

Soundings

Portobello & Joppa Parish Church

Magazine

December 2016/

January 2017



Portobello and Joppa Parish Church

Worship takes place each Sunday at Portobello and Joppa Parish Church with two services – one at 9.30am and one at 11am (10.30am in July and August).



From the editor

Our three-year-old granddaughter asked me yesterday when Christmas was going to come. “Quite soon,” I said, “but not yet. And what happens at Christmas?”

Her little face glowed with joy. **“SNOW!”** she exclaimed.

This wasn’t quite the answer I’d expected, but her shining eyes made me think about enthusiasm in general, especially as reflected in “Soundings”. I don’t know if Stewart normally sees fervour in our faces as he delivers his reflections... but I feel proud of my fellow church members as I read in this edition (and others) about what they do for us all and for other people.

Christmas is a time of gifts, but as we know, these don’t need to come wrapped in shiny paper. So, focusing on this issue of the magazine - thank you to Michael and David, who’re looking after our finances, and to the Stewardship Team, who’re planning how to safeguard our future. Do come along on the afternoon of December 10th and think about how you could use some of *your* talents to help. Thank you to Angela and Gill and other contributors to the baking stall, and to all who save small change in the penny tubes. Thanks to the Art Club and other organisations who contribute and help out in various ways. Thanks to Michelle and Louise and their helpers, who raise money for others – for Asha and Christian Aid, for example – it’s all a lot of effort, we know - and to Jamie, whose enthusiasm for his work with Junior Drama comes across so wonderfully in his writing. And of course there are lots of others to thank whose efforts don’t happen to feature in this issue of the magazine.

And thanks especially to Stewart, for whom the word “tireless” might have been invented, and to Lourens and Tara. We do appreciate your hard work, especially at this, the hardest-working but most exciting time of the year. Happy Christmas to everyone - whether we get **SNOW!** or not.

Pam

From the minister



Dear Friends and Neighbours,

The key has been turned in the ignition, the engine is running and things are beginning to rev. Christmas is coming. Here we go!

Yes, the busyness that is Christmas is upon us. The events, the services, the gatherings, the conversations, the shopping, the meals, the extravagance of it all.

At PJPC, we are not immune to the excitement and exuberance of Christmas. We have a myriad of services during Advent and Christmas that provide opportunities to celebrate the coming of the Christ Child. We have the Celebration of Gifts planned for 10 December at 3pm as a way of celebrating all that we give as a church and all that we have been given by God. The gatherings and parties within the different organisations will be great fun.

Whew!

But that is not all. In the excitement and buzz, there needs to be a quiet centre.

On Sunday 6 November there was a gathering of people to initiate the Retreat in Daily Life. It is an initiative sparked by Fr. Jock Dalrymple at St. John's and Rev. Dr. Sophia Marriage at St. Mark's. Our own Linda Small and Lourens de Jager set up the sanctuary so it was peaceful and beautiful. We expected about 35. 60 showed up. What is that telling us? People are looking for quiet, stillness and peace.

There is that opportunity too during Advent. Quiet lectio divina gatherings on the evenings of 4, 11 and 18 December, when we will linger over some of the Advent texts. Those wondrous moments during the Christmas Eve services when we collectively take a breath and recognise that there is still enchantment in our world, the touch of the divine in the midst of the everyday.

I have taken part in the Retreat in Daily Life and it has been very, very challenging. Setting aside 20-30 minutes for quiet reading or study has rarely been a challenge for me; setting aside the same amount of time to be quiet with God has been a colossal struggle. As soon as I stop, the ticker tape to-do list unfurls in my head. What is that telling me? What is that telling us...er, me?

And yet, with a prayer guide, one learns how to adjust. To see, to acknowledge and to release the list to God. To put Christ at the centre and allot time accordingly.

Not easy. But there have been moments of grace. Like those moments of grace at Christmas Eve, in worship, in our lives.

Search for them. Remain open to them. Be still, and know that it is God. God's gift to us through Christ.

Stewart

Art group



The PJPC Art Group have donated an impressive total of £955 to the church during the year. Thank you!

The group meets in the main hall every second Thursday (for example, December 8th) from 10am – 12 noon and new members would be very welcome. There's plenty of room! January dates start on the 12th.

Sabbatical 2016



In the last magazine I mentioned that I would provide some thoughts on the sabbatical which I took during the month of October. A fuller description will be drawn up in due time for Presbytery and for the national church and will be made available to the congregation. That will probably appear sometime in the new year.

Why a sabbatical? The years leading up to the union and the years afterwards have been quite full and challenging. Now that things have begun to settle, I thought it important to take a step back and try to look at the big picture. Or, if nothing else, to remove myself for a short time from the everyday responsibilities so that a different and wider perspective could be gained upon return.

What did I do? As mentioned previously, I spent a long weekend at Pluscarden Abbey, a Benedictine monastery set in lovely grounds near Elgin. I also spent a bit of time looking more closely at the story of David with my previous PhD supervisor, Rev. Prof. A. Graeme Auld.

Why Pluscarden and David? We have been thinking a lot about discernment and attending to God's call to us as individuals and as a congregation. Quiet time in a quiet setting might be the way to be still and attune myself to God. And, it is rare that I have a chance to spend an extended bit of time on any one task: my job is simply too varied to do that. Looking at the story of David in depth, revisiting the Hebrew text and talking about it with someone as insightful as Prof. Auld was a delightful time of focus and study.

What did I come up with? One does wonder if that is *entirely* the point of a sabbatical for ministers, but I offer the two main, larger themes that came through.

Services at Pluscarden punctuate the entirety of the day. The first service is at 4.30am and the last service is at 7.50pm. There are 7 services on weekdays and

9 on Sunday. The monks worship and work: they have little spare time. Their day revolves around worship. This focus reminded me of our suggestions that we become more worshipful and prayerful in our daily lives: the Christian life is not just Sunday. How can we learn from these men who have dedicated their lives to this form of service?

As for David, there was a process of delimitation: I couldn't deal with the entire text in two weeks. Through reading and conversation, I spent a bit more time reflecting on the story of David, Bathsheba, Uriah and Nathan. It seemed to be a study in leadership at a moment of transition. A study that is a cautionary tale from a book that is not afraid to show David as a very human, flawed and yet capable leader. Much was drawn from this reflection but most of all, it suggested to me that importance of being with the people in the church, in the organisations, in the community. Always scurrying about from one meeting to another or one tranche of e-mails to another may not be what God wants any of us to be doing. On this one, give me some time to adjust.....

Are there any connections? It seems to me that the one who is worshipful and prayerful will more likely take that time to be with people, to listen to them and speak with them. Surely that is what Christ did. It is not easy, and indeed it is often well nigh impossible, as a parish minister in 21st century Edinburgh. Yet to ignore the lessons offered by others is a missed opportunity. For it is on the Sabbath that we spend time with God; and it is on a sabbatical that that which is heard should (ideally) be applied. Watch this space....

If you have any questions, feel free to ask. And, keep your eye out for something a bit more detailed in the new year. Right now, I'm just tooo busy to get it sorted. Oh dear, where did that resolution go?

Stewart





A celebration of gifts

As we look forward to the Christmas season and the arrival of the Baby Jesus, we wish to acknowledge and celebrate the many gifts and blessings that we enjoy as members of PJPC. There is so much to be thankful for and we hope and pray that the Christ child will re-inspire us to work even harder for the furtherance of His Kingdom among our church family.

Every member of the congregation will be invited to consider re-dedicating the use to PJPC of those gifts and talents that are personal to you. Please look out for the invitation to **Afternoon Tea** on **Saturday 10 December** during which we will have an opportunity to reflect upon and celebrate all that is good in our lives.

Do please also consider how you might be able to play your part in the ongoing story of our ministry and community here in Portobello and Joppa.

The Stewardship Team – Sheena, Louise, Michael, Tara, Lourens & Stewart

CrossReach Christmas cards, calendars, Care Shares

CrossReach Christmas Cards and Calendars are still available. 100% of the profits from these goes towards the Church's caring work across Scotland.

This year we've introduced "Care Shares", a way to buy a virtual gift for the person who has everything. We send you an elegant certificate which you can give to the recipient.

You can find out more, and order cards and calendars, via our website at www.crossreach.org.uk/shop. The last day for ordering is December 15.



What we've been doing with your offerings (and other things finance)

One of the questions that David (our Treasurer) and I are regularly asked is, “What happens to our weekly offering?”

In general terms, these allow us to fund the staff costs of our worship, outreach and ministry teams here at PJPC. These costs include the payment of lay staff salaries and expenses, including those of the church secretary, youth worker and caretaker. We also make a contribution each year to the central “Ministries and Mission” fund, from which our ministers’ salaries are paid along with those of other ministers who serve congregations who are less well off than ours.

As in so many other churches, the income from congregational giving and other donations is not currently sufficient to meet our day to day running costs. Therefore, while we can use our reserves to meet any shortfalls in the near term, it's clearly not a position that we wish to continue over the medium term.

In preparing our financial plans and budgets for the next couple of years, David has been working closely with myself and the other members of the Finance committee to determine what actions we might be able to take to put our finances onto a more sustainable basis. There are a number of tactical steps that we might be able to take to reduce some of our outgoings; however, we really need to try to boost our income if we are to continue to offer the range and breadth of activities that are so appreciated by members as well as the wider community in Portobello and Joppa.

One of the most effective and tax-efficient ways in which members can continue to support the church is through leaving a legacy in their Will. This is something that we'll be discussing with the Kirk Session over the coming months, along with other initiatives aimed at boosting our income stream.

Elsewhere in this edition of "Soundings" we set out some of the opportunities for members to share more of their gifts for the furtherance of God's Kingdom here in Portobello and Joppa.

Let me conclude by thanking everyone for the support that you already give to the church. Without your faithful service we would not be the community of believers that we are.

Michael
Finance Convenor



The night before Christmas

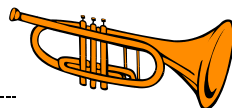
I thought I would share with you a very special Christmas memory.

I was working an evening shift as a midwife at the Simpson on Christmas Eve. I had safely delivered a healthy baby - always a joy - and my shift came to an end. It was a clear crisp night, and I left the hospital at 10pm to go to my car.

There wasn't a soul to be seen, and in the still darkness - several blocks away - the Salvation Army band started to play "Silent Night".

It was a tradition that these musicians played carols around the labyrinth of the grounds of the "old" Royal Infirmary on Christmas Eve. I was very moved, and really appreciated their efforts that year.

Angela



ASHA Fundraiser



On Saturday, 12 November, PJPC Breakfast Club hosted a fundraiser curry dinner for ASHA. We welcomed in guest speakers Freddy Martin and Shiv Kumar. Freddy is the Associate Director of ASHA. His wife, Dr. Kiran Martin, founded ASHA and began her work for ASHA in 1988. Freddy travelled to the UK to share more about the current work of ASHA and meet with friends of ASHA in Great Britain. He travelled over with Shiv, a university graduate who grew up in a slum in Delhi which ASHA supports. Both shared stories and pictures and were incredibly inspiring.

The mission of ASHA is to “work with the urban poor to bring about long-term and sustainable transformation to their quality of life. Through a practical expression of the Christian values of faith, hope and love, we aim to provide holistic community-based healthcare, empowerment, financial inclusion, education and environmental improvements by training, resourcing and encouraging slum communities to receive and enjoy their basic human rights”.

It was a blessing to share a meal with Freddy and Shiv and hear more about the valuable work of ASHA. We were thankful to have 84 people come along for the curry dinner. It was an excellent meal prepared by Paul Brown, Jamie Clabby, Linda Bradley and Mishia de Jager. We also enjoyed a wonderful dessert buffet baked by Mary, Anna, Mishia, Linda, Michelle and Sarah. There was a raffle with baking donated by Sheena and Mishia as well as some lovely gifts brought in by Janet. Many thanks to those who cooked, baked or gave in raffle prizes. Thanks also to the volunteers from the Breakfast Club, the parents of the Breakfast Club and the Outreach Team for all your help setting up, serving the food and clearing up.

In total, we raised £494.27 for ASHA. If you would like to learn more about the work of ASHA or to donate money to their work, please visit their website at: <http://asha-india.org/>

Michelle

A call to prayer



ARE WE “URGENCY ADDICTS?”

“There is a time for everything”

(Ecclesiastes Ch 3 v 1 NLT)

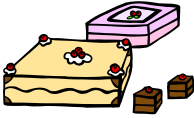
Until we value ourselves we won't value our time. And until we value our time we won't use it wisely. Urgency is addictive. If we find ourselves habitually reacting to outside demands, we may be “hooked.” Like other addictions, urgency: a) temporarily meets a need to feel needed; b) creates a sense of “getting things done;” c) falsely enhances our self-esteem; d) often makes the problem worse because “haste makes waste.” If we're urgency addicts consider this:

- 1) In our society busyness equals status, people *expect* us to be in demand. Now, while constantly abandoning our goals to help others accomplish theirs may make us feel more appreciated, it side-tracks us from our God-ordained purpose and creates a false sense of significance.
- 2) Sometimes it's hard to say no, because as Christians we feel “obligated.” But not every problem is a call for us to jump in and solve it. Our decision to get involved in anything should come from God. Before we react, pray! Listen: “In all Thy ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct Thy paths” (Pr 3:6). If we're a “fixer” by nature, we probably get fulfilment out of solving problems, meeting needs and expectations, influencing behaviour and outcomes. “So what can we do?” we ask. Recognise that we're vulnerable to urgent pleas and have a hard time saying “No.” *Identifying our response pattern can stop us from getting “hooked in,” and help us to stay focused on what God has already called us to do.*

Harry,

Prayer Promoter

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Baking stall and penny tubes

Well done and thank you every one for a record-breaking year - with still another month to go before the final totals.

The first-Sunday-of-the-month baking stall proceeds are £1195.00, and penny tubes have raised £1059.00. All money raised goes to the church fabric fund for special projects.

There are always empty tubes in the vestibule or you can use any other container / bank coin bag etc., and return them to the wee basket at the back of the sanctuary - beside the food bank collecting box.

The December baking stalls will be as follows:

December 4th - as normal - scones, marmalade etc.

December 18th Christmas Special with Sheena's wonderful cakes, black bun and other festive fare.

Thank you for your support this year and hopefully in 2017. The bakers will have a rest in January to give you chance to digest all your festive goodies, and we will be back in harness on February 5th.

Angela

Burns Supper 21st January 2017



This year the Burns Supper will be held on 21st January and as always the proceeds will go to Christian Aid. As in past years, there is an excellent line-up of speakers. Tickets will cost £15 and will be available from Sunday 1st January onwards, but you can order them beforehand from Louise Simpson or Winnie Davis or through Anne Russell in the church office. If you are booking for a group of people please can we have the names of the people in the party, to help with table and place settings? Can we also know if there are any dietary requirements?

Louise

Junior Drama Club

Hi everyone!

We at Junior Drama hope that you are all well and looking forward to Christmas.

Christmas is one of our favourite times of the year, as well as Easter and of course the Junior Drama Show.

This year's show is - wait for it - drum roll - "ALICE THE MUSICAL"!!!!

Yes, "Alice in Wonderland", with a few slight changes. How exciting is that?!

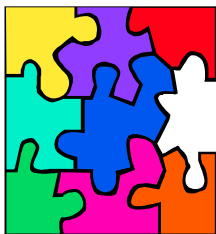
We have a fabulous young cast who are just as excited about the show as I am. Already we have had our singing auditions (possibly the casting has been done as I am not sure when the newsletter is out) and they will all receive their parts after the Christmas holiday. Can't wait. This is an exciting, funny show for everyone of all ages - young or not so young.

Just now, though, Junior Drama has been busy rehearsing for their family show and for the Christmas Eve service and they are absolutely amazing. So don't miss them on Christmas Eve and make sure you don't miss "Alice The Musical" at the end of May, 2017. More details will follow later.

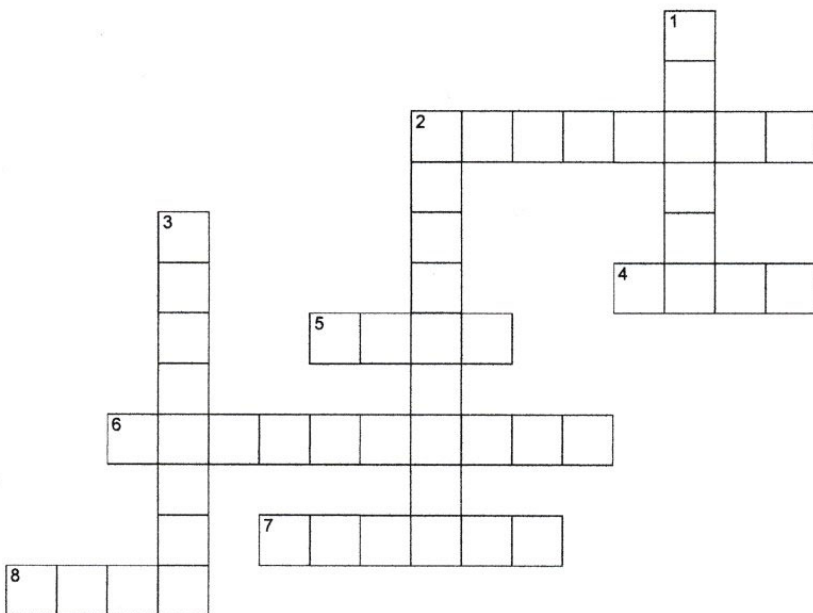
Everyone at Junior Drama would like to wish you all A HAPPY CHRISTMAS AND A WONDERFUL NEW YEAR!!

Jamie





Brain-teaser- a festive crossword



ACROSS

- 2 Santa brings these (7)
 4 We hang baubles on this (4)
 5 It's white (4)
 6 Christmas Eve Service (5,5)
 7 The coming of Jesus (6)
 8 Mother of Jesus (4)

DOWN

- 1 Chillest season (6)
 2 Comic theatre production (9)
 3 New Year's Eve (8)

Alison

Getting to know you...

Answering the questions this month is our (now-not-so-new) probationer, **Tara**, who's come to us with her husband Ramon from Texas - via Ireland and other places.



Welcome, Tara and Ramon!

Q. What is a favourite hymn, and why?

A. I love the hymn, God of the Sparrow. It always reminds me to stand in wonder of all the ways God is present and interacting with the world beyond my small scope.

Q. What is an early church memory?

A. I remember playing hide and seek in youth group and finding just the right hiding place behind a door where no one could see me in the sanctuary. I then passed by that door on Sunday morning and I remember smiling inwardly at my secret and the sense of familiarity and belonging, like it was my sanctuary too.

Q. What's your earliest childhood memory?

A. Perhaps not my earliest, but I remember playing catch with my dad a lot growing up, learning to be a pitcher for softball. I would be inclined to apologize after every bad or wild pitch and he would tell me each time to stop. I don't remember learning to apologize unnecessarily, but I remember unlearning to.

Q. In an alternative life, what job would you have chosen?

A. I would have been a stage actress or stage manager, something to do with theatre.

Q. What are you reading at the moment?

A. I am rereading The Undertaking by Thomas Lynch.

Q. Do you have a hero or heroine? – either real or fictional? Who? Why?

A. Hermione from Harry Potter. I love her because she's an unapologetic nerd who likes lectures and homework and reading, as do I.

Q. What would be your ideal holiday?

A. I have too many to pick only one. I like travelling low key, only a couple, three friends with me. But two places that are high on my list right now are Tenerife and Siberia. I've heard both are beautiful in very different ways.

Q. If you were a superhero, what superpower would you choose?

A. I'd like to be able to speak every language fluently.

Q. What is your most prized possession?

A. A quilt that my aunt made for me out of my mother's old t-shirts; and my engagement ring that Ramon made for me.

Q. Tell us something that not many people know about you.

A. I enjoy washing dishes and folding laundry. I find it meditative.

Q. What do you do to relax?

A. I love a slow day at home to cook without rushing.

Q. What is a favourite quotation?

A. The best teachers are those who show you where to look, but don't tell you what to see. – Alexandra K. Trenfor

Q. What kind of music do you listen to?

A. I love country music, which I suppose is one of the few things that stuck with me from growing up in Texas.

Q. What do you miss (or not miss) about being a child?

A. I miss the kind of sleep you get when someone else is taking care of the schedule and is in charge of waking you up and getting you where you need to go on time.

Q. How would you like to be remembered?

A. Genuine and kind.

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

A. Coffee, always coffee.



LIFE AND WORK: DECEMBER 2016

O Come Let Us Adore Him The Rev Dr Douglas Galbraith reflects on the history of some of the best-loved Christmas carols.

Plus: seasonal story from Kenneth Steven, reflections by Ron Ferguson and the Very Rev James Simpson, Christmas prayer.

‘I Absolutely Believe in God’ Jackie Macadam meets Boyd Tunnock, managing director of the world-famous confectionery company and Church of Scotland elder.

Helping the Vulnerable Thomas Baldwin reports on the major funding crisis facing Borderline, the Church-supported charity which helps homeless Scots in London.

SOLAS – ‘Saving of lives at sea’ The Rev Dr Marjory MacLean on life aboard a Royal Naval vessel rescuing migrants crossing the Mediterranean.

A Visitor’s View Richard Ellis shares his reflections on the 885 services in 200 churches he attended in the course of his work as Fulton Lecturer in Speech at New College, Edinburgh.

‘You are Beautiful’ In the third part of a series centring around prison life, the Very Rev Dr Andrew McLellan describes the hope from the events which led to Jesus’ crucifixion.

‘A Lovely and Undervalued Part of Scotland’ John R Hume profiles a parish church in an area with strong Covenanting links.

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MAGAZINE/DIARY DEADLINES

February	Sunday 22nd January 2017
March	Sunday 19 th February 2017
April	Sunday 19 th March 2017

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