

December 2023

# The Parishioner

The magazine of the Portland Parish Church of  
Scotland: Troon



**Each one of us is an innkeeper who  
decides if there is room for Jesus.**

## **OUR MISSION STATEMENT**

**With God's support we are developing Portland as a  
dynamic, Spirit-led Church impacting on our town  
and beyond through encouragement, nurture and  
service**

**Dear Friends,**

It seems no time at all since we were in Advent last year! As we spend the next four weeks preparing for the birth of Christ it will be wonderful to see as many of you are as able to join for our services. It will be particularly good to share in worship with all three congregations of Troon: Old, Portland and St Meddans as the future Troon Church of Scotland for many of our Advent services, particularly our Pop-Up Nativity and the evening services based around the themes of Peace, Hope, Joy and Love. The candles in our Advent wreath are all based upon this theme, with the central candle, of course, representing the light of Christ who came into the world to be amongst ordinary people.

This year we are also singing hymn 685, For Everyone Born, A Place at the Table as our Advent hymn. This hymn is the work of Shirley Erena Murray (b.1931 in Aotearoa, New Zealand) whose various hymns appears in hymn books all over the world. The themes of her hymns range from social justice, peace, human rights, and the voice of women, to the sacraments, the Church year, and eco-theology. This hymn is about the radical inclusiveness

of the church and, identifying some of the divides in both church and society, affirms that all



have 'a place at the table'. For me, it personifies the teaching and work of Jesus in our world: our responsibility as Christians and people of faith is to not only follow the teaching, but to act on it.

I came across this prayer by David Adams recently, and felt that it really captured the wonder of the coming season, with a gentle reminder that Jesus is not just for Christmas...

A prayer before a Christmas crib  
– David Adams

I open the stable door;  
I kneel before the infant;  
I worship with the shepherds;  
I adore the Christ child.

I give my love with Mary and Joseph;  
I wonder at the 'Word made flesh'.

I am aware of the love of God;  
I sing glory with the angels;  
I offer my gifts with the wise men.

I receive the living Lord;  
I hold Him in my hands;  
I go on my way rejoicing,  
glorifying and praising God.

Gilleen



## **Statement for the congregations on the Union**

It is a huge logistical challenge to bring three congregations, Kirk Sessions (trustees), congregational rolls, accounts, pastoral care, ministries and mission all together into one.

*For there is hope for a tree,  
if it is cut down, that it will sprout again,  
and that its shoots will not cease. (Job 14:7)*

With challenge comes opportunity. Uniting to form one Troon Church of Scotland gives opportunity to worship together and pool resources for effective mission. Together is stronger.

Our first challenge was successfully accomplished choosing a name for the new church – Troon Church of Scotland.

Our next challenge is setting out the details of our Union in a legal framework to satisfy Church Law. This is called the Basis of Union. This is a lengthy document and must be agreed by all Kirk Sessions and congregations forming the union.

This document will be available to view on our website, and paper copies will be available on request, once it has been approved by the Presbytery of the South West, the Church of Scotland's Law Department, Principal Clerk, and Presbytery Planning Department.

A date for the congregations to vote will be arranged early in the new year.

We move forward in faith.

John Reid (Session Clerk)

## December Worship Schedule

3rd	9.30am	All age service in MeadowGreen
	10.30am	Communion Service - 1 <sup>st</sup> Sunday in Advent (in Portland)
		Communion Service and Food Bank Collection - 1 <sup>st</sup> Sunday in Advent (in St Meddans)
	2.30pm	Sunday School visit to Suncourt Nursing Home
	6.30pm	Troon Church Peace Service (in Portland)
6th	2.30pm	Christmas Messy Vintage in Suncourt Nursing Home
10th	9.30am	All age service in Meadowgreen
	10.30am	Troon Church of Scotland Pop Up Nativity - 2 <sup>nd</sup> Sunday in Advent (Portland Church)
	6.30pm	Troon Church of Scotland "Blue Christmas" Service (in Portland)
17th	9.30am	All age service in Meadowgreen
	10.30am	3 <sup>rd</sup> Sunday in Advent (in Portland) – Lessons and Carols Service and Gift Service
	10.30am	Lessons and Carols Service and Gift Service (in St Meddans)
	6.30pm	Troon Church of Scotland Communion Service (Portland Church)

24th	9.30am	All age service in Meadowgreen
	10.30am	4th Sunday in Advent (in Portland)
	10.30am	Morning Worship Service (in St Meddans)
	6.30pm	Troon Church of Scotland Candlelight Service (in Troon Old)
	11.15pm	Troon Church of Scotland Watchnight Service (in St Meddans)
25th	10.30am	Christmas Day Service for Troon Church (in Portland)
31st	10.30am	Troon Churches Together Service in Lighthouse Church



**From the 14th November there will be an opportunity for people who have experienced a bereavement to meet in Portland Church Halls. This is a chance for people to join with others who are experiencing similar losses and issues. There will be no set agenda or topic to discuss, and is a time in which you are free to share your thoughts and feelings.**

**Blue Christmas** is a gentle, contemplative service for those who are carrying pain or loss during this season of celebration. We will share in song, readings and shall light candles in memory of those of our community who have passed in the last year, in addition to recognising those losses close to us which we feel most keenly at this time of year. All are welcome.

## **January**

The services for the month of January will be held in Troon Old Parish church with 14<sup>th</sup> being the date for the Troon Church Service.

# Christian Aid

It is disheartening, isn't it, to read constantly, of death and disaster, wars and conflicts, poverty and hardship.

Yet the Christian Aid reports help to hearten us, by giving to the communities where they have partner organisations so that what is needed can be supplied, whether disaster relief or seeds, tools, information and education. And HOPE, greatest of all is hope

In Ukraine, in Gaza, in Sudan.

Someone helping you when you are down. In Bangladesh, hard hit by floods, women have banded together to sell their beautiful craftwork online. They can work from home and earn an income which can lift their family out of poverty.

Christian Aid has supported over 5,800 women with small start up grants and taught them about e-commerce and their gender rights.

Kakoli is studying for a degree at college. At the same time, she's running a successful business after receiving training, start-up funding support from Christian Aid and our partners, Aid Comilla.



A shining beacon of Hope for their futures.

You can help by supporting the Christmas appeal [caid.org.uk/Christmas](http://caid.org.uk/Christmas) Light up a life with Christmas shopping!

Barbie Short

# Messy Church

Messy Church @ Wintertainment was a great success. Well over 100 enthusiastic children attended to make crafts, learn about the nativity story and have fun. It was busy! Volunteers from all TCT were there - we are looking for more.



Please get in touch if you would like to help on no more than one Friday afternoon a month. It is fantastic to be involved when a church is literally

bursting with children and young families.

For information please email

[Troonmessychurch@gmail.com](mailto:Troonmessychurch@gmail.com)

Our next events are back to our usual Fridays. 3.30-5.30pm in St Meddans Church Halls on 12/1/24, 2/2/24 & 1/3/24. All families welcome to join us for crafts, Bible stories, food and fellowship.



Jennifer Lawrie



Remembrance Sunday fell on a weekend of glorious November sunshine. Although there was a small gathering on the 11<sup>th</sup> at 11am, the main service was held on Sunday. It seems this commemoration has enjoyed greater significance recently. It was impossible to get near the war memorial, such was the crush of the crowd.



From the beach the crowd could be seen – and the two minutes silence was palpable.



For the first time we saw the Troon Church congregation joining with St Ninians and Our Lady of St Meddans meeting in Troon Old Parish Church. The service was conducted by the leaders of the three congregations with representatives from Marr College, local youth organisations and South Ayrshire Council taking part.



Boys Brigade playing in the grounds of Troon Old



## **HAPPY CHRISTMAS** from Housegroup

We started with Moses - wound our way through Psalms, Philippians, Thessalonians , Corinthians and Malachi.....

Why? because we were discussing Gratitude.

How do we get from the Law from Moses through to Jesus and Love? How do we cope with the ups and downs of life which we all go through? Coping with the Bad and the Good and becoming content despite it all.

We found some answers through discussion, and felt we understood some of the tangles of the Bible through discussion and debate.

'Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good, his love endures for ever.' *Psalms 106*

Our next two meetings are open to all:  
Contact Barbie at  
**[office@troonportlandchurch.org.uk](mailto:office@troonportlandchurch.org.uk)**

*Wednesday 13th December 7.30pm*

*Wednesday 11th January 7.30pm*

# Building Bridges

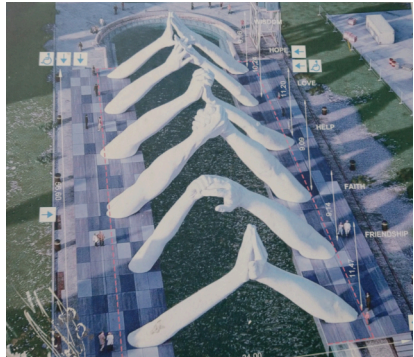
Far from the gondolas and palaces of the Grand Canal in Venice there is industrial and dockyard ground. It was raining and we were geocaching, an activity which often leads you to unusual places. In this dreich wasteland we came across a structure, a huge sculpture of hands joined across a canal.



The joined hands were symbolic of five aspects of unity. As the noise of war roared from the Middle East these joined hands seemed to offer a ray of light.

The first symbolised FRIENDSHIP, the second FAITH, the third HELP, the fourth LOVE. The last set of clasped hands

symbolised HOPE. Their size and towering set of clasped hands offered a powerful scene against the grey sky.



Not just against a background of war, but for life as we know it, these intertwined fingers represent a blueprint for our society.



Avril McDonald

## Arran Church Closures

This is the village of Lamlash on Arran. The autumn colours were vibrant; the left side of the photo shows Lamlash Church. It has just closed. Three other churches on Arran have also held their



final service. There is not a single Church of Scotland minister on Arran at the moment, nor has there been for at least a year. There has of course, been much weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth, but to no avail. The most pain is centred around the loss of their halls, well used and busy all week. In Lamlash there is a proposal to hold a community buy-out of the hall, so that the villagers have continued use of it.

Funerals, weddings or baptisms have been conducted by Readers, Celebrants or a retired minister. Of course the numbers attending church services have gone down and the islanders know this. The churches they built and maintained, which have witnessed many significant events in their lives have gone forever. It's not just a case of crossing the road to another church, as here in Troon, but a journey to another village.

The Church of Scotland's rationale for the closure of so many churches is financial. Their aim is to underpin and promote a leaner and fitter organisation. Can this be achieved? Is this the best way? Or will it be counter productive?

Avril McDonald

## Book Group November 2023

Book Group resumed in November, with Dave Tomlinson's "How to be a bad Christian ... and a better human being". This seemed a lighter read than previous books, with many of the group reading on quickly to the end. Dave Tomlinson is an unconventional Vicar, working in house church and pub church environments before becoming a parish Vicar. He has a fund of entertaining and poignant stories to illustrate his strategies for Christian life.

Despite the easier read, there was no shortage of topics for debate. We discussed our understanding of his views on organised religion, other

faiths, suffering, the Bible and heaven, amongst others.

Group members' perspectives vary, making for enjoyable but always supportive conversations. Time passes quickly on Mondays from 7-8 pm in the Millennium Room!

If you enjoy reading, and would like to join in next time, contact Gillean or watch out for the next intimation.

Interested? Contact any Book Group participant - we'll be happy to welcome you and tell you more.

Margaret Duncan

## EXPLORE A NEW SPACE

The new Faith Museum in County Durham has just opened, housed in a 14th-century wing of Auckland Castle. Inside the sleek building by Niall McLaughlin Architects lie some 250 precious objects.

Each reveals a story of faith in Britain over 6,000 years, from the Neolithic period to 2000. Ten years in the making, the museum will also stage exhibitions exploring timeless ideas. Among the pieces now on display is this, the exquisite Painswick Astrolabe, c.1370, surely a status symbol of its time.

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



Plans are in place to enhance the audio and visual systems in Portland Church.

The present equipment is more than 10 years old and beginning to show its age. These plans include high quality radio microphones to improve the sound quality in the church and several new cameras to enhance Portland's online offering.

This should help to modernise the church experience.

Of course this equipment is no use without enthusiastic volunteers to use it. The team has welcomed two new members recently who are undergoing and enjoying "on the job training". It is not difficult and no one is left on

their own. Anyone who wants to see how it is done is welcome to sit in the balcony behind the equipment to watch. Hopefully the team will expand.



## Organ Recital

A good number of people decided to forsake the attractions of Wintertainment on 19th November and made their way to Portland for the final recital in the "Music at Portland" series for this year. Peter Shepherd, recently appointed to Chesterfield Parish Church, had driven all the way up that day to give us a masterful performance of a wide range of music, especially chosen to suit our organ. He included music for the 400th anniversary of the death of William Byrd, along with the music of a female composer (a theme running through previous

programmes), Jeanne Demessieux.

Watch this space for details of future events in the series.

Andrew McConnell



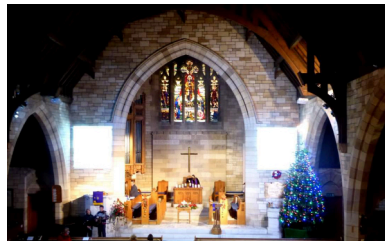
# Christmas

By John Betjeman

And is it true,  
This most tremendous tale of all,  
Seen in a stained-glass window's hue,  
A Baby in an ox's stall ?  
The Maker of the stars and sea  
Become a Child on earth for me ?

And is it true ? For if it is,  
No loving fingers tying strings  
Around those tissued fripperies,  
The sweet and silly Christmas things,  
Bath salts and inexpensive scent  
And hideous tie so kindly meant,

No love that in a family dwells,  
No carolling in frosty air,  
Nor all the steeple-shaking bells  
Can with this single Truth compare -  
That God was man in Palestine  
And lives today in Bread and Wine



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BEGINNING OF FEBRUARY.  
PLEASE SEND ANY  
CONTRIBUTIONS TO YOUR  
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**Wise men still  
seek Him.**