



# Soundings

Portobello & Joppa Parish  
Church Magazine

December 2022  
& January 2023

# *Portobello and Joppa Parish Church*

## ***From the editor***



In his letter, Stewart reminds us of the story of the sheep and the goats. This reminds *me* of the day that my Primary 1 teacher told us this story and then divided us into sheep and goats, letting the sheep out of class to go home first. She decided that I was a goat, somewhat to my indignation. I think it was because I hadn't done my sums very fast. In fact I'd done them very slowly. They weren't at all interesting and my daydreams were much more so.

I hope that this edition of *Soundings* is more stimulating than Miss Dunlop's sums. Stewart gives us a lot to think about as we enter Advent and tells us about the worship plans for the month. Michael gives us information about the Presbytery Mission Plan. There are invitations to donate selection boxes or something similar to families in Craigmillar, or to join the restarting Scottish Country Dance Club.

And there are the usual features – thanks to all the faithful contributors – in one of which you can discover who might like to go to France in the 1790s.

Warm wishes from the editors for a happy Christmas.

**Pam**



## ***From the minister***

Dear Friends and Neighbours,

Fancy an edgy Advent and Christmas?

Not in the sense of cutting edge fashion or art, not something *avant garde* (what does that phrase actually mean?), but an Advent and Christmas with an edge to it. Not clothes that are a bit outré (what does *that* mean?) or eyebrow raising, with rips and tears and outrageous statements, or art that looks more like detritus held together by silly string, but something that blows away the gathering mistiness of saccharine, sugar coated Christmas.



By this, an edge that is perhaps a bit sharper, perhaps a bit more strident, one that encourages us—*forces* us?— to sit up and take notice.

Many of the Advent stories suggested by the Lectionary, which provides choices for Biblical texts to use in services, ask one to sit up and take notice.

The coming of the Son of Man in Matthew 24? That's not necessarily a time of mince pies and mulled wine. There is the separation of the sheep and the goats later in the section, where many are asked pointedly: 'when I was hungry, did you feed me and when I was thirsty, did you give me water to drink?'

Then there are a few stories about John the Baptist. Repent, repent, repent. Yikes.

And, of course, the Magnificat (Luke 1.46ff), sung by Mary when the infant John the Baptist leaps in Elizabeth's womb and Elizabeth exults in a blessing for the new child. The ramifications of Christ's arrival become clear. The world will be turned utterly and irrevocably upside down.

The writer Annie Dillard, a favourite of the previous Archbishop of Canterbury Rowan Williams, once suggested that each time we attend a service of worship we should be issued with a crash helmet. For, if we gather together in the presence of the living God, it will be no easy ride. We ascend the heights of light and goodness and transcendence, of course. But we are also called to look clearly in the light of love to a world creaking and groaning and yearning for healing.

As stated in years gone by, Advent used to be approached far more like Lent.

A time of self-reflection and self-analysis and self-scouring: to what extent am I prepared for the gift of selfless, sacrificial, healing and bountiful love? To what extent am I ready to receive the gift of a tiny, vulnerable, powerless child born amongst the muck of a barn whose task is to transform my life through love into a gift for God's creation?

Perhaps this Advent we should more fully and more clearly concentrate on that within us which needs to be transformed. And focus more unflinchingly on those parts of our community, country and world that need to be healed and transfigured.

It's so easy to travel from edginess to anger. For the pursuit of peace and justice to morph into self-righteous shrillness.

But not in love. Not in a tender, vulnerable, powerless love.

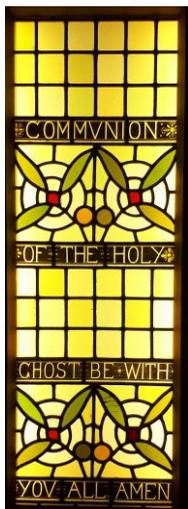
A Christmas gift?

Look steadily, piercingly, unflinchingly, honestly at all that needs to be transformed in our lives and in the life of our world. Keep looking. Do not turn away. See the darkness and the fires burning; see too the shafts of light and the waters of grace. Reflect on reality, but through the lens of timeless, inexhaustible hope

And when the Christ child comes, the miracle is immeasurable, the event ineffable, the life eternal.

What a gift.

## Stewart



### ***Presbytery Mission Plan***

On 15 November, the Presbytery of Edinburgh and West Lothian approved a new plan for taking forward the national church's mission throughout Scotland. As Convener of the Resources Deployment Group, Rev Dr Stewart Weaver has played a key role in the development of the new mission plan. This will have far-reaching consequences for every congregation in Edinburgh, including Portobello & Joppa Parish Church.

As well as continuing the existing collaboration with the other churches in our local area, including Duddingston Kirk and St. Martin's, PJPC will be invited to enter into a *parish grouping* with a new church formed by the union of the congregations currently worshipping at Meadowbank and Willowbrae. This new parish grouping is expected to be formed at some point during 2023 when Stewart, along with a newly called minister for the Meadowbank/Willowbrae union, will be part of a ministry team responsible for taking forward the mission plan for the extended parish.

More details will be available over the coming months but feel free to speak to Stewart or myself if you'd like to find out more about the new mission plan.

**Michael**  
**Session Clerk**

## **WORSHIP**



### **Sunday 4 December (Second Sunday of Advent)**

- 9.30am Quiet, reflective service  
10.30am Interactive, intergenerational service  
11.15am Traditional service

### **Sunday 11 December (Third Sunday of Advent)**

- 9.30am Quiet, reflective service  
10.30am Interactive, intergenerational service  
11.15am Traditional service, with Lessons and Carols

### **Monday 12 December**

- 7.30pm Service of Hope and Healing (for those who have been bereaved)

### **Sunday 18 December (Fourth Sunday of Advent)**

- 10.30am Celebration Sunday: Nativity Play

### **Saturday 24 December (Christmas Eve)**

- 6.30pm Family Christmas Eve Service  
11.00pm Community Carols  
11.30pm Watchnight Service

### **Sunday 25 December (Christmas Day)**

- 10.30am Family Christmas Day Service

### **Sunday 1 January 2023 (New Year's Day)**

- 10.30am Quiet, reflective service

### **Sunday 8 January**

- 9.30am Quiet, reflective service  
10.30am Interactive, intergenerational service and Sacrament of Baptism  
11.15am Traditional service

### **Sunday 15 January**

- 9.30am Quiet, reflective service  
10.30am Interactive, intergenerational service  
11.15am Traditional service

## ***Selection Boxes/Chocolate Oranges/Toblerone***

Please bring any selection boxes to the Nativity/Celebration Service on Sunday 18 December at 10.30am. They can be placed under the Christmas tree and then will be picked up by Bill Wishart for distribution through the school at Craigmillar.



Some people prefer to give Chocolate Oranges or Toblerone or other gifts that use less packaging and plastic. If you'd prefer to bring these along, nobody will say no!

## ***Portobello and Joppa Church Scottish Country Dance Club***



Because of a few enquiries, it is intended to restart the club in the new year on Monday 16 January at 7.30 pm.

Depending on the numbers that are interested, we would hope to meet every other Monday evening.

We are a very friendly club and would be delighted to welcome any new members. We give instructions and walk the dances through.

Hope to see you then.

**Norrie**

## ***Recycling group news***

### **WE'VE MOVED!**

The PJPC Recycling area is now in the passageway near the hall doors. You can't miss it. Donations for Fresh Start can still be left in the 'Flower Room' as can clean jars (for the wonderful jam makers).



The box drawers in the new Recycling area unit pull out using the strip where the label is attached (hope that makes sense - try it and you'll see).

The box labelled 'Large Plastic Bags' is only for those more solid bags which can also be used for storage or carrying heavier items. If it's full, please don't leave any extras! Please take one if you need it, but always leave a couple there.

Please don't leave food bags! They go to some supermarkets, along with other 'soft plastics' like the thin plastic film on food packages. PJPC do NOT take them.

However, we need to let people know of places where one can leave soft plastic – e.g. Tesco Musselburgh and M&S at Fort Kinnaird do take it 😊; Aldi and Co-op in Portobello don't 😞. We would appreciate it if you could let us know of other places which do.

And don't forget – when you are putting foil into your kerbside recycling bin at home, make sure it is screwed up into a shape bigger than a tennis ball, otherwise it slips through the recycling machinery.

With gratitude and good wishes from the Recycling Team.

## ***More on recycling***

### ***Spectacles***

I have been collecting all the pairs of spectacles left at the church over the last, approximately, three years and last week I took a bag full of 100 pairs to Specsavers. I was assured that both frames and lenses will be recycled so it is well worth our while continuing to collect them.

### ***Stamps***

I have also continued to collect all the used stamps. During the pandemic I was not able to pass them on to CrossReach at Charis House but instead have been sending them to the Royal National Institute for the Blind who also use them to raise funds. After sorting the stamps into British and Overseas and discarding any that have been damaged, I have sent three large, full, envelopes away.

The RNIB have asked that we trim the stamps with an **approximately one centimetre** of paper around the edge. I think this will be a bit more difficult now that stamps are so much bigger, but we must do our best.

Many thanks for all your help in this.

**Gill**



## THE PJPC RECYCLING TEAM

asks you to collect

- **used stamps and very old postcards**
- **milk bottle tops**
- **pens**
- **soft lenses and packaging**
- **blister packs**
- **toothpaste tubes and toothbrushes**

If you have a query, or wish to raise an issue, or to share information, please speak to one of the team or email

Kay Ross at [alkaross@aol.com](mailto:alkaross@aol.com)

### **Susan Aitchison**

**Gill Anderson** stamps & postcards

**Elaine Armstrong** toothpaste tubes and toothbrushes \*

**Donna Ballantine** pens

**Sandra Binnie** milk bottle tops

**Anne McKerchar** soft contact lenses and packaging

**Isabel Orr**

**Kay Ross** blister packs

\* newly added

***Gardening with George*** – *More plant lore from George, horticulturist and star of the small screen.*



As I write this, the rain is teeming down and adding more millimetres to those already gathered in the rain gauge outside the kitchen window. All very dull, dreich and damp, and the cheery weather girl suggests that over the next day or so there is more to come. However, having been digging a hole in the garden to plant a rose recently, just three or four inches below the surface the soil is very dry, so the rain is welcome.

The work here in the garden at home and at the allotment will be focusing on tidying and clearing up after the various crops have been harvested and the blooms on the herbaceous border and pots of annuals have faded. Pots of annuals will be emptied and the old compost used as a soil mulch. The herbaceous plants that have all finished blooming will be left for a while to provide some shelter for insects and the last of the autumn leaves will be raked swept off the paths and lawn and consigned to the compost heap.



We are enjoying this year's apple harvest at the moment. A small one is grated on our cereal each morning, larger ones are eaten with cheese and some of the cookers are baked with marzipan and currants for dessert. I still have some cookers to harvest from the tree at the allotment and they will be wrapped in paper, put

into a plastic box and stored outside in the cool where they will last right through until next March and April.

Dahlia tubers have been lifted, dried off and cleaned and will soon be stored in a box in the garden shed and kept snug, dry and frost-free over winter.

Most of my seeds for next year have arrived and planning is well underway for the start of next season already. Sweet pea seeds have been sown in the cold glasshouse and once they have germinated, the seedlings will be put out into a cold frame where their only protection overwinter will be a single sheet of glass. They are extremely hardy plants and if kept free from the marauding molluscs will be ready for planting out next spring. I can almost smell the flowers already.

Soon the pots of poinsettias, cyclamen, azaleas and hyacinths will be set out on the supermarket and garden centre shelves. When you are selecting your plant, make sure it is one that has good colour, flower, scent or foliage and looks healthy. With poinsettias, select ones with good vibrant green leaves and brightly coloured bracts and when you get them home set the plant in a position out of full sun and away from any drafts and like all house plants, only water it when the pot of compost gets dry. The same rules apply to azaleas, cyclamen and bowls of hyacinths.

Enjoy the Advent season and the festivities in celebration of Christmas. Soon we will pass the winter solstice and the days will lengthen imperceptibly.

More excitement to come next season.

Wherever you garden, enjoy your space.

Stay safe and secure.

**George**

## ***St.Columba's Hospice Christmas cards and calendars***

For many years prior to the Covid pandemic it was my privilege to sell St. Columba's Christmas cards and calendars in the Church Hall after the Sunday Services leading up to Christmas. This was a very successful fund-raising event for the Hospice, carried out initially by my late wife Lilian and myself and eventually I continued on my own.

We had so many loyal customers that we sold about a hundred calendars and many hundreds of cards every year.

It is with great regret that I feel that I can no longer provide this service. However, we now have an excellent St. Columba's charity shop at 195 Portobello High Street, where Christmas cards and calendars are readily available. The shop hours are: Monday to Saturday 10am – 5pm and Sunday 12 noon – 4pm.

Many thanks to all who used to buy calendars and cards from our Sunday stall and I hope you will still give the Hospice your support this Christmas.

May you have a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year

Ian

## ***CrossReach Christmas cards***

CrossReach Christmas cards are now also available. They can be ordered online at [shop.crossreach.org.uk](http://shop.crossreach.org.uk) or by phoning 0131 454 4374, or by post using the order form in the catalogue. We'll have some copies of these available at coffee time.



## ***Cards that care***

My organisation is delighted to be working once again with Cards that Care this Christmas to help get more Christmas Cards to more older people.



<https://www.facebook.com/groups/makechristmasmerry>

Soon, the Caring Elves will be busy writing thousands of Christmas Cards - all looking for your help to find a good home.

Some cards come with a letter to read for those who would appreciate and understand this. Others come with a picture to look at and enjoy.

With your help we'd like to get as many cards as possible to older people – particularly those who don't have friends and family around them this Christmas.

So ... please let me know how many 'letter cards' and how many 'picture cards' you would like and we'll get them to you in December so you can give them to the older people you know in time for Christmas.

Many thanks for your help!

**Andrew**

What did the wise men say when they'd offered up their gifts of gold and frankincense?

*Wait, there's myrrh.*





## ***The Word for today***

***Celebrate Christmas!***

***“I am like an evergreen tree,  
yielding my fruit to you throughout  
the year.” Hosea, 14,8.***

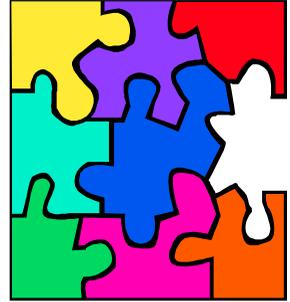
A Christmas tree is a specific statement. By means of this tree, we are saying: we believe in celebration. Although no one can make a Biblical case for Christmas trees, we gather round ours with joy. We see in its living branches a symbol of everlasting life given to us because of Jesus' death on the tree, which ushered in forgiveness and eternal hope.

The ornaments reflect the decorative splendour with which His kindnesses adorn our lives. The star beams out hope.

As you gather around the tree this Christmas, don't forget to celebrate the One who said, "I am the Light of the World. Whoever follows me... will have the light of life." John 8,12.

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## ***Brain-teaser***



## ***Calendar 2023***

I've been thinking about the turn of the year, and the phrase "Calendar 2023" came into my mind.

Can you decipher the clues to make up the word "Calendar", using the first letters of each answer in order?

The code is simple: 1 = A, 2 = B, 3 = C etc.

- 3**, 1, 18, 15, 12, 19 - we sing these
- 1**, 4, 22, 5, 14, 20 – the coming of Christmas
- 12**, 21, 11, 5 - gospel
- 5**, 1, 19, 20 – the star shone in the ...
- 14**, 1, 26, 1, 18, 5, 20, 8 – Jesus of...
- 4**, 15, 14, 11, 5, 25 – Mary's steed
- 1**, 18, 3, 8, 1, 14, 7, 5, 12 – Gabriel
- 18**, 5, 4, 5, 5, 13, 5, 18 – Our Lord and...

(The code doesn't quite work in reverse for 2023, which would be B, ?, B, C. )

Happy Christmas and a blessed New Year.

**Alison**



## **Getting to know**

**you** – Robert,  
who's 16. Robert

**says:** *I used to go to*

*St Andrew's and St George's, but we came to PJPC when I was around 5. I'm in S5 at the moment, with my favourite subjects being History and French. I've lived with my family in Portobello all my life, and I love being a part of the community. My interests include cycling, debating, and spending time with our dogs!*



### **Q. What is a favourite hymn, and why?**

A. Let Us Build a House (198) was the first I remember singing, aged 5, and it's been special since.

### **Q. What is an early church memory?**

A. Being nervous coming to PJPC from St Andrew's and St George's, but being welcomed by the Sunday School. The welcoming attitude hasn't changed since!

### **Q. What job might you like to do?**

A. Law or the Civil Service interest me a lot at the moment. Professional cyclist is more unattainable!

### **Q. What are you reading at the moment?**

A. *The Trial* by Franz Kafka. I find it slightly frightening, but thought-provoking at the same time.

**Q. How did you find lockdown?**

A. I felt lockdown was fine at the time, and didn't affect me much, but it's now become increasingly frustrating seeing the effect it had on my school life.

**Q. What is your most prized possession?**

A. My bike, and the freedom it gives me.

**Q. What luxury would you take to a desert island?**

A. A high-quality stereo with unlimited songs!

**Q. Where would you go in a time machine and why?**

A. So many possibilities. Definitely not the future, that's too scary, but somewhere famous in history, like the signing of the Magna Carta, or Paris in the 1790s. Or possibly Hampden Park on Cup Final Day 2016!

**Q. What kind of music do you listen to?**

A. Indie rock and pop, especially 2000s rock. Fontaines DC are a particular favourite right now.

**Q. What gets you up in the morning (apart from your alarm clock)?**

A. Currently, the desire to do well in my prelims and upcoming Highers. More generally, the knowledge that things move on if you're up or not, so it's better not to lie about in bed.

**Q. Where would you like to be right now?**

A. Travelling somewhere exotic and warm, somewhere interesting that I've never been to before.



## ***Life and Work December 2022***



### **'Come Closer'**

Life in Israel/Palestine as Christmas approaches

### **'God Has Given Us All Talents'**

The life and faith of award-winning environmental campaigner Maureen Potter

### **Small Seeds**

The Annual Gathering of the Church of Scotland Guild

### **At the Heart of Scotland's Christian Heritage**

In his final article of the series, John R Hume reflects on the history of Christianity at Whithorn, Wigtownshire.

### **Christian Living Starts at Home**

The Very Rev Dr Martin Fair explains why Christian life begins with those closest.

### **Where God Has Gone Before**

The Very Rev Dr John Chalmers emphasises the importance of transforming the Church of Scotland for the future.

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## ***MAGAZINE/DIARY DEADLINES***

February 2023

March 2023

April 2023

Sunday 22<sup>nd</sup> January 2023

Sunday 19<sup>th</sup> February 2023

Sunday 19<sup>th</sup> March 2023

***Scottish Charity Number : SCO11728***



[www.portyjoppachurch.org](http://www.portyjoppachurch.org)

Photography by Anne Russell