

The Country Link



Kelso
Country
Churches

~~~~~November/December 2023

Dear Friends,

I was at a meeting at the beginning of November, and most people were wearing a poppy. Some had a plastic one, while others a more environmentally-friendly paper one. A surprising number had smart enamel badges with poppies on the design, while one lady had a woollen poppy which I knew she had knitted herself. All complimenting the poppies we lay at the war memorials on Remembrance Sunday.



The poppy is a symbol of the tragedy of war, and Remembrance is a time to look back and remember all who have fallen in the service of their country, most of them young people dying far from home. But Remembrance is also a time to look forward and pledge to work for peace and reconciliation. It is especially poignant this year as war continues to rage in Ukraine, while the conflict in Gaza brings harrowing pictures of suffering and destruction. Extremism on both sides fuels the conflict as the innocent get caught in the middle. When will we ever learn?

Yet at Advent we prepare ourselves to remember the baby born in the hardship of a winter's night in Bethlehem, who grew up to be the Prince of Peace. The Christmas story is one of rejection, with Mary and Joseph turned away from the inn, and of violence, with Herod's soldiers slaying the innocents; but amidst it all, angels sing of peace on earth and goodwill to all, while the ordinary shepherds and the exotic wise men bow before the baby in wonder. They show us the model of how to move forward in our lives, ever seeking to live together in peace and showing in our lives the love which was born at Christmas.

Peace and blessings. *Colin*

## *Parish News and Updates*

**Harvest Thanksgiving** was celebrated in Stichill Church on 22<sup>nd</sup> October. The church was looking lovely with the colours and fruits of autumn and there was a generous response to the appeal for donations of tinned and packet foods for the Kelso foodbank.

There was also a retiring offering for Self Help Africa, the charity KCC supports at this time of year and a total of £227

was raised. Warm thanks to every one who helped to decorate the church and contributed by sharing their gifts with those who struggle to make ends meet.



**Christmas Shoe Box Appeal:** once again, there was a good response to the shoebox appeal this year. Fifty one boxes from KCC were loaded onto the lorry on the first leg of their journey to people in Eastern European countries, mainly Moldova, Albania and Ukraine, where the gifts give comfort and pleasure to people of all ages who rarely receive gifts, and have few comforts in their lives.

Kathy and David Wilkie are the driving force each year behind this effort for Blythwood Care, covering hundreds of boxes with festive paper and handing them out to many churches and individuals. We say a big thank you to them both for their commitment and enthusiasm for the cause.

**Footnote:** Unfortunately, Kathy has had a fall recently, and although no bones were broken, she has a sore leg and is finding it difficult to move around and is having to curtail her activities, which is frustrating for her. However, she assures me that she is now on the mend. Get well soon, Kathy.

## *Preaching Plan for November/December*

**Weekly services start at 10.30am unless otherwise stated.**

### **November**

5<sup>th</sup>      Makerstoun                                  Sophia Duncan

### **REMEMBRANCE SERVICES**

11<sup>th</sup> Smailholm War Memorial 11am      Jim Smith  
Roxburgh War Memorial 12noon      Jim Smith  
12<sup>th</sup> Nenthorn War Memorial 10am      Charles Orr  
Makerstoun War Memorial 10am      Jim Smith  
Stichill War Memorial 10.50am Jim Smith  
followed by service in Stichill church at 11.10am  
Hume War Memorial 12noon      Jim Smith

19<sup>th</sup>      Makerstoun                                  Elizabeth Findlay

26<sup>th</sup>      Makerstoun                                  Charles Orr

### **December**

3<sup>rd</sup>      Makerstoun                                  Elizabeth Findlay

10<sup>th</sup>      Stichill      **Communion**      Rev Colin Johnston

17<sup>th</sup>      Makerstoun 10.30am      Rev John Shields

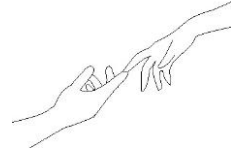
17<sup>th</sup>      Stichill **6.30pm. Family Service of Lessons & Carols**

24<sup>th</sup>      Makerstoun      **5.30pm Christmas Eve Service**

25<sup>th</sup>      Stichill 10.30am **Christmas Day Service** Jim Smith

31<sup>st</sup>      Joint Services at Ednam 9.30am / Kelso North 11am

# Across the Parishes



## THE UNION

The subcommittee delegated to take forward the Union of Kelso North & Ednam with Kelso Country Churches, has been working behind the scenes for the last few months. This committee consists of five or six members of each session and they are looking at progressing the union as smoothly as possible and up to now, things have run very smoothly with both sides being amicable to each other's situation.

Our first task or hurdle is to complete the "Basis of Union". This is an important document which will set the conditions of the union. For example, the name needs to be altered to accommodate the new situation so we need a name that will unite both congregations.

Then there are the transfer of the property and funds of both congregations into one, and any conditions we wish to set on these funds, remembering that these church funds have been, and still are an important part of keeping the church alive in the past, and hopefully, for many years to come.

Next comes the places of worship, and they are going to be Kelso North Church and Stichill Church, and we need to set a time for these services to suit as many people as possible.

It is with great sadness that both Ednam and Makerstoun have been put on a list to be sold, let or otherwise disposed of in the future and certainly by 2027, but until Presbytery says when, we will still be able to have special services in these churches hopefully!

Both sessions will merge into one session in the form of the "Unitary Constitution" with Kelso North and Ednam losing their Congregational board in one sense, but will be able to merge it into the session in other ways.

Kelso Country Churches no longer have a Minister, and the way is now open for the Minister in Kelso North and Ednam to be the Minister in the new union and that is looked on as a positive step by all concerned. We are concerned about the increased work-load that is going to be put on the Minister and we will look at ways of alleviating this as much as possible by the new session.

The Minister also has to formally agree to become the Minister in the new union.

Kelso Country Churches have now sold their manse in Stichill so the manse in the new union will be the Kelso North Manse.

So this document has to go through several stages of approval where it will be checked over, and if all is well, it then goes for approval to the Law Department for checking, and then it comes back to the Kirk Sessions for approval, then the congregations vote on the Basis of Union.

If all goes well, the next stage is SPM (Lothian Planning Committee) take the Basis of Union to Presbytery for approval, and, after that, the Law Department is notified to allow OSCR changes to be made.

So it is a complicated procedure which must be followed before Union takes place. That's how it goes but the congregations will be kept informed of progress so watch this space!

James Smith  
Session Clerk

## Our Church Family

### **Baptism** – *‘Suffer little children to come unto me’*

15<sup>th</sup> October: Anna Lily Cooper Baird, Granddaughter of Kirsty and Gareth Baird, was baptised in Makerstoun Kirk by her other Grandfather, Rev. Justin Manley Cooper.

### **Deaths** - *‘Blessed are they who mourn for they shall be comforted’*

4<sup>th</sup> October: The funeral took place of Isobel Jane Johnston, Kelso, late of Runningburn, Stichill, in Stichill Church. The service was conducted by Rev. Colin Johnston.

1<sup>st</sup> November: The funeral took place of Janette Orr, Kelso, dear mother of Liz Orr, at Borders Crematorium, Melrose. The service was conducted by Rev. Colin Johnston.

*Christmas Services in  
Kelso Country Churches*



*Family Service of Lessons and  
Carols by Candlelight in  
Stichill Church on Sunday,  
17<sup>th</sup> December at 6.30pm.*



*Christmas Eve Carol Service  
in Makerstoun Kirk*

*Sunday, 24<sup>th</sup> December at 5.30pm  
Mulled wine and mince pies/shortbread will  
be served at both occasions. Please bring along  
family and friends to herald in this special  
time of togetherness.*



## *Christmas Cracker*

### *Little Willie Whatsisname of St. Withit's*

Now little Willie Whatsisname came running home  
one day, and told his parents he was in a native-itty play.  
His mother scarce believed her ears and asked him was it true.  
and when he answered, "Yes, it is,"  
she asked "What will you do?"

He said, "I'm going to be a king. I've got some words to learn  
about some stuff called Frankincense, to say when it's my turn."  
We've got to do the play in church with lots of people there.  
But as for Willie Whatsisname, he did not turn a hair.

The great occasion day arrived, St. Withit's church was filled  
with aunts and uncles, mums and dads, grandparents -  
all were thrilled

As Joseph, Mary (on an ass), innkeeper (with his wife)  
A real live baby, sound effects, all brought the play to life.

A group of angels played guitars, a shepherd quartet sang.  
(in modern phraseology the show went with a bang).  
The children, full of confidence, all looked so worldly wise,  
But when the grand finale came, it took us by surprise.

A drums and keyboard fanfare as the kings came into view  
found little Willie Whatsisname flanked by the other two.  
Just out of sight, their teacher stood to watch the plot unfold.  
King number one approached the crib,  
and shouted, "I bring gold."

She held her breath as number two approached and glanced at her,  
Then bending low before the crib, he whispered, "I bring myrrh."  
Then little Willie Whatsisname, whose eyes were full of bliss,  
Approached the crib with gift held high, announcing,

**"Frank sent this."** *by Earnest Statham*

## ***Kelso Food Bank***

There is an on-going shortage of food items in stock and any donations of tinned, packet or dried foods are most welcome.

There are receptacles in Sainsburys and the two Co-op stores where dried, packet and tinned foods can be deposited.

At present, there is particular need for the following items:

*TINNED MEAT                      RICE                      PASTA SAUCE*  
*TINNED FRUIT    TINNED PUDDINGS*  
*MICROWAVE PACKET FOODS*

Please pop in an extra item in your basket when shopping if you can.  
Thank you.

## *Let us Pray*

*Christmas God,  
Transform our empty spaces, bare and  
unwelcoming, to places filled with warmth and  
welcome.*



*Fill the empty mangers of the world with food.  
Empty the cardboard boxes, refuge of the lonely and despairing.  
Bring warmth and light and shelter to all who watch and wait  
tonight,  
In bar and bare hillside, in crowded flat and tented home,  
May we feel your presence at our shoulder and in our hearts.  
Amen.*

For those who cannot celebrate  
*God of Hope, when every minute seems like an hour, when days  
are empty and bleak, when nights are lonely and long, when the  
ache inside does not fade, help me to find peace and comfort in  
the encircling of your arms,  
Amen.*



## *Some Christmas Customs*

### **Christmas trees**

In Roman times trees were brought indoors to celebrate the mid winter festival of Saturnalia. Celtic Druids also decorated branches of trees with gilt apples. Boniface, an English missionary to Germany, in chopping down an oak tree sacred to pagan worshippers, found a small fir tree at its roots and designated it a Christian symbol because it is evergreen and points to heaven. The use of the tree in England was popularised by the German born Albert, husband of Queen Victoria, about 1841.

### **Christmas cards**

The first card was probably designed in 1843 by John Horsley for his friend Sir Henry Cole. The following year, a clergyman in Newcastle had private cards printed. Some suggest, however, that William Egley who later illustrated Dicken's novels, began the tradition.

### **Mince pies**

They used to be filled with lamb or mutton. They were oval-shaped like the manger bed, the covering being the swaddling clothes. This is one reason why the Puritans looked at them with some suspicion.

### **The crib**

St. Francis is reputed to have been the first person to make a crib after seeing the cave of the nativity in Israel. He created a nativity scene in a cave in his native Italy to bring home to people, the reality of the birth of Jesus. Fashion took over and the king of Italy paid famous artists to produce figures. Scenes are now made in different materials – wood, canvas, terracotta, silk, ivory, glass. There is a permanent underwater crib in amalfi, and at a French exhibition of cribs, one was set as a distant planet and showed the wise men alighting by jet.

## Freewill Offering Envelopes

Anyone new wishing “Freewill Weekly envelopes” please contact Liz Orr or Jim Smith. These will be distributed to all who used them in 2023.

This is a useful way to contribute to your Church.

The contributors’ sense of belonging and responsibility to their own church is heightened with each envelope personalised with their church name and location.

Contributors find envelopes convenient and simple to use. If they are giving weekly, they have their own set of 52 envelopes held neatly together in correct date order yet easily detached when required.

The maximum amount goes to your church funds thanks to a unique manufacturing process which produces the envelopes at low cost

Gift Aid is a government scheme which allows a congregation, as a registered charity, to claim 25p from HMRC every time an individual donates £1. The donor must have made a Gift Aid declaration giving the congregation permission to claim on their offerings and donations.

## From the editor’s desk



Can this really be the last edition of the Country Link for 2023? My sincere thanks to everyone who has helped me with compiling the magazine by submitting stories, letters and reports, proof-reading, stapling and delivering it round the districts.

To all our readers, I wish you a happy Christmas and a peaceful new year.

Useful Contacts

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

Church of Scotland Charity No. SC000958

Date for your Diary

*HANDEL'S MESSIAH*

*Sunday, 26<sup>th</sup> November, 2023*

*Kelso Old Parish Church*

*Come and sing*                      *or*                      *Come and listen*

*At 2pm*

*at 7pm*

*Entry £8*

*entry by donation to KOSP*

*Local soloists and small orchestra*

*Conducted by Marion Dodd*

N.B. Bring your own copy of The Messiah and a pencil

or contact Marion (07454509301)

if you need to borrow a copy for the day.

Bring your own tea!

When I say,,,“I am a Christian”  
I'm not shouting, “I am saved.”  
I'm whispering “I was lost,”  
That's why I chose this way.

When I say... “I am a Christian”  
I don't speak of this with pride.  
I'm confessing that I stumble  
And need someone to be my guide.

When I say...“I am a Christian”  
I'm not trying to be strong.  
I'm professing that I'm weak,  
And pray for strength to carry on.

When I say...“I am a Christian”  
I'm not bragging of success.  
I'm admitting I have failed,  
And cannot ever pay the debt.



When I say...“I am a Christian”  
I'm not claiming to be perfect.  
My flaws are too visible,  
But, God believes I'm worth it.

When I say...“I am a Christian”  
I do not wish to judge.  
I have no authority.  
I only know I'm loved.

*Taken from the Parish Magazine of Caputh & Clunie with Kinclaven*