



# Soundings

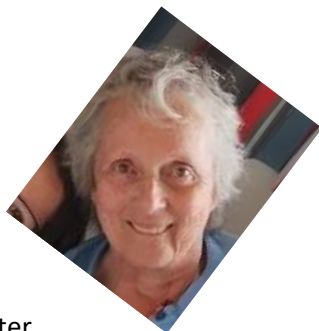
Portobello & Joppa Parish  
Church Magazine

December 2023  
& January 2024

*Portobello and Joppa Parish Church*

## ***From the editor***

In his gardening article, George tells us about “the lilies of the field” and what they might be: possibly, but not definitely, the white Madonna lilies that feature in one of our church windows.



When I was a little girl, my family sat in a pew that was later removed to make steps and a ramp for exiting to the Centenary Hall – we sat at right angles to the main body of the congregation. Services then didn’t take



much account of children, so I used to look across at the windows on the east side of the church. I particularly liked the lilies and their red background. However, they were quite far away and I didn’t realise that they *were* lilies. I always thought they were judges in red robes and white curly wigs. Even now, I have to force myself *not* to see them as judges.

However, back to more relevant topics!

This edition of *Soundings* contains, as usual, accounts of what splendid people in our congregation have done – raised money for ASHA and Venture Scotland, for example. You’re invited to contribute to the Sunflower Giving Tree for children affected by their parents’ drug problems, to donate a selection box or chocolate orange, and to go to festive events at the Guild (with free fun!). You can also find out who’s caught a baby shark\* and who would like to have a new hip.

Thanks to all the usual and occasional contributors – and have a happy Christmas when it comes.

**Pam Donaldson**



## ***Dear Friends and Neighbours,***

‘Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall inherit the earth.’

This is a phrase from Matthew 5.1-9, otherwise known as the Sermon on the Mount or the Beatitudes.

At a session meeting recently, that phrase acted as a springboard to share some ideas and thoughts from George Mitchell, the US Senator so instrumental in forging the Good Friday Agreement. In an article about all that is happening in Gaza, he was referenced: negotiations and peacemaking in such situations are often 700 days of failure followed by one day of success. Other ideas from Mitchell were mentioned. One needs to listen, listen, listen. Patience is not only a virtue, it is a muscle that requires exercise.

These ideas were expanded upon at a recent service. Jesus’ Sermon on the Mount calls those of us who strive to follow him to be a light to those around us. That light is not that people may gaze upon us in wonder and awe and reverence but that they might see, experience or intuit God’s mystery and wonder and glory.

It’s not about us. It’s about something far, far greater. It’s about the God who created all that exists and proclaimed that it was good. It’s about the peace and tranquility of the Garden of Eden and the healing and restoration of the New Jerusalem. It’s about the renewing and refreshing at the baptism of Christ, when God said, ‘Behold, my beloved.’ And through Christ, are we all not beloved?

If so, why war?

Where is love right here, right now in this earth pockmarked by craters and bomb pits, in cities that are heaps of rubble in a lunar landscape, in hospitals that are razed and drones that attack unscathed?

I have recently been reading the book 'Give' by Magnus MacFarlane-Barrow, the founder of Mary's Meals. He describes some time spent in Cité Soleil in Haiti's Port-au-Prince immediately after the devastating earthquake some years ago. He and others had travelled there at the invitation of a Catholic priest who had worked in this notorious, violent slum for decades through a charity called Hands Together. Together, they decided to work to rebuild schools that had been lovingly, caringly built by people in the community. These centres could once again reflect community pride and once again serve the community.

The two of them went along to a large meeting of aid agencies. There, they heard nothing but complaints about living conditions for the aid workers, demands that things be improved and a sense of entitlement.

He left the meeting bewildered and upset.

When those who are in a position to help others remove themselves from the ones who are struggling, a gap develops. People become statistics, sufferers become problems and solutions are imposed.

Jesus ascends the mountain, sits down (perhaps with a weary sigh) and summarises what he has seen and what he will do and what he will be. Before this, he has walked amongst those who are ill, who are sick, who mourn, who weep, who are downtrodden. If he articulates a new vision of heaven and earth with his words and with his life, it is one fashioned from the dust of the winding road and the squeeze, jostle and stink of desperate, sick people.

Humans are fragile, delicate, scared, desperate, fallen creatures. We can in our faith and in our imagination ascend to the heavens. We can also can in our fear and our anger descend to the seventh circle of hell. Who has seen recent photographs and not thought of Dante?

We can be each other's hell. We can be each other's healing and salvation.

But we cannot heal from afar. A creation cannot be renewed through strategies and tactics and spreadsheets and statistics. Even if these are needed, it is the heart that presses us outwards and forwards.

It begins when the gap between humans, between religions, between nations, between peoples is bridged. When the other becomes the neighbour. When the caricature becomes a real creature. When the stereotype is seen as the simplistic, degrading mirage that it is.

We await the birth of the Prince of Peace. The Word becomes flesh. The eternal becomes mortal. The heavenly becomes human. The creator becomes created. The eye of eternity looks up to us from the face of a baby.

Let us walk the path of Christ. Amongst those we know, amongst those we do not know, amongst those we fear, amongst those we do not understand. That path is Christ, that path leads to Christ, that path joins together heaven and earth, that path is the way to peace and that path is peace.

**Stewart**



## ***Sale of goodies***

On Sunday December 10, Sheena will be selling her home-made Christmas cakes, black bun and very possibly other delicious treats.

There will also be a Fair Trade stall with groceries and gifts.

**PLEASE BRING CASH!**

# ***Worship***



## **Sun. 3 Dec. (First Sunday of Advent)**

- 9.30am** Quiet and reflective
- 10.30am** Informal and interactive
- 11.15am** Traditional with Sacrament of Baptism

## **Sun. 10 Dec. (Second Sunday of Advent)**

- 9.30am** Quiet and reflective
- 10.30am** Informal and interactive
- 11.15am** A Service of Readings and Carols

## **Sun. 17 Dec. (Third Sunday of Advent)**

- 10.30am** Nativity Service

## **Sun. 24 Dec. (Fourth Sunday of Advent and Christmas Eve)**

- 10.30am** Informal Christmas Eve Service
- 6.30pm** Family Christmas Eve Service
- 11.00pm** Community Carols
- 11.30pm** Christmas Eve Service with Midnight Silence

## **Mon. 25 Dec. (Christmas Day)**

- 10.30am** Informal Christmas Day Service

## **Sun. 31 Dec.**

- 10.30am** New Year's Eve Service

## **Sun. 7 Jan 2024**

- 10.30am** Epiphany Service

**Sun. 14 Jan.**

- 9.30am** Quiet and reflective
- 10.30am** Informal and interactive, with Sacrament of Baptism
- 11.15am** Traditional

**Sun. 21 Jan.**

- 9.30am** Quiet and reflective
- 10.30am** Informal and interactive
- 11.15am** Traditional

**Sun. 28 Jan.**

- 9.30am** Quiet and reflective
- 10.30am** Informal and interactive
- 11.15am** Traditional

**Sun. 4 Feb.**

- 9.30am** Quiet and reflective
- 10.30am** Informal and interactive
- 11.15am** Traditional

***Chocolate for kids***

St Martin's are collecting and distributing selection boxes and chocolate oranges again this year. If you would like to donate these, please leave them under the tree in church, on or before Sunday 17 December.





# **THE GUILD**



Guild meetings during the winter are **MONTHLY** and are on a **TUESDAY** at **2pm!**

**So December's afternoon meeting is our next meeting and is our Christmas Party: FUN, FOOD AND FIZZ**

**The food and fizz cost £5. The fun is free!**

**TUESDAY 12<sup>TH</sup> DECEMBER AT 2PM**



**EVERYONE IS WELCOME!**

**Look out for Annette's Jolly Christmas Quiz to put you in festive mood!**

**Available after Church for £2 – in aid of the Guild's charities.**

## **ASHA Fundraiser**

On Friday, 17 November, around sixty people gathered together at Meadowbank Parish Church to enjoy a curry dinner and hear more about ASHA. This fundraiser brought together our church alongside our fellow church in our parish grouping, Meadowbank and Willowbrae Parish Church. The food was fantastic, cooked by Paul and Mary with support from Eleanor.



After we were full of curry, we listened to our guest speakers from ASHA, Freddy Martin and Loknathan. Freddy is the Associate Director of ASHA and he shared about the various ways ASHA works alongside people in slums in Delhi – supporting education, women’s groups, empowerment, sanitation improvement, financial inclusion, healthcare and more. 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 Loknathan, a university graduate who grew up in a slum in Delhi which ASHA supports. Loknathan studied journalism with help from ASHA. He served in the ASHA slums as a volunteer during Covid, giving back to a charity who has been so instrumental in his own life. He said that Dr Kiran Martin saved his life through ASHA and through Covid when he ended up being very ill himself. He was a very inspiring speaker and vividly described life in the slum before ASHA came in to help and after ASHA helped transform the slum.

Dr Richard Hogben from Friends of ASHA Great Britain was along for the dinner as well and he introduced both speakers and told us of a cookbook for sale – with great curry recipes and inspiring stories from the people of ASHA. This cookbook sold well after the talks when tea/coffee and dessert were also on offer.

It was a fantastic evening with great conversations over dinner, inspiring stories, excellent food and more. Many thanks to the Breakfast Clubbers and Breakfast Club leaders and parents who helped on the night. In total, we raised £1,700 for ASHA. If you missed the evening, but would like to contribute to the work of ASHA, please visit their website at: [asha-india.org](http://asha-india.org)

**Michelle**

## ***Did you know...?***

- *People decorated their houses with greenery in winter from ancient times to encourage the Spring to return. Christmas trees are probably a development from this tradition, though Prince Albert popularised them in Britain*
- *Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer was invented as a marketing ploy for the Montgomery Ward department store in 1939.*
- *Christmas wreaths in a circle shape symbolise the everlasting life we find in Jesus*
- *According to the Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents, about 1000 people in the UK are hurt every year while putting up Christmas decorations. Be careful!*



## ***Venture Scotland – changing young lives outdoors***



Can you imagine living a life without hope? Can you imagine living a life fearful of the world around you, crippled by anxiety and overwhelmed by the thoughts in your head?

Now can you imagine living in world where the largest single cause of death for under-18-year-olds is suicide? That is the UK right now.

Venture Scotland is a small charity, based in Edinburgh and Glasgow, which supports young people aged 16-30 who are finding it hard to understand their identity and where they fit into this world, and are struggling with their mental health. We surround these young people with caring, empathetic and compassionate adults (staff and volunteers) and support them through a year-long programme, all based in the outdoors, to help them find out who they really are, how to navigate the world around them, how to build trusted relationships and how to understand, maintain and improve their mental health.

This work is all done based on our values of trust, respect, belonging, compassion and empowering, along with the three basic youthwork principles of:

1. Meeting the young people wherever they are on their journey through life.
2. Ensuring we do things 'with' young people, not 'to' young people, so we learn alongside them.
3. The young people choosing to take part.

While this is not quick and definitely not cheap, we believe that investing in our young people not only supports them to live happier, healthier lives, but has a massive positive impact on our communities, our economy and our world. PJPC hosted a Family Ceilidh at the end of October to support Venture Scotland and we would like to say a massive thank you to everyone who generously donated. An incredible £1,000 was raised on the night and even better, these donations will be DOUBLED thanks to The Big Give foundation. We are extremely grateful. This funding will support one of our young people through the first two stages of our programme.

Reading the stories of our young people is really the only way to understand the impact of our work...

### **Ishbel's Story** (shared with permission)

*'I am unbelievably grateful to be here today. When I started with Venture Scotland in April 2021, I was utterly terrified of the world around me and myself. After years of battling a losing fight with my mental health, there was very little left in me to keep going. By people keeping me alive, it felt like they were killing me slowly from the inside out. But from my very first conversation with Sophia, the outreach and support worker, her kindness and understanding gave me a glimmer of hope, and the strength to give it one last go at change.'*

*Getting through the first stage of the course was a case of trying to survive each day. My only goals were to turn up, and try to speak. I was so uncomfortable in my own skin, and really found it difficult to speak at all within the group.*

*However, I also quickly found that being outdoors made me feel more at ease and calm, emotions quite foreign to me.*

*As the programme continued, I found it harder and harder to maintain my mask that everything was fine, when it wasn't. I was really really struggling. I kept waiting for Venture Scotland to lose their patience and give up on me, like I'd given up on myself. Instead I was met with a compassionate, nurturing environment, and generous amounts of time. When I was at breaking point, in floods of tears on the floor of the VS car park wanting with every fibre in my body to kill myself, I was finally able to let the walls come down and open up. I was terrified of the consequences of this. I had never found talking to be any help whatsoever. But this time I felt listened to. I felt supported. I felt like someone cared and would work with me to find a way forward, not force a quick fix upon me and then cast me away.*

*From this point, slowly but surely, the possibility of a future became more of a reality. I learnt that every time I was confident enough to communicate and participate more fully, there was not a day where life didn't seem that little bit better and more manageable.*

*I learnt that I am allowed to have opinions and a voice to express them. I learnt that I can experience happiness, laughter and have fun.*

*I learnt that the outdoors makes me feel free, and people aren't so scary after all.*

*It has been the journey I never contemplated being able to make. I've heard people say that you need to experience rock bottom before you can accept help and slowly climb back out again. In my experience, I hit rock bottom when I first attempted suicide at 13, asked for help, and then was buried down there for 5 years. It was during our Glen Etive bothy trip, where for the first time in those 5 years my mind finally went a day without the constant barrage of suicidal thoughts I had become so used to. That was a real breakthrough! It was the first time where I spoke in a group review without really panicking about it. It was also the first time where I was able to sit with the group, at my most vulnerable,*

*having a panic attack trying to read out this speech, and felt welcome, supported and wanted. These memories will never leave me, and I often call on them in times of crisis as a comfort.*

*Venture Scotland supported me, and crucially helped me, when every other form of support had failed. Bit by bit, Venture Scotland gave me back my voice and although it's still quiet, I am loving continuing to discover it. I still have regular wobbles and moments where the world is too much to handle. But it is not every single second of every single day any more. I am beginning to find the words to describe what I am feeling, share them with those around me, and ask for help when I need it. I am more able to sit with my crippling anxiety, fighting the urge to run, recognising that in a safe environment, it will pass with time. I am forever indebted to Venture Scotland for supporting me with this. Thanks also has to go to our beautiful earth, for providing the outdoors as a space to breathe, take up space in this world, and be our true selves.'*

So, thank you once again. If you didn't have a chance and would like to help fund the life-saving work we do AND have your donation DOUBLED, you can do this here <https://donate.biggive.org/campaign/a056900002RXt0wAAD> or using the QR code or you can make a regular donation through our Just Giving page at



<https://www.justgiving.com/venturescotland>

**David**



## ***Junior Drama Update***

Junior Drama has managed to build up its group of young people to 24, as the youngsters in the group have been letting their friends know about us. This takes us back up to pre-pandemic numbers.

We were lucky to be able to perform for the Ceilidh organised by Elaine Armstrong in October. This was a great night for all our youngsters, with a great ceilidh band entertaining us all. We were also lucky to have Paul Brown and his team make us great stovies and soup as well as amazing pies donated by Derek. Well done and thank you everyone. Junior Drama performed their favourite song, “Drumnadrochit”, from last year's show “The Lost Monster of Scotland”. We then performed the “Hairy Toe”, a story about an old wifie who eats a giant’s hairy toe. They gave a great performance thanks to Charlotte’s great directing. This was followed by “A dug, a dug” a poem wonderfully performed by Rosa and Lilly. Last, but not least, Maisy, accompanied by Fiona on piano, gave a lovely performance of the funny poem “Up ma juke” to the tune of “These are a few of my favourite things” from the “Sound of Music”.

Congratulations to all our performers, who did amazingly well. A big thank you also to Linsey and Jimmy, two of our newer volunteers, who also helped our youngsters become wee stars on the night.

Now it’s our pantomime rehearsal of “Junior Drama’s Worst Pantomime Ever”!

You might think to yourself – is it worth going to see if it’s going to be the worst pantomime ever? Well, it is, as it’s also going to be filled with funny jokes and with great characters such as “Hansel and Gretel”, “The Big Bad Wolf” and the “Ugly Sisters”.



“Oh no it’s not.”

“Oh yes it is” – just ask the kids.

Our performance date is the 14th December, after which we’ll be on holiday. After the New Year we will then rehearse for our big main show for May, 2024, so it’s all busy, busy for Junior Drama just now.

**Jamie**

## ***Sunflower Garden***

The Sunflower Garden, part of CrossReach, the social work arm of the Church of Scotland, supports children aged 5-18 whose lives are affected by living in families with drug or alcohol use. It provides one-to-one therapeutic support on an outreach basis, usually in schools.

We are collecting gifts for Sunflower Garden for Christmas to hand on to these children.

If you have selected a gift tag from the Sunflower Garden Giving Tree at the back of the church, please be sure to bring in the appropriate gift, unwrapped but with the tag attached, by Friday, 8 December.



Leave gifts by the Sunflower Garden Giving Tree at the back of the church. Thank you.

## ***Christmas afloat!***

Christmas is a time for reflection, for looking forward to the winter being over and reaching out to the increasing length of the day.

For many people, however, it is a normal working day, keeping the world ticking over. For many religions it is just that, a normal working day. In many ways it is a joyful yet tragic day since every Christian knows the eventual outcome. It has replaced Easter as the Christian climax, while consumerism has driven Christmas to mean something else other than the birth of the Holy Child. But it still has meaning for us who gather every week in church!

I went out to Norway every two weeks and it was cold but great fun, doing any job without moaning, getting the ship readied for when a contract came up. For many years I experienced Christmas at sea - it just so happened that I always seemed to be away then. On one occasion, however, it looked like I was going to be home: my ship was laid up in Norway with no work. It was Friday and Christmas was the following week. I told the children not to answer the phone under any circumstances in case I was called away.

The phone was located at the front door opposite the toilet. Eventually it came 5.30 on Friday and nobody had touched the phone. I went to the toilet and as I was leaving, the phone rang! My reaction was to pick it up! How stupid of me! It was the office. "You are needed in Shetland tomorrow morning". I protested – no way can I get to Aberdeen from the Borders by then!! The answer was simple, "Get a taxi. You must be at Dyce by 0900 because a flight has been arranged for you."

As usual my stoic family accepted it. Dad had to go, because of his own stupid fault! Apparently the person I relieved was going home to his father, who had terminal cancer.

I duly arrived at Dyce and met another person, a huge man, a Dutchman, of the oil company Shell, who greeted me with, "So it is your fault I am here!" The plane

took us to Sumburgh and then a helicopter was arranged to take the two of us out to the rig.

Christmas was the usual all-male affair of paper hats and forced jollity. The weather was awful, 60 knot winds most of the two weeks. I got home two weeks later, relieved to be back. Despite all the food it was far from a Merry Christmas!

There is something magical about Christmas, however. No matter if you are in the middle of an ocean, you know it's a special day. Somehow the stars are brighter, the world is more peaceful and people smile more as they all greet you with "Merry Christmas". At least that was the way it was when the vast majority of people were Christian.

I remember taking the ship's sailing boat out on a beautiful Christmas Day on Beira Patrol. Our ship, a tanker, was anchored in the Mozambique Channel, miles from land. There were myself and the ship's mate and an engineer to provide propulsion: he was required to row! We stretched out a fishing line and sailed around on a flat calm sea. Bliss! Certainly a different Christmas Day!

Suddenly the line went taut. We pulled in the line to find a baby shark on the end of it! Worse, the mother was circling our boat! It is at times like this that a cool head is required – something sadly lacking on our little vessel, miles from help!

We pulled the baby shark on board. It was quite big. How were we to remove the hook? We took it from the rear! Its head kept moving, writhing and we were aware we had to get it freed quickly.

Eventually the shark did the job itself. The hook must have been torn from its mouth by its vigorous struggling. Now we had the problem of getting it over the side again. That was solved with a canvas bag which we managed to get under the body of the shark. Over the side it went and the fishing line did not enter the water again!

Back on the ship, we all dressed for Christmas dinner. The tables were laid out beautifully and we were informed by HMS Fife, our commander, that we could stand down for the rest of the day. A great day. I hope the shark appreciated its freedom. It would have seemed cruel to kill it - not on Christmas Day and not with mother lurking so close!

However, the patrols by the Shackleton bomber aircraft from Madagascar never ceased. The mail was duly dropped by parachute, picked up from the sea by helicopter and distributed round the fleet, therefore there was also mail for us all on board. Real letters to be cherished and reread, often!

I don't know if Christmas is still so special at sea now. I hope so, I really do.

When I stand on the prom and look out at the lights of ships at anchor at Christmas, I think of these men and now also women away from home, but on the end of a mobile phone, no doubt. It is not the same as filling the day with experiences and getting a letter, or a card, from home to read, and cherish. There is something special about that!

**Sandy**



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



'Consider the Lilies of the field.'

It is interesting how a few words can conjure up an image.

On reading 'Consider...', many of us will have thought of pure white lilies, the ones that signify Christ's purity: *Lilium candidum* or 'The Madonna Lily', the one that appears in many religious paintings of the Madonna and Child and also in some of our stained glass windows on the east side of the Church. Leaves of the plant, when bound on to open wounds, were reputed to aid healing. Perhaps they have antiseptic qualities. Christ himself was often referred to as 'the Lily amongst the thorns' and indeed some of the last strongholds of *Lilium candidum* in its native habitat are amongst thorn bushes where the foraging goats cannot reach it.

Tulips, cyclamen, crocus and iris in some translations also come up as possible candidates for 'the lilies of the field' and indeed they are native to the Middle East and grow in some of the most inhospitable places without any human aid, encouragement or care.

Does a name really matter? Common names for common plants can vary considerably from one area of the country to another. Dandelion, for example, can have a multitude of common names, some of which are none too savoury; but botanically it has only one name, *Taraxacum officinale*. Botanical or Latin names are important. They give the true name of the plant and are used world-wide, thus preventing confusion.

Liliums, cyclamen, tulips, narcissus and crocus are all from the Mediterranean region, where warm dry summers (usually) prevail. They are plants that have evolved to avoid the hostility of hot dry weather by retreating underground over the summer drought period. Once the autumn rains come, their roots start to develop and their leaves and flower stems grow slowly, timing their emergence above soil level to coincide with the warm spring sunshine and the appearance of pollinating insects.



Even now when we are in December, there is still time to plant spring bulbs in pots and containers or in the open garden. Choose a sunny spot where the soil is free draining and plant them so that they are covered by about three inches (75mm) of soil or compost. Water them in and sit back and wait for the magic to happen. If you are in an area where grey squirrels are present, cover any pots of tulips or crocus with a fine wire mesh to prevent the naughty little rodents digging them up.

Last month Gill and I planted some yellow pansies and bright orange tulips (Princess Irene) in the two raised beds outside the centenary door. It is hoped that they survive the activities of the local cats, who seem to find the soft soil too attractive.

In the allotment as we approach the shortest day, I will be planting my elephant garlic. As the name suggests, it produces, where the conditions allow, a good set large cloves by the middle of summer. The general rule with garlic is to plant it on the shortest day and harvest it on the longest day. It is even a crop you can grow in a pot by the doorstep where you can enjoy the foliage, the tall stately flowerheads and then of course the harvest of mild garlic cloves.

Wherever you garden, enjoy your space. Happy Gardening.

**George**



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

*“They saw the young child... and fell down and worshipped him.”  
Matthew 2, 11*

He was born in the humblest of settings, yet heaven above was filled with the songs of angels. His birthplace was a cattle shed, yet a star brought the rich and noble from thousands of miles away to worship Him. His birth was contrary to the laws of life, and His death was contrary to the laws of death, yet no miracle is greater than His birth, His life, His death, His resurrection and His teachings.

He wrote no book, He had no headquarters and He built no organisation. Yet two thousand years later He's a central figure of human history, a perpetual theme of preaching.

At this season of celebration and gift-giving, let's join the wise men who fell down and worshipped Him. Let's remember: Christmas is about Christ.

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## **Getting to know you**

– **Mary**. She says: *I'm originally from Edinburgh but left after I finished college, having trained as an*



*Occupational Therapist. I returned to Edinburgh in June, having lived in the Highlands for almost 25 years. I worked in Zimbabwe for 2 years as a Development Worker with an NGO. I also worked for the Iona Community for 3 years on Iona. I trained as a Reader and was 'Set Apart' in 2003. I worked for the NHS in the Community Mental Health Team based in Aviemore. In 2013, I was ordained as an OLM (Ordained Local Minister) and held a number of positions within the Presbytery of Abernethy (Badenoch & Strathspey) for 10 years.*

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

*A. Singing in worship is very important to me and I have lots of favourites be they traditional, contemporary or from the World Church. But one of my favourites is 'Touch the earth lightly' by Shirley Erena Murray (CH4: 243) It is about the importance of caring for God's creation.*

**Q. What was your job, and in an alternative life, what job might you have chosen?**

*A. I was an Occupational Therapist and felt the call to ministry while working on Iona. Initially I was told I was too old! But when the Church brought in Ordained Local Ministry, I was finally able to train as a Minister of Word & Sacrament.*

**Q. What book do you feel you should have read but never have?**

*A. 'A Promised Land' by Barack Obama.*

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



- A.** *A cross stitch sampler that was done by my great grandmother when she was 12.*
- Q.** **Tell us something that not people know about you?**  
**A.** *I have a twin brother.*
- Q.** **What single thing would improve the quality of your life?**  
**A.** *A hip replacement!*
- Q.** **What do you do to relax?**  
**A.** *I love painting and drawing.*
- Q.** **What is a favourite quotation?**  
**A.** *'Goodness is stronger than evil, love is stronger than hate.' Desmond Tutu.*
- Q.** **What kind of music do you like listening to?**  
**A.** *Folk music, especially Joan Baez.*
- Q.** **What do you miss about being a child?**  
**A.** *Life was safe and uncomplicated.*
- Q.** **How would you like to be remembered?**  
**A.** *That you are never too old to learn. I gained a degree in Theology from Aberdeen University in 2013. It was a part-time distance learning course.*
- Q.** **Where would you like to be right now?**  
**A.** *Cape Town in South Africa. I've been there once and it is like no other part of Africa. I didn't manage up Table Mountain or go to Robin Island.*
- Q.** **What makes you heart sing?**  
**A.** *My three grandchildren!*

## ***Brain-teaser***



It will soon be Christmas and we'll be welcoming the birth of the baby Jesus, as we do every year – and also spending time, if we're lucky, with family and friends. That will be a time of... in anagram form... **ALICE BRONTE**

Can you work it out?

If you prefer the letters in alphabetical order, then you might find it easier to deduce from this: **ABCEEILNORT**

Some people may be like to check their answer by using the code A=1, B=2, C=3 etc, in which case the word would look like this: **3, 5, 12, 5, 2, 18, 1, 20, 9, 15, 14**

Just in case you still haven't got the answer, I asked an online thesaurus and it suggested, among other things: **spree, jollification, revelry, jubilation, honoring, festival, wingding.** (Wingding?)

Some of these words are more appropriate for this occasion than others.

Have a very happy Christmas.

**Alison**





**CHRISTMAS 2023**

**Reaching Out at Christmas:** Churches and charities supporting their local communities

**Letter from the Holy Land:** The Rev Muriel Pearson reflects on the message of the birth of the Prince of Peace

**‘Nothing is Impossible With God’:** the Moderator urges readers to listen for the spirit during Advent

**Time to Pause:** The Rev Roddy Hamilton urges us to find space to consider every aspect of the Advent story anew

**‘We Must Care for the Vulnerable’** Marking World AIDS Day on December 1, a Bolivian campaigner living with HIV talks about her work

**A Labyrinth Ministry** In his final column as Sanctuary First minister, the Very Rev Albert Bogle reflects on the power of journey

**‘Christian faith is rooted in the physical’** The Rev Dr Richard Frazer links physical wellbeing to spiritual health

**Sharing ‘the fragrance of His love’** A young Church member who moved to Scotland from Nigeria last year shares his story

**The Art of Peacebuilding** Concluding her series of Bible studies, Ruth Harvey reflects on the place of ‘voicewalkers’

**Plus:** official updates from the Assembly Trustees and Faith Action Programme, news, letters, reviews and puzzles – all for £3.50. Visit [www.lifeandwork.org/subscribe](http://www.lifeandwork.org/subscribe) or speak to your church’s Life and Work co-ordinator.

***Remembering***

**16 October**

**5 November**

**12 November**

Alistair Macleod of Portobello

Maurice Smith of Joppa

Ronald Moxey of Craigentenny



***MAGAZINE/DIARY DEADLINES***

February 2024

March 2024


April 2024

Sunday 21<sup>st</sup> January 2024

Sunday 18<sup>th</sup> February 2024

Sunday 24<sup>th</sup> March 2024

***Scottish Charity Number : SCO11728***



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