

The Country Link



Kelso
Country
Churches

~~~~~November/December, 2020

**Dear friends,**

We had hoped that by now the way forward for our country would be clearer and that we'd be over the worst of the pandemic. But, sadly, that's not the case. We still have some hope that things could get back to the way that they used to be but we know it will never be exactly the same as it was.

We remember how things were before but it all seems so long ago. A lifetime ago.

At this time of year we have many opportunities where we make time to reflect and remember. At Halloween we remember all that we got up to as children, the traditions we used to have. Guy Fawkes - making guys and letting off fireworks. November 11th, the most important of all, when we remember the sacrifice of so many, who died that we may live in peace.

And as we come to the end of the month, we enter the season of Advent. The time when we prepare for the birth of Jesus, the time we remind ourselves of the Christmas story and all that Jesus means to us. But like everything else this month Advent and Christmas will not be the same as it used to be. However we can still remember. We can still give thanks for the birth of the baby who came to this earth as Saviour of all.

Yours

**Stephen**



'The angel said to her, "Don't be afraid, Mary; God has been gracious to you. You will become pregnant and give birth to a son, and you will name him Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High God. The Lord God will make him a king, as his ancestor David was.' **Luke 1.30-32**

## Acts of Remembrance at War Memorials.

These will not take place this year but a wreath will be laid at each memorial as usual sometime either on Remembrance Sunday or the 11th itself by someone from the local community.



We cannot gather to remember this year but I would encourage you still to take a few moments to remember all the same. When you are out for a walk go by your local war memorial and take a few moments to read the names and remember. Or stand on your own doorstep at 11 on the 11th and reflect on past wars and pray for peace in our world.

The departure from the usual traditions was a difficult decision for all involved, nationally and locally, but it really was inevitable under the current restrictions. Everyone, especially our veterans must be kept as safe as possible.

## Worship each month



Just a reminder that services will take place on the first Sunday of the month in Makerstoun church at the usual time of 10.30am

Services in Stichill are on the 2nd and

4th Sundays of the month at 10.30am



Other Sundays are only online.

Each week there will also be a service on the worship section of our church website.

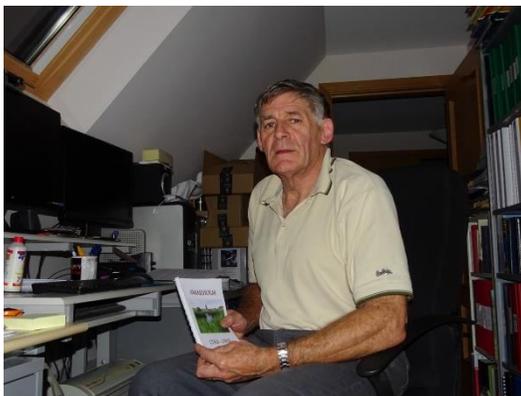
And most weeks there is also a podcast - a recording of the sermon.

<https://www.kelsocountrychurches.org.uk/services/>

Please speak to Sophia if you are able to help clean the churches between services.

## ***Parish News and Updates***

In the last edition of the Country Link, our Session Clerk extraordinaire, local historian and author Jim Smith, introduced us to his latest project of compiling seven books about life in our villages from 1700-1900s'. They have generated great interest in our country parishes and Jim has, to date



sold over 100 copies and has also had requests from outwith this area from people who had read about them on-line.

Makerstoun, Smailholm and Nenthorn have sold the most so far thanks to spreading the news on local media or by word of mouth very effectively.

The books have generated extra income to the Country Churches in a year when all fund-raising activities are cancelled although Jim didn't think of that when he started the research.

So thank you Jim for all your work which is giving folk much interest and pleasure during this enforced quiet time.

(half the selling price goes towards printing costs.)

**Christmas Shoeboxes:** because of current covid 19 restrictions, a decision was made not to fill Christmas boxes with gifts for people in Eastern European countries, but to have a retiring offering for fuel costs of getting boxes to their destinations instead.

However, Kathy and David have been busy as usual covering shoeboxes with festive paper and some people were keen to fill them as in previous years so I can report that 32 boxes have been delivered to pick up points in the Borders and should be on their way very soon.

**Harvest Offering:** The sum of £267 was raised for the charity 'Self Help Africa' at our two thanksgiving services.

**Prayers for the Week:** My warm and grateful thanks to David and Ailsa Harvey for the prayers on page 12.

# Christmas

Christmas isn't cancelled but will be very different this year for all of us. It's not really possible to plan anything so far in advance as we've no idea what the rules and regulations will be by then but we do know that we will need to find different ways to celebrate.



The Christmas Carol service won't take place nor the Christmas Eve service or the Guild Christmas party as the distancing rules mean so few people could attend.

It may be that families will also struggle to get together on Dec 25th to celebrate in-person together.

But we can still celebrate. We can still remember. But we will need to find new ways and new traditions to celebrate this most important time of year.

It will be interesting to hear how people rise to the challenge. Christmas Dinner on Zoom? A socially distanced Boxing Day walk with a friend or neighbour? An opportunity to give more to those in need as we are saved from the expense of the Office Party?

'Let us praise the Lord, the God of Israel! He has come to the help of his people and has set them free. He has provided for us a mighty Saviour, a descendant of his servant David.'

**Luke 1.68-69**

*It isn't far to Bethlehem town,  
it's anywhere that Christ came down,  
and finds in people's friendly face  
a welcome and abiding place.  
The road to Bethlehem runs right through  
the homes of folk like me and you.*

## Giving to the Church

In this time when you may find it difficult to get to a service, you may wish to give your regular offering in other ways. One way is to set up a bank Standing Order which can be stopped or amended at any time that you wish. Payments can be made monthly, quarterly or annually. Alternatively, giving can be made via online banking, by cheque payable to “*Kelso Country Churches (Church of Scotland)*”, or via the donate button on our website. You can also continue to use your Freewill Offering envelopes which can be collected at a convenient time. For more information about any of these options, or to request a Standing Order form, contact Liz Orr on 01573 224595 or email [lizzorrscott@btinternet.com](mailto:lizzorrscott@btinternet.com).

### **2019 Trustees’ Report and Receipts and Payments Accounts –**

We have been unable to hold the Stated Annual Meeting this year and so if you would like a copy of the accounts, please don’t hesitate to contact Liz Orr on 01573 224595 or email [lizzorrscott@btinternet.com](mailto:lizzorrscott@btinternet.com). The main feature of the accounts is that although we had a deficit in our General Fund of £5,815 for 2019, it is mainly offset by the 2018 surplus of £5,672 (in 2018 we did not require to use all of the vacancy allowance allocated to us via a reduction in our Ministries and Mission allocation). 2019 included some one-off expenditure including a new website which has proved invaluable this year and some work to prepare the manse for occupation.

*Liz Orr*

### **THINK**

Pray don’t find fault with the man who limps or stumbles on the road unless you have the shoes he wears or struggle beneath his load.

There may be tacks in his shoes that hurt though hidden from view, or the burden he bears, placed on your back might cause you to stumble too.

Don’t be harsh with the man who sins, or pelt him with words or stones, unless you are sure that you have no sins of your own.

You may be strong but still the blows that were his, if dealt to you in the self-same way at the same time, might cause you to stagger too.

## THE LAST POST



We have all heard the haunting music, ‘The Last Post’. It’s the song that gives us the lump in our throats and tears in our eyes. But do you know the story behind the song? If not, you may be interested to find out about its humble beginnings.

Reportedly, it all began in 1862 during the American Civil War when the Union Army Captain, Robert Ellicombe was with his regiment near Harrison’s Landing in Virginia. The Confederate Army was on the other side of a narrow strip of land.

During the night, Captain Ellicombe heard the moans of a soldier who lay severely wounded on the field. Not knowing if it was a Union or Confederate soldier, the Captain decided to risk his life and bring the stricken man back for medical attention. Crawling on his stomach through the gunfire, he reached the wounded soldier and began pulling him towards his encampment. When the Captain finally reached his own lines he discovered it was actually a Confederate soldier, but the soldier was dead.

The Captain lit a lantern and suddenly caught his breath, numb with shock. In the dim light, he saw the face of the soldier; it was his own son. The boy had been studying music in the South when the war broke out. Without telling his father, the boy enlisted in the Confederate Army.

The following morning, the heartbroken father asked permission of his superiors to give his son a full military burial, despite his enemy status. His request was only partially granted. The Captain had asked if he could have a group of army bandsmen play a funeral dirge for his son at the funeral. The request was turned down since the soldier was a Confederate, but out of respect for the father, they did say they could give him one musician.

The Captain chose a bugler.

He asked the bugler to play a series of musical notes he had found on a piece of paper in the pocket of the dead youth's uniform. This wish was granted.

The haunting melody we now know as 'The Last Post' used at military funerals was born.

The words are:

*Day is done.  
Gone the sun  
From the lakes  
From the hills*



*From the sky.  
All is well  
Safely rest  
God is nigh.  
Fading light dims the sight,  
And a star gems the sky  
Gleaming bright from afar..  
Drawing nigh falls the night.  
Thanks and praise  
for our days.  
Neath the sun  
Neath the stars  
Neath the sky.  
As we go  
This we know,  
God is nigh.*

## The Kelso Country Churches Parish Books

It all started in January! The thought came to me of doing a book on one of our villages in the country parishes. On 15<sup>th</sup> February I decided to do Makerstoun Parish but had no idea of the information available or how easy it would be to access it, but I persevered, doing a little each day or more on cold, wet days, and had over 100 pages of information by the end of February.

I then realised that simple facts need some embellishment so, I set off with permission, to spend an enjoyable day photographing what I needed from Makerstoun estate. What a lovely place Makerstoun is with the majestic river Tweed flowing through with the backdrop of the mansion house keeping watch over it.

The National Newspaper Archives is a wonderful source of information but despite their best efforts, they are copying old newspapers onto the computer and sometimes they don't copy well. Checking the documents is time consuming, and I did each book about 3 times (and still missed things!)

For anyone interested in the history of these places these books open up a new and interesting insight into the way our forbears lived. Most names are familiar but some have been lost in time.

By this time we were in lockdown so I found creating these books a good distraction from everything else going on around us, and during the next six months I produced another six books – all different stories except for one or two which occurred in neighbouring parishes.

Some of the books are different in their make-up as I tried to add more information and use my computer skills. Nenthorn, for instance has snappy “Irish proverbs” throughout, Roxburgh and Heiton have some photos and clip art relevant to the story. Stichill and Hume are my local areas and I have lots of photos to enhance them. Smailholm has some old historical photos.

I printed the first two on my own printer but realised that was not cost-effective, and have printed the others on the church printer and that was another learning experience.

With your help we have now sold over 100 copies to date so thank you for helping in this enjoyable and worthwhile venture. **Jim Smith**



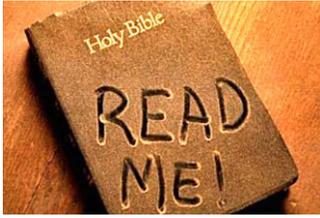
The Church of Scotland convened its first General Assembly held mostly online. With only the Moderator, speakers, officials and technical crew in the Assembly Hall in Edinburgh, around 730 Commissioners took part, speaking and voting through video conferencing technology. Thousands more

watched the livestream on Facebook and on the Church website.

They heard the Moderator, the Rt Rev Dr Martin Fair, open the Assembly with a warning that if the Church were to become overwhelmingly concerned with its own survival, it would fail. Instead, he called for the Church to be outwardly-focused as it faces the challenges of both Covid-19 and its own historic decline. He said: “To be outwardly- focussed means, in our language, to be focussed on mission rather than maintenance. “It’s understanding that the same Jesus who calls us to Him sends us out for Him. The Jesus who says, ‘Follow me ’goes on to say ‘Now go and make disciples... be fishers of people as I have shown you.’” He said that being outwardly-focused meant both ‘doing ’and ‘saying’. The ‘doing ’included ‘sitting silently with the bereaved and the broken’, ‘taking climate justice seriously’, and ‘refusing to brush aside racial injustice’.

“So mission, being outwardly- focussed, is engaging, acting, working, doing. But it is also saying. Sharing, proclaiming, speaking a word in season, always being ready to give an explanation for the hope that is within us.”

During the truncated Assembly, which took place over an evening and a day, there were discussions focusing on the challenges facing the Church, and on the Church’s response to the climate emergency and protests about racial injustice.



Along with this magazine you should also have received a three year Bible reading plan. (If not let me know and I'll try to get one to you.)

I produce Bible reading notes each week based on the lectionary readings which you can find on the church website but you may

also find this helpful.

Could this be your New Years resolution? Many of us will have been through most of the Bible in the course of our lives but this plan takes us through the whole Bible from cover to cover in the course of 3 years. Perhaps you will find stories and sayings that you have never heard before. Perhaps you will find answers to some of your questions. And you will definitely find more questions to which you will want to seek answers.

Sometimes it might seem like hard going but I would recommend it as one way to hear God speaking to us through His Word. It is a method that both Kath and I have used and enjoyed.

**Stephen**

### ***Buy your own Church***

It was our intention to have a closing service in both Smailholm and Roxburgh churches this year but with covid that has been impossible. We have gone through the legalities and now both churches are closed and can be sold. The sale of the churches is undertaken by the General Trustees of the Church of Scotland, and that in itself, takes time as a result of the church headquarters in Edinburgh being temporarily closed during lockdown.

The General Trustees were reluctant to put both churches on the market at the same time and so Roxburgh Church is now on the market. It can be viewed on the Church of Scotland website and they have set a value of £85,000 on it.

There has been a good response so far with five interested parties. Smailholm Church had one enquiry before the virus struck (it's not officially on the market yet) but there has been no development that we know of. So if you are looking for an interesting building to convert to a home or business with history and character, with the surrounding grass cut for you, now is your chance!

**Jim Smith**

Website: [www.kelsocountrychurches.org.uk](http://www.kelsocountrychurches.org.uk)

Church of Scotland charity no. SC000958

**CROSSREACH**

Care you can put your faith in

Please consider purchasing CrossReach 2020 calendars as you plan your shopping for CrossReach usually raises much money by selling calendars in churches at this time of year. This is not possible under the present restrictions.

Funds are needed more than ever this year to finance the wonderful work CrossReach carries out in Christ's name amongst some of the most vulnerable members of society through projects across the length and breadth of Scotland.

It's also a really beautiful calendar with fantastic photos of Scottish views and some comments from service users in some of the projects. Christmas cards are also for sale.

Available online from CrossReach Web Shop

[shop.crossreach.org.uk](http://shop.crossreach.org.uk)

**Kath Manners**

## ***Prayers for the week based on God's promises***

**Monday:** *Come and pray to me, and I will listen to you.* (Jeremiah 29:12)

Lord God we thank you that you invite us into your presence. We believe you will hear our prayers. But we would want also to be still before you so that we hear you speak to us. We would want to learn to rest and take strength from your promises.

**Tuesday:** *I am convinced that nothing can separate us from the love of God.* (Romans 8:39) Heavenly Father we pray for our church family. For those who are experiencing loneliness and sadness; for those who worry when looking to the future. For those who are unwell and feel they are lacking strength and ability to do things they would wish to do.

**Wednesday:** *All who listen to me will live in peace, untroubled by fear or harm.* (Proverbs 1:33) Father God we live in a troubled world. We see lives torn apart by war, violence, hatred and greed. We see families and communities destroyed by famine, disease, fire and flood. We pray for those who help those in deep need. May they, by hearing your voice and showing your love, dispel fear and bring peace to those who need it most.

**Thursday:** *Come to me all who are tired from carrying heavy loads and I will give you rest.* (Matthew 11:28-29) Thank you Lord that you have given us times of rest and refreshment. But we think of those for whom there is no time for rest. In those times of pandemic we pray for those who are exhausted from caring for the sick, the frail and vulnerable. May they hear your voice to help them as they care for others.

**Friday:** *The Lord himself goes before you and will be with you; he will never leave you or forsake you. Do not be afraid* (Deuteronomy 31:8) Father, we pray for those in church leadership as they make difficult decisions regarding the future shape and structure of the church. From a human point of view the future seems to hold many difficulties and problems. As we face the future may we all draw strength from your promise that you will never forsake your people.

**Saturday:** *I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness but will have the light of life.* (John 8:12) Thank you for your promise that those who follow you will never walk in darkness. We acknowledge the current disharmony in our own nation. Give wisdom to our political leaders and may they act with righteousness and compassion.

**Sunday:** *As long as earth endures, seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night will never cease* (Genesis 8:22) The issue of climate change causes such distress. Thank you for your promise that you will sustain the world you created. Thank you for all who have access to the world's resources and pray they will work for the good of all.

