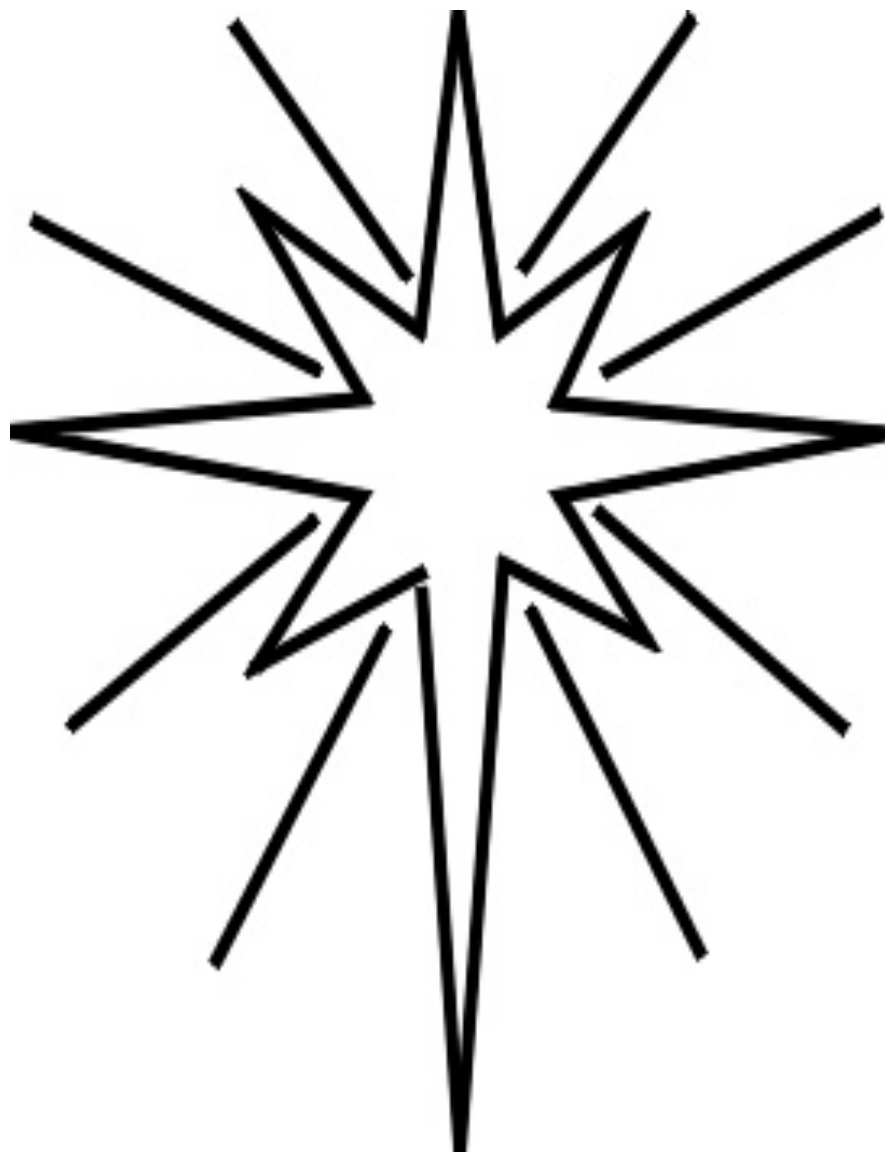


Clachan Church Newsletter



Christmas
2018

Message from our Minister

For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the greatness of his government and peace there will be no end. He will reign on David's throne and over his kingdom, establishing and upholding it with justice and righteousness from that time on and forever. The zeal of the Lord Almighty will accomplish this. Isaiah 9.6-7

Such amazing words of promise and hope to usher us into a season of preparation for the coming of the King of Kings...Advent.

Advent is rightly a season of excitement. We will no doubt sing familiar carols, watch some incredibly entertaining nativity productions or pantomimes and, of course, many a holiday programme will invade our homes in the run up to Christmas. Throughout Christendom candles will be lit and the themes of hope, preparation, joy, love and adoration will find their way to us, not omitting that of peace. We will likely spend time with close friends and family, eat more than we should and look for opportunities to bless others. Advent is indeed a special time.

Advent, as you are probably aware, is Latin for coming. A historical reminder and reference to the coming of the Son of God among humankind. A reminder that as the Christian calendar begins again that we are to be prepared, we are to make ready ourselves for the Messiah, the one who saves and redeems all of creation. We wait. But what are we waiting for? What are we preparing for?

I hear the words of John the Baptist...*prepare the way for the Lord and make straight paths for him, Mt 3.3*. The coming of the Christ, the gift of the Messiah was just that, a gift. A gift of God's presence, character and person in the flesh as it were. The account of Jesus' birth cannot be separated from the Easter account. The fullness of his gift realised on our behalf. An expression of love, a rescue mission for all his children. God doing the unthinkable...walking among us, for our benefit.

So we wait. We wait upon the Lord, who continues to reveal himself to us, with anticipation, hope and expectation. May we have eyes that see His work throughout the advent season. So we prepare. We prepare our hearts to hear what the Lord would say and ask of us. We give Him space to speak to us through His word and prayer. Perhaps the best thing we can do is to make a gift of ourselves to the greatest gift giver of all time.

From the Manse we would like to wish you all a very Happy Christmas and best wishes for the season and year ahead. May His peace and presence be evident to you and yours this Advent and Christmas season.

Rev Drew and the manse family.

Church Twinning visit- 2018

Straight after the church members from the '2017 visit to Chuka' returned to Uist, the anticipation of our friends from Jerusha Kanyua Memorial Church in Chuka, coming to stay with us the following year, began to build. So this June they arrived, by flying into Uist, instead of travelling overland from Glasgow, as on previous trips. This in itself, (getting such a good overview of Uist), was memorable for the five who came. They were Ben Ruguendo (twinning co-ordinator), Mike Njeru, Dr. Nancy Mbaka, Rev. Kiugo Evanson (pastor of JKMC and Ndangani District Churches), and Monicah Mgambi.

They were welcomed at Benbecula airport in the fashion we have come to associate with their returning to the Hebrides, by Sgoil Lionacleit Pipe Band - playing just for them! Our parish minister Rev. Drew Kuzma, (having taken a very full part in church duties on his Chuka visit last year), accompanied the group on almost every part of their trip here. His Landrover was packed with people every day! The visitors even tried their hand at traditional peat cutting for the manse fire – and which was also used for our outside Barbecue in an evening!!

Some of the JKMC group attended a meeting of Uist Presbytery which entailed a sea crossing and a good day out in Harris. The whole group were accompanied by the Twinning Committee and church members for a very informative and memorable sightseeing and guided history tour of Barra and Vatersay. The company of the folk from Chuka is always such a blessing as they lead worship and preach, and really enliven our schools, and church groups, everywhere they go. There is always a buzz in Uist when they're here!

Wilson's thanks – These are the observations of the late Wilson McKinlay, whose vision and drive brought this successful twinning together. This was written following the first twinning visit by our friends from JKMC in 2012 but it still rings true today:

“I would like to express my sincere thanks to the church family for the magnificent manner in which they ensured that the visit of the Kenyans was a great success. It is only with hindsight that it becomes apparent of the enormous amount of work that is required in arranging a twinning visit. In setting about this task I had to rely on help and assistance from many members of the church, all of which was given without hesitation and with total commitment. All this commitment has been well rewarded in a variety of ways, especially the fellowship shared with the Kenyans; the fun and experiences of the many activities, and the interaction we had with the island community at large during the visit. When I first suggested twinning I had no idea about the amount of work involved. Prayer paid a very important part in the success of the visit. Besides prayers within the church I am aware of prayers of support from Christians outwith our own church circle. I personally look forward with God’s grace to more twinning visits in years to come.”

Nancy summed up 2018’s visit by saying “It was go, go, go; meet, meet, meet; eat, eat, eat; sleep, sleep, sleep; pray, pray, pray” ... The congregations and schools can add to that - it was sing, sing, sing; dance, dance, dance! Ben has extended an invitation on behalf of JKMC church for a group from Benbecula I/w Carinish to visit them in Chuka in 2019 and planning for that is now underway. It is a joy and a privilege to be involved in these amazing, informative, faith building and well blessed trips. To God be all the glory, for the success of these ventures this far.

Rev. Ishie Macdonald (OLM)

Rural Resources Road Show

On Friday and Saturday 21st and 22nd September (at the invitation of our Session Clerk) representatives from the Church of Scotland Mission and Discipleship Council came to us - instead of us often having to travel to central Scotland for meetings and conferences. Both meetings took place in our church hall. Our guests were - Rev. Ron Clerk from the Borders, and Mission and Discipleship Council Edinburgh; Rev. Richard Baxter who is minister in Fort William; Rev. Chris Blackshaw from Cumbria, but working as a Farmers` Minister based in Ayrshire, and Jim Steel.

On Friday evening, because there were representatives from Lewis Presbytery here, everyone enjoyed a take-and-share informal meal before the meeting. This was part of the `Tarbert Declaration (2016)` commitment of our Presbyteries to share fellowship together a couple of times a year.

Rev. Chris`s talk was about the challenges which farmers face in their work and the ways that he (from a farming background), is able to take church to them. He is able to be available in a spiritual care capacity, at markets, and outdoor settings etc. as well as conducting worship to sizeable gatherings at these events. Chris gave a good number of insights, and new perspectives on that interesting work. He stayed to conduct worship for both Sunday services, which was a real blessing for those who heard him speak and sing.

Ron Clerk provided some good information to those present from the congregational boards and property committees about where to inquire about grants, information about care and upkeep of church properties etc., and some leads about the best way to process and progress these things well. He informed the gathering that whenever there is a conference or organised learning opportunity which leaders, elders or members can`t get to, on the mainland, these are now uploaded to the Church of Scotland website after. He also encouraged

elders and leaders to access the 'Ascend' materials, 'Learn' publications and other resources, in the same way.

Rev. Richard Baxter was interested in the complexities of united and linked parishes (his charge takes in a few), there was plenty opportunity for worthwhile discussion in the day. We were encouraged to build a Rural Forum to encourage dialogue, networking and ideas sharing between congregations – to help each other with hints and tips and good practice.

Jim Steel rounded off the Saturday event with an interesting and informative presentation on 'streaming', that is, the use of technology to inform and enthuse those we would like to see come to church, about what we do. He highlighted creative ways in which all the devices used in daily communication may be used to further God's work. He indicated that he would be willing to return in the future to do some work with congregations about this.

Our visitors were impressed with our facilities here, but were particularly blessed, they said by the worship - led by Donnie before each session. Unfortunately, the weekend clashed with a number of ministers and elders being away for unexpected commitments but there was a good representation of elders from both of our congregations, and others.

We were strongly encouraged by those who came to represent Mission and Discipleship to hold further learning and development events in our church hall. It was good that they were able to come, they all enjoyed the Uist visit, were impressed by the scenery, the fellowship and worship, and the commitment to work together which they felt here.

Rev Ishie Macdonald

Nearly Christmas

“Nearly Christmas!” I heard a lady say in the shop the other day. What struck me was the way she said it: She sounded as if she was in pain. Another customer seemed to be suffering, too, and agreed with her: “I know, terrible, isn’t it?”

Of course, I am aware that people in Uist quite often call a rainy day a “horrible” one, so there might have been some degree of exaggeration involved. However, while I was pretty sure that this short conversation had been all about the self-inflicted stress of “having to buy presents for everybody” and, maybe, the “need to stage the perfect dinner party for family and friends”, I was still struggling to link the words “Christmas” and “terrible”.

It kept me thinking on my way home. In fact, not only when I was a child I found Advent to be a wonderful time - this has not changed for me to the present day.

Christmas... terrible?

The candles, the tree, the old carols that will be sung in our families, all these will remind us of the well-known biblical story of Mary and Joseph who had to make the difficult journey to Bethlehem, because a decree had gone out from the Roman emperor that all the world should be taxed.

This was, indeed, the beginning of our salvation - salvation that came at a terrible cost, however, not only in Calvary but already in Bethlehem. The singing of the angels, the kindness of the shepherds and the faith of the three wise men should not let us forget the tragic circumstances the bible tells us about:

The shocking reality of locked doors and hearts. The scandal of the uncompassionate inhospitableness and the stable our Lord was born in. The hatred of King Herod who considered a helpless baby a danger to his reign. The horror of Mary and Joseph when they found out about it,

when they had to flee in a hurry, in the middle of the night, from one hiding place to another, across the border into a strange country.

Just imagine... The arrival in Egypt, the difficult start away from home in a foreign land, language barriers, interviews by law enforcement officials, suspicion, the long way from one council office to another, legal requirements like residence and work permits... After all, who would like to employ a migrant worker who crossed the border illegally with his wife and a new-born?

Jesus, Mary and Joseph were refugees. Since that night when the angel woke Joseph and told him to flee to Egypt with his young family, countless people have suffered a similar fate.

The world has seen millions and millions of expellees and refugees. In every single one of them Christ is begging for love and support.

Just like the shepherds who brought some modest gifts to the stable, and like the few warm-hearted people here and there who supported the holy family on their way to Egypt, it is our task to be there for the persecuted Christ of our time who is suffering in the least of his brothers and sisters everywhere in the world.

So... will you get stressed this year because the festive season is getting closer and closer? Christmas is about so much more than buying presents and throwing a dinner party. It is about the arrival of Jesus Christ into a cold, dark and unredeemed world. Without a doubt, we are allowed to celebrate the incarnation of our Lord - even with a feast. But we must not forget the main thing: That Jesus wants to become human in every one of us, again and again, so that we make himself, his kindness, his mercy, his charity and his grace beacons of hope in the darkness of our time.

Nearly Christmas - rejoice!

Volker Labitzke

This Baby

Well, he cried when He was hungry,
Did all the things that babies do,
He rocked and He napped on His mother's lap
And He wiggled and giggled and cooed
There were the cheers when He took His first step,
And the tears when He got His first teeth,
Almost everything about this little baby
Seemed as natural as it could be.

*But this baby made the angels sing
And this baby made a new star shine in the sky
This baby had come to change the world
This baby was God's own son, this baby was like no other
This baby was God with us, this baby was Jesus.*

And this baby grew into a young boy
Who learnt to read and write and wrestle with dad,
There was the climbin' of trees and scrapin' of knees
And all the fun that a boy's born to have.
He grew taller and some things started changing.
Like His complexion and the sound of His voice;
There was work to be done as a carpenter's son
And all the neighbours said He's such a fine boy.

*But this baby made the angels sing
And this baby made a new star shine in the sky
This baby had come to change the world
This baby was God's own son, this baby was like no other
This baby was God with us, this baby was Jesus*

And love made Him laugh and death made Him cry
With the life that He lived and the death that He died
He showed us heaven with His hands and His heart.
'Cause this man was God's own son
This man was like no other one
Holy and human right from the start.
**This baby was God with us, this baby,
This baby was Jesus, this baby was God.**

(Stephen Curtis Chapman).

Church of Scotland Safeguarding Service

As our Presbytery safeguarding contact and safeguarding trainer I would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone who has given of their time and attended safeguarding training over the last year and beyond. Thanks also to Joan at Benbecula and Karen at Clachan for their work as Safeguarding Co-ordinators. Safeguarding involves everyone in “Ensuring a Safe Church for All”

Wishing you all a very Happy Christmas

Alison Macvie

Puzzle Time!

Can you work out these Christmas story anagrams?

KINDER HOG

SEW MINE

KNIFE SCANNERS

RAG MEN

BLEATS

HEALTHY OVENS

HANG CLEAR

CHAIR HAZE

RATS

CURT USA SAUSAGE

Church Office Bearers

Minister:

Rev Drew Kuzma

Ordained Local Minister (OLM):

Rev Ishie Macdonald.

Elders serving on the Kirk Session:

Alastair Banks (Session Clerk); Donnie Johnson; Alistair MacDonald; Roddy Macleod; Peter Matheson; Robin Wallace; Colin Rankin; John MacDonald; Tina Wakeling and Sarah Banks.

Elder retired from the Kirk Session:

John Macdonald (Sidinish).

Members of the Congregational Board:

Katherine Macleod; Donald Haxby; Charlie Matheson; Alastair MacQuarrie; Margaret MacDonald; Anne Quarm; Ruth Owenson.

Sunday School Superintendent and Church Safeguarding Officer:

Karen Maclain

Contacts

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Rev Ishie MacDonald: 01876 580367 Ishie.Macdonald@churchofscotland.org.uk

Session Clerk, Alastair Banks: 01876 580617 banks@masafish.com

Benbecula linked with Carinish Church of Scotland

We wish you and yours a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year! May the joy, peace and presence of Christ be with you this festive season.

Benbecula Parish Services – Griminish

Dec 16 – Family Service 11am

Dec. 24 – Watchnight Service 11.15pm

Dec. 25 – Christmas Day Service 11am

Carinish Parish Services – Clachan

Dec 16 – Family Service 11am

Dec. 24 – Watchnight Service 11.30pm

Community Carol Service

Dec. 16 – Balivanich Primary School 6pm

Benbecula Church of Scotland – Scottish Charity no. SC002191

Carinish Church of Scotland - Scottish charity no. SC016461