to be in the photo as well.

I ended up right on the front bench, delightfully sandwiched between two pretty women, resplendent in their red gowns, while I draped my black fleece around my body and tried to pull it as far down as it would go in the

vain task of trying to achieve the impossible by creating a makeshift divinity gown from a jersey!

“Smile everybody...!”

“Stay still now...!”

“That’s it...!”

“But let’s have another one just in case...!”

The photographer darted about taking photographs, it seemed, from all angles, with both his ultra modern digital camera and the large stationary one with the curtain around it, which looked as if it would go back to those heady days in the nineteen twenties when these legendary college photographs were first being taken. (Without any scruffy trousers.)

And that was it! It was over as quick as that. Very much disappointed, I went back to work and at the two o clock lecture told Ann and Irene, about how I had come so close to missing being in the photograph and how sad I was at not being able to warn them it was taking place today.

A mystified look came over Ann’s face, “But it’s next Tuesday!” She brought a leaflet out of her bag which confirmed this.

New hope dawned within the bungling Drew Robertson brain. A second chance? A neat suit this time? New respect from a dear and much loved aunt? But whose photo was I in just a few moments ago? All three of us laughed at the comprehension of what I’d just done.

On the next Tuesday, sure enough, the Divinity photograph took place and resplendent in my dark suit and black divinity gown, I posed in the left hand side of the second row with my friend Irene on one side and Ann on the other. There was even a light covering of snow on the ground would you believe, just to complete the Christmassy scene. Come Christmas time, I gave my aunt her special present and I’ll never forget the look of delight

in her face as she saw the large photograph for the first time. It seemed to make her Christmas, as it was a totally unique souvenir from St.Andrews that she didn't already have. It made mine as well.

My aunt sadly passed away two years ago. But every year in the run up to Christmas, when the shops start to get busier and busier with Christmas shoppers, trying to find that elusive perfect present for a friend or loved one, I'm always reminded of her and the joy a perfect present can bring.

Each Christmas I'm also reminded of and rejoice about another perfect present from God, which was given to us all so long ago and signifies what the celebration of Christmas is all about. That was of course, the birth of Jesus in a humble stable. A Saviour who died so that we might have the gift of eternal life. The Three Wise Men who travelled so far to visit the baby Jesus also brought some perfect presents. Gold to symbolise his kingship. Frankincense to recognise his holiness. Myrrh to symbolise his suffering and death.

At Christmas I always ask myself how can we repay his love? What is the perfect present you can give to a King of kings? In one of the carols that we sing just before Christmas, "In the Bleak Midwinter," just like I, the writer, Christina Georgina Rossetti, was asking the same question and I think she may have found the answer:

“What can I give him, poor as I am?
If I were a shepherd, I would bring a lamb;
If I were a wise man, I would do my part -
yet what I can I give him, give my heart.”

We can give the Lord the most perfect present of all by loving him with all our hearts. Love is such a precious gift. It is in all of us. It is here with us as we worship the Lord in this church. It is in us as we work for the Lord by telling people how wonderful his love is for all of us. It is so thrilling when

someone senses the greatest love of all for the first time – the love of our Lord.

Going back to the mysterious photo I found myself in one week too early, you may be wondering in whose photo I so hastily posed on that sunny, snowy Tuesday afternoon in December 2003. I wondered as well and I suspect it may have been the Psychology Faculty, which has a building very close to St Mary’s College. I can imagine many years from now, the photo being published in a national newspaper with a circle around me as the psychology graduates try to trace their long lost friends with the question, “Do you know this psychologist? He probably graduated in 2007 and so far, nobody has a clue who he is.”

Do you think I should finally own up then?



Festive dates for your diary

- | | |
|--------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Sat 27 Nov, 2.30pm | Sunday School Panto Outing |
| Sun 5 Dec, 3pm | Memorial Service |
| Mon 13 Dec, 2pm | Short Carol Service, Muiravonside |
| Wed 15 Dec, 1.30pm | Rendezvous Christmas Fun |
| Sat 18 Dec, 2pm | Sunday School Party |
| Sun 19 Dec, 10pm | Family Service |
| Sun 19 Dec, 4pm | Christingle Service |
| Fri 24 Dec, 11pm | Watchnight Service |
| Sun 26 Dec, 10am | Lessons and Carols |

