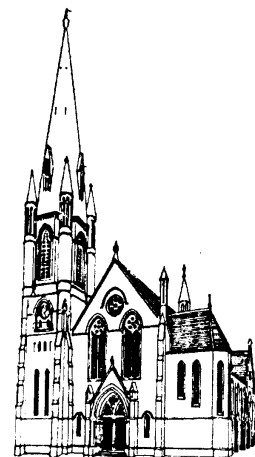


The Link

The magazine of Auldearn & St. Ninian's
Church of Scotland, Nairn
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Christmas 2016

From our Minister

Christmas



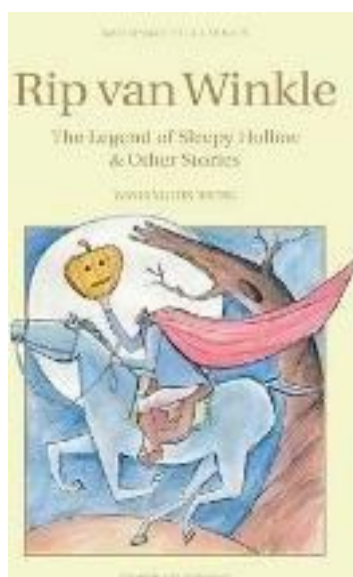
I suppose there has been many things said about Christmas over the last two thousand years. Why it happened and how it happened with many stating their point of view over it and pondering what on earth really happened.

Today I suppose we are all baffled and bewildered as to how we now have two sets of Christmas - the Real Christmas and the Commercial Christmas which has practically taken over the meaning all together.

As far as I can tell, it started away back in 1809 with the introduction of a book called "Knickerbocker's History of New York" by an unknown author called Washington Irving. This detailed the legend of the Dutch St Nicholas, and various other Christmas Traditions. It covered many of Christmas tales and folklore that now embellish Christmas, but each tale or tradition often comes with a twist.

For example the Dutch St Nicholas is twisted all out of proportion. In reality he was a miser who had starved his people almost to the point of death so that they were willing to eat their own children in order to survive. The twist in the tale comes when he finds himself feeling guilty and persuaded by his servant to help the people. His servant, a dwarf, goes around asking people to leave their shoes at the door so he could fill them with goodies. Where the whole point of the St Nicholas story is not so much that he is a saint, but it's his servant who is the saint.

Irving also wrote another book which capitalised on the first book's success in 1819 called "The Sketch Book of Geoffrey Crayon" which included the legend of Rip Van Winkle, Sleepy Hollow, and five other Christmas stories - where a new type of Christmas was born.



But what really gave birth to what is now the commercial Christmas, really started in 1823 with a book called, 'A Visit From St Nicholas' better known as 'Twas the night before Christmas' published by a man called Clement Clarke Moore who literally changed the face of Christmas forever. America and the rest of the World has never been able to resist the charms of this type of Christmas ever since.

However, if you really want to know more about the history of Christmas, both sides, let me get a plug in for Christmas Eve at 6.00pm Auldearn and 8.00pm at St Ninian's where I will be telling you the whole story, the truth and nothing but the truth.

Rev Tommy Bryson



New Elders -New Hope

On the 18th of September, Auldearn Church held a special service to ordain new Elders. It was with great pleasure that the Minister, Elders and congregation welcomed Jean Bryson, Carol Chisholm, Christine Mentipty and June Milne as new Elders. A fortnight later we also welcomed Ann Davidson to the Eldership.

In the weeks prior to this service the new Elders, and some older ones, namely Neil Gibson and Ann Poyner, had attended evening training sessions at the Manse with Tommy. They were joined by Mary Heggie and Norma McIntyre from St. Ninian's.

A Saturday conference in St Ninian's church hall completed the training giving all a greater understanding of the role of an Elder.

The increase in Eldership is a great step forward in revitalizing the church in Auldearn. Many hands make light work and will allow the Session to fulfill its responsibilities and its role in supporting the Minister.

More importantly, having more elders, with willing hands and joyful hearts, will help us grow as a church. Tommy summarised the Elder's role as having three main duties;

Door-warden - to welcome people into the Christ's church,

Spiritual postman – to carry God's message, showing by word and deed the life he wants us to lead and

Royal Cup carrier to celebrate the Lord's supper.

We can now hopefully fulfill these roles.

A warm welcome and grateful thanks to all our new Elders.

Ann Poyner, Session Clerk

More information on the role of an elder can be found at:

http://www.churchofscotland.org.uk/__data/assets/pdf_file/0008/3131/elder_who_me.pdf

http://www.churchofscotland.org.uk/__data/assets/pdf_file/0007/3130/elder_rediscover.pdf

Christmas Acrostic

C is for the Child born that night to be our Light

H is for Holy is HIS name

R is for Rejoice with gladness and joy

I is for Immanuel, God with us

S is for the Star that led the wise men to Him

T is for the Truth and grace that was sent our way

M is for Mother Mary laying Him in swaddling clothes in the manger

A is for Angels singing songs of joy

S is for Salvation

Merry Christmas

Flower Rota

January - June 2017

January

1st Mrs G McCloy
8th Mrs J McIntosh
15th Mrs E Main
22nd Mrs J Burnett
29th Mrs E Robertson

February

5th Mrs I Sharp
12th Mrs S Forbes
19th Mrs S Waugh
28th available

March

5th Mrs Molly Scott
12th Mrs R Stewart &
Miss P Forbes
19th Mrs P Gordon
26th Mrs M Scott

April

2nd Mrs M. MacDonald
9th Mrs K Dunlop
16th Mrs P Gordon &
Mrs Macrae
23rd available
30th available

May

7th Mrs I Sharp
14th Mrs M Asher
21st Mrs S Forbes
28th Mrs S Barron

June

4th Mrs I Bryce
11th Mrs M Bunker
18th Mrs M Heggie
25th Mrs J Ranscombe

Please contact Grace if you can take an 'available' week, or if changes need to be made.



Dear Friends,

This is the time of year when we think of family and friends. Let us also think of those who are less well off, those who have suffered bereavement and illness and those caught up in war. There are many people who need our prayers at this time of year.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank our great band of helpers who assist with the Coffee Break, Tea and Coffee after the Sunday Morning Service, Food for Thought Lunches and Stewardship Lunches. Your help is greatly appreciated by us all.

I would also like to thank everyone who donates flowers to our Church on Sunday mornings. The flowers are beautiful and very much appreciated by the Church members who receive them.

God Bless, *Grace*.

CCLL Nairn & District Link

Update and Events

Each time the Nairn & District Link bring Chernobyl children over for a month, St Ninian's supports their programme financially and by hosting two meals for the children, their Nairn families and Committee Members.



This summer we helped the children celebrate Pavel's birthday with a meal, cake and party.



The following is an update from Cath Stevenson

I thought I'd provide a quick update on what's happening locally.

At the recent committee meeting, a decision was taken to host the next visit in 2018, particularly to replenish funds used this year. The AGM date has been moved to January to accommodate CCLL HQ change of accounting year.

Below is a range of activities coming up. If you would like to help/contribute in any way, it would be much appreciated.

Coffee Morning at British Legion on Saturday, 26th November at 10am.

Donations of baking and for the raffle would be gratefully received. The hall will be open at 9am.

Bag Packing and Carol Singing at Tesco Forres on Saturday, 17th December.

Volunteers for the bag packing would be welcomed. Usually volunteers do two hours slots but this and the number of checkouts we could cover will depend on the number of people available. Linda and Morag will do the first slot from 10 am. Please let either Linda or Morag know if you can help.

Bag Packing at Coop, King Street on Saturday, 31st December (Hogmanay).

Again, volunteers needed to cover slots and names to Linda or Morag.

Some other events are planned but no dates confirmed as yet.

Best wishes from us all. *Cath Stevenson*

Check out the Link's Facebook page at <https://www.facebook.com/chernobylnairnlink/>

Guild News

This session opened on 2nd October with our dedication service in the Church. Members took part in the service and later distributed flowers to those who no longer manage to come due to ill health or age.

Our theme this year is "Go in Joy - be bold, be strong". With this in mind our first speaker was Rev Tommy Bryson who spoke to us on the need for entertainment to bring joy and how many joyous occasions have changed as a result. Twenty seven members attended this meeting and there was a pleasant buzz with some members not having met up since last session.

On 19th October we had 12 members of the Highland Male Voice Choir come to visit. The conductor, Mr Peter Hooker, gave us his testimony interspersed with the choir singing various sacred songs. It was a joy to have them and other visitors from various churches within the town. As Eileen Kidd, a member now gone to live with her daughter in the South had been 90 during the week, we celebrated her birthday by eating a delicious cake baked by Fiona.

In October we held a DIY meeting on our project - Female Genital Mutilation - led by our Project Partner Mrs Isabel Bryce.

On 3rd November we took over the Thursday Coffee Spot raising over £300. This is always well supported by members and friends. Wednesday the 9th we were invited to Nairn Old Parish Guild for an update on the rebuilding of the Highland Hospice.

Our own second meeting will be held at Whinnieknowe when we entertain and mix with residents.

In December Lt Donaldson from the Salvation Army is coming to share their work with us and on the 14th we go to the Clubhouse for our Christmas Lunch.

In 2017 we have a variety of speakers on a variety of subjects relating to joy. Please come and join us or just come to test us out. First and third Wednesday of the month. I asked one of our new members if she was enjoying being with us. She replied it was so much better than she expected.

Why don't you come for a visit soon - both men and women so very welcome.

Sheena Proctor



Mission International: HAITI PROJECT

This year the guild project is Breaking the Cycle of Female Genital Mutilation FGM with the charity Feed the Minds.

The guild project is working to help to fight the horrendous practice of Female genital mutilation in Kenya, so that girls can stay in school and reach their God-given potential. When they are cut they leave school and stay at home to prepare for marriage.

According to the World Health Organisation over 125 million girls and women across 29 countries, including Scotland, alive today, have been cut. FGM is the partial or total removal of the external genitalia for non-medical reasons. Seen as a rite of passage, it is carried out on girls of 12 years and sometimes younger. It can lead to severe problems and even death. After the procedure girls tend to drop out of school, are married off and give birth, all before 16.

In the Kuria district of Kenya, where Feed the Minds works, complex cultural and social reasons make FGM hard to combat. Nevertheless, they are committed to promoting a culture of change to ensure every girl can choose her own future and to stop the innocent becoming victims. They do this by engaging the whole community in activities that raise awareness, share knowledge and drive positive social action.

Feed the Minds is an ecumenical Christian charity founded in 1964 that works in partnership with grassroots partners to deliver education projects that empower communities to combat poverty and injustices across the Global South.

Isabel Bryce, project partner.



The Leprosy Mission Scotland

Members of our church continue to support The Leprosy Mission Scotland by putting their change into the blue collecting tins. Over the last six months, the total sum paid into the bank from this sum was £87.11.



In addition, a personal birthday party raised the total gift to charity of £300, of which £200 was sent to the Leprosy Mission. The Harvest Lunch proceeds raised £260. Under the Gift of Life scheme, 7 goats were purchased to be sent to 7 needy families, with the balance of £15 paid into Leprosy Mission's bank account.

Leprosy Mission Christmas cards are being sold in the church and, if all sold, will raise a further £200.

Finally, a Leprosy Mission speaker will give a talk to the Guild at their final meeting of the session in April 2017. Your continued support is much appreciated.

Leprosy is a bacterial infection largely associated with poverty. It causes nerve damage and, left untreated, leads to a loss of feeling or mobility in the hands, feet or around the eyes. Everyday tasks become fraught with danger – burns, blisters and other minor injuries go unnoticed leading to more serious injuries. These injuries can lead to permanent disfigurement and disability. Injuries to the eyes can often lead to blindness.

Leprosy starts by damaging the small nerves in the skin's surface. The first outward sign is usually discoloured patches where there is no feeling. These can be easily missed, ignored, or mistaken for another disease. If correctly diagnosed and treated at this stage, it is likely that permanent damage or disability can be prevented.

The World Health Organisation reported that 213,899 people were diagnosed with leprosy in 2014. More than half of them were in India. The next largest numbers were in Brazil and Indonesia.

For more information check out <http://leprosymission.scot/about-leprosy/>

Norma

Nairn St Ninian's Stewardship Committee Soup & Sweet Lunch Tuesday 6th December 2016 12.30 - 2.30pm

Join us in the church hall for lunch and an afternoon of Christmas fellowship!

Any donations for the lunch are being gifted to 'Queenspark Gardens Entertainment Fund'.

If you require transport, please contact Sandra Paton on 01667 454219.

Bible Readers to June 2017

January

1st Norma McIntyre
8th Grigor Mackay
15th John Waugh
22nd Judy McIntosh
29th June Ranscombe

February

5th Rose McKendrick
12th Andrew Paton
19th Norma McIntyre
26th June Ranscombe

March

5th Grigor McKay
12th John Waugh
19th Judy McIntosh
25th Andrew Paton

April

2nd June Ranscombe
9th Norma McIntyre
16th Grigor Mackay
23rd John Waugh
30th Judy McIntosh

May

7th Rose McKendrick
14th Andrew Paton
21st June Ranscombe
28th Norma McIntyre

June

4th Grigor Mackay
11th John Waugh
18th Judy McIntosh
25th June Ranscombe

Please let June Ranscombe know if you swap dates!



Can You Show Me the Way to Bethlehem?

"Can you show me the way to Bethlehem?" That is what we are celebrating at this time - a journey . A journey full of happiness, expectation, hope and love and, yet, also full of frustrations, unfilled dreams and hopes not realised. Worries, tensions and "why did this have to happen to me!"

Happiness, frustrations, hope, tension.

The whole point of the Advent season is to move us to think more deeply about the implications of the birth of Jesus. It is not just a yearly ritual. It is a yearly pilgrimage - a pilgrimage of the soul. A journey over which we yearn - we want to take others on the journey with us.

It is a time of preparation to celebrate the birth of Jesus. As part of this preparation we organise food and gifts to share with others. But, it is also a time of spiritual preparation.

As we make the practical preparations, we also make our spiritual preparations. When we hear people say "It's only a time for children" or "It's all just one big hassle, or "I'll be glad when it is all over" , we need to reply "It all depends on your vision!"

The story is told of a beautiful mountain which takes eight hours to climb but the views are spectacular and well worth the arduous climb. However, these days you can reach the top by funicular railway in a matter of minutes. (We did just that on our recent holiday in the USA when we took the railway to the top of Lookout Mountain overlooking where the Battle of Chattanooga took place in the American Civil War!) This, of course, resulted in missing out on seeing many of the amazing views. We were too intent on marvelling at the railway!

Part of the thinking and planning of the vision that lay ahead had been lost. The beauty right under our noses may as well not have been there!

Surely it is up to us as Christians who profess to have captured the vision, to try to broaden the view of what others might see. And what a vision!

Those of us who have been given the encouragement to think in terms which are spiritual, who believe in the faith journey and of the need to dream dreams and to have glorious visions, have an important role in helping to put Advent where it really belongs.

The Advent journey is not an easy one, it never has been and never will be.

However, it is the road to love, joy and inner peace.

We can show the way to Bethlehem. It is up to us!

Mary Heggie

2017 DOOR AND OFFERING DUTIES

January	1	Ian Colquhoun	Jean Bryson
	8	Jim Main	Bill Welsh
	15	Norma McIntyre	Rose McKendrick
	22	Grigor McKay	George Proctor
	29	Roberta Stuart	Grace McCloy
February	5	Bill Kennedy	Judy McIntosh
	12	Harry Scott	Sheena Welsh
	19	Ian Colquhoun	Sheena Proctor
	26	Jim Main	Jean Bryson
March	5	Norma McIntyre	Bill Welsh
	12	Grigor McKay	Rose McKendrick
	19	Roberta Stuart	George Proctor
	26	Bill Kennedy	Grace McCloy
April	2	Harry Scott	Judy McIntosh
	9	Ian Colquhoun	Sheena Welsh
	16	Jim Main	Sheena Proctor
	23	Norma McIntyre	Jean Bryson
	30	Grigor McKay	Bill Welsh
May	7	Roberta Stuart	Rose McKendrick
	14	Bill Kennedy	George Proctor
	21	Harry Scott	Grace McCloy
	28	Ian Colquhoun	Judy McIntosh
June	4	JIM MAIN	Sheena Welsh
	11	Norma McIntyre	Sheena Proctor
	18	Grigor McKay	Jean Bryson
	25	Roberta Stuart	Bill Welsh

Sunday School Update

The first term of Sunday School the children learnt about the 7 days of creation. They learnt that God created the world from nothing! The children were given some "junk" to see what they could create from "nothing" and this wee person was made from nothing!

Here are two of the girls with paintings of the fourth day of cre-



ation when God made the sun, moon and the stars.

The children spelt out the word "Harvest" on Harvest Sunday and discovered they could make the words "eat", "have", "starve" and "share" from the letters. Some members of the congregation had to help as some of the children were unwell. During the rest of the Harvest Service the children made harvest wreaths in the hall.



This term the children are learning about the 'I am' saying of Jesus.....

'I am the Good Shepherd',

'I am the door',

'I am the way, the truth and the Life' and

'I am the Bread of Life'.

They'll finish at Advent with *'I am the Light of the World'* when the first Advent candle will be lit.



Fabric Report

At the recent Congregational; Board meeting, Andrew Paton reported on the following matters.

Replacement hall windows at gable ends

The planned meeting with the joiner and window company didn't take place when scheduled. *(Update: this meeting has now taken place so the windows can now be constructed. A date for installation will be agreed thereafter.)*

Church Hall storage

Mervyn Grant was thanked for the installation of storage units at the rear of the hall. These are in use by the church and other hall users. They have now been varnished and a vote of thanks was given to Billy Hossack for this work. The smaller folding tables have been purchased and are now available for use.

Kitchen works

The hot water boiler for making tea/coffee has been faulty for some weeks. Moray Catering advised that repair was uneconomic so a replacement was ordered at a cost of £654. this is now in use.

Session Room Heater

A powerful space heater has been purchased and its installation by Jimmy Doull is awaited. This will be connected to the 3-phase electricity with an isolator switch installed.

Church sanctuary and hall sound and vision systems

As the original quotation received for the upgrade of the sound/audio system was considered excessive, a further quotation was sought from The Music Station in Inverness. This figure was considered to be very reasonable so it was agreed that the Property Committee meet again with this company to finalise requirements and update costing. This work will include a new sound system, TV screen and hearing loop for the hall. In the main sanctuary, TV screens, new microphones and hearing loop will be installed. Both areas will be hard wired to the church router to allow internet access by hall and church users.

Paintworks

The areas above the heating radiators in the sanctuary have now been rubbed down and repainted. However, the original finish has faded over time so a good match isn't possible. Other options, using existing paint supplies, are now being explored to make good this paintwork.

Church gutters

Weeds and debris have been removed from the Queen Street side of the building. The leaf guards previously fitted have been removed as they aren't effective, becoming clogged themselves. Wheelie Clean has agreed to undertake a twice yearly cleaning of guttering.

Church laptop

As the existing laptop used for displaying hymns and printing hymn sheets is now obsolete, it was agreed that a new machine be purchased.

If you are interested in being part of the Property Committee, please

Go In Joy - Guild Reflection

This is an extract from the Guild "Theme & Topic Discussion Guide which challenges us all to think about "joy".

The words 'peace, joy, love' can be found several times in the Bible and in hymns, but not always in the same order.

What is joy? Is it simply pleasure, happiness, feeling glad, contentment? The Bible says it is more than pleasure or pleasing ourselves but is being full of joy, joyful, with the joy which comes from inner peace. If we aren't at peace with ourselves, with other people or with God, we can't be joyful.

God is the source of our joy, 'May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace' (Romans 15:13). The Holy Spirit fills us with joy 'the harvest of the Spirit is love, joy...' (Gal 5:22). We can worship God even when life seems hard for he will give us strength and fill us with joy (Colossians 1:11-12). Time and again we hear of people who have found peace and joy through their suffering.

Paul wrote 'In our sorrows we have always cause for joy' (2 Corinthians 6:10). Robinson Crusoe, in the well-known novel, says that when he was at a low point he read 'be content with what you have'; for God himself has said, 'I will never leave you or desert you' (Hebrews 13:5) and he learned that it was possible to be more happy in his forsaken solitary condition than he might have been anywhere else.

Joni Eareckson Tada's story may be known to you - following a diving accident and a long period of rebuilding her life she found joy and peace. An evangelical christian, she has spread the Good News around the world, and founded 'Joni and Friends' an organisation 'accelerating Christian ministry in the disabled community'.

Our joy must be expressed in our worship (Psalm 95:1, Psalm 96:1-3, Psalm 100), through music (Psalm 150), and with joyful shouts of 'Alleluia'.

There's nothing better than a good sing!

