

# The Country Link



Kelso  
Country  
Churches

~~~~~November/December, 2021

**Dear Friends**



Christmas centres on the Nativity, the birth of Jesus who came into the world to be our Saviour, Emmanuel – God with us. There would be no birth, of course, if there was no mother. We so often forget about the role Mary plays.

Imagine what it must have been like for Mary – a young woman just going about her life when an angel comes to speak to her. Think what she thought and felt. Her world completely turned upside down – she was going to have a baby and she's not yet married to Joseph. She's not yet slept with Joseph. But she hears what the angel says to her and responds – **"I am the Lord's servant,"** said Mary; **"may it happen to me as you have said,"** Luke 1.38. Mary is the model for Christian discipleship, the person who all people, men and women alike should emulate, especially if they wish to emulate her son.

Mary is identified as being blessed by God – **"Peace be with you! The Lord is with you and has greatly blessed you!"** Luke 1.28. Luke wants to make sure we know why she is to be considered blessed. Her kinswoman Elizabeth says, **"How happy you are to believe that the Lord's message to you will come true."** Luke 1.45. Notably, she is not blessed because she is going to be the physical mother of Jesus, but because she believed God's word, she lived God's word. So whatever blessing accrues to Mary is one we all can share, if we emulate her. We cannot all be physical parents of Jesus, but we can believe that God's word will be fulfilled. We can live out God's word in this world. And we can share the great message of Christmas with all whom we meet as the angels and

shepherds did before us – I am here with good news for you, which will bring great joy to all the people. This very day in David's town your Saviour was born - Christ the Lord! Luke 2. 10-11.

Stephen

## *Parish News and Updates*

**Blythswood Charity Christmas Shoeboxes:** Kathy and David Wilkie are pictured delivering Christmas boxes to the pick up point in Kelso on the first stage of their journey to Moldova in Eastern Europe where they will be distributed to families in need who will otherwise receive no Christmas presents. KCC filled 47 boxes and we thank Kathy and David for supplying the boxes ready for filling and for being the driving force behind the effort.



### **Rotary, Galashiels**

In 2010 we started collecting milk bottle tops to raise cash for the Margaret Kerr Palliative Care charities. Since then, over 45 tonnes have been collected and that has raised over £12,000. The money has been distributed to the Margaret Kerr unit, Macmillan Cancer Care, Marie Curie and The Lavender Touch. A small group gather twice a month and check the contents of the bags of tops that you are good enough to collect.

The tops are bought by Border Plastic Recycling Ltd, based at Charlesfield, St. Boswells.

The tops are eventually used in cable insulation for submarine communications cables. **Thank you for your support.**

**Christmas Carol Service:** Due to covid food safety guidelines, no refreshments will be served following the evening carol service in Stichill on 19<sup>th</sup> December, but do come and be part of heralding in this joyful and Holy season.

***Preaching Plan for November/December.***

Nov. 7<sup>th</sup> Makerstoun Rev Stephen Manners

Nov. 14<sup>th</sup> Remembrance Sunday



Makerstoun War Memorial 10am

Nenthorn War Memorial 10am

Stichill War Memorial 10.55am  
followed by a service in the church at 11.15am

Smailholm War Memorial 11am

Roxburgh War Memorial 12noon

Hume War Memorial 12 noon

**Nov. 21<sup>st</sup>** Makerstoun 10.30am

“ 28<sup>th</sup> Stichill 10.30am

**Dec. 5<sup>th</sup>** Makerstoun 10.30am

“ 12<sup>th</sup>Stichill Holy Communion 10.30am

“ 19<sup>th</sup> Makerstoun **Carol Service** 10.30am

“ 19<sup>th</sup> Stichill **Service of Lessons and Carols at 6.30pm**

“ 26<sup>th</sup> Stichill 10.30am



## *One Thousand Men are Walking*

One thousand men are walking,  
walking side by side,  
singing songs from home  
the spirit as their guide.

They walk towards the sun my lord,  
they walk towards the sun  
They smoke and laugh and smile together,  
no foes to outrun.

These men live on forever  
in the hearts of those they saved;  
A nation truly grateful  
for the path of peace they paved.  
They march as friends and  
comrades

but they do not march for war;  
Step closer to salvation,  
a tranquil, steady corps.

The meadow lit with golden  
beams,

A beacon for the brave,  
the emerald grass untrampled,  
a reward for what they gave.

They dream of those they left behind  
and know they dream of them,  
forever in these poppy fields

there walks one thousand men. *Joshua Dyer (aged 14)*

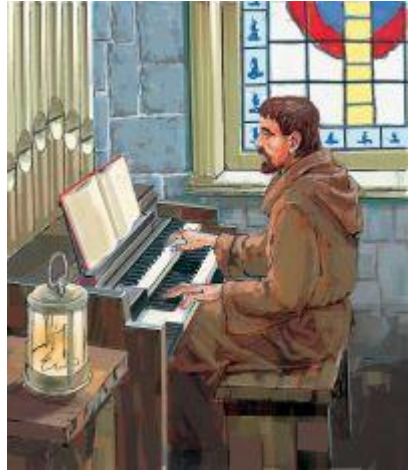


# Advent Prayer

God of Love,  
Your Son, Jesus, is Your  
greatest gift to us.  
He is a sign of Your love.  
Help us walk in that love  
during the weeks of Advent,  
as we wait and prepare  
for His coming.  
We pray in the name of  
Jesus, our Saviour.  
**Amen.**



## *The Story of 'Silent Night'*



Father Joseph Mohr sat at the old organ. His fingers stretched over the keys, forming the notes of the chord. He took a deep breath and pressed down. Nothing! He tried again. Silence echoed through the church. It was no use. The pipes were rusted, the bellows mildewed.

The organ had been wheezing and growing quieter for months, and Father Joseph had been hoping it would hold together until the organ builder arrived to repair it in the spring. But now, on December 23, 1818, the organ had finally given out. St. Nicholas church would have no music for Christmas.

Father Joseph sighed. Maybe a brisk walk would make him feel better. He stepped out into the night, his white breath puffed out before him. Moonlight sparkled off the snow-custed trees and houses in the village of Oberndorf as he climbed the path leading to the mountain.

From high above Oberndorf, Father Joseph watched the Salzach river ripple past St. Nicholas church. In spring when the snows melted and the river swelled its banks, water lapped at the foundation of the church. It was the moisture from the flooding river that caused the organ to mildew and rust. As Father Joseph looked over the Austrian Alps, stars shone above in the still and silent night.

Silent Night? He stopped. Of course, he had written a poem a few years ago when he had first become a priest, and had given it that very title, 'Silent Night'. He scrambled down the mountain. Suddenly he knew how to bring music to the church.

The next morning, Father Joseph set out on another walk – to see his friend Franz Gruber, the organist for St Nicholas who lived in the next village. Franz was surprised to see the priest so far from home on Christmas Eve, and even more surprised when Father Joseph handed him the poem. That night they stood at the altar of the church. Father Joseph held his guitar. He could see members of the congregation giving each other puzzled looks. They had never heard a guitar played in church before, and certainly not during midnight mass on Christmas Eve, the holiest night of the year.

He picked out a few notes on his guitar, and he and Franz began to sing. Their voices rang out, joined by the church choir on the chorus. Franz Gruber's melody matched the simplicity and honesty of the priest's words.

When the last notes faded into the night, the congregation remained silent for a moment then began to clap. Applause filled the church. The villagers of Oberndorf loved the song! Father Joseph's plan to bring music to St Nicholas church had worked.

A few months later, the organ builder arrived in Oberndorf and found the words and music to 'Silent Night' lying on the organ. The song enchanted him, and when he left, he took a copy with him.

The organ builder gave the song to two families of travelling singers who lived near his home. The singers' performed 'Silent Night' in concerts all over Europe, and soon the song spread throughout the world.

Today, cathedral choirs and carolers from New York to New Zealand sing the simple song that was first played in a mountain church in Austria on Christmas Eve nearly 200 years ago.

*Dick Smolinski*



COP26 is now over. The following statement was issued on September 20, signed by more than 50

Scottish and UK faith leaders representing Presbyterian, Anglican, Roman Catholic, Orthodox, Methodist and Baptist churches and the Muslim, Jewish, Hindu, Sikh, Buddhist, Baha’I and Zoroastrian faiths, among others, to show where we as Christians and those of other faiths stand in relation to the climate crisis.

OUR faith communities are united in caring for human life and the natural world. We share a belief in a hopeful future, as well as an obligation to be responsible in caring for our common home, the Earth. We recognise the opportunities that COP26 brings in addressing the urgent need for action in limiting the effects of climate change and the critical importance of decisions made in this conference to take forward the agreement made in Paris in 2015.

People have exploited the planet, causing climate change. We recognise that the burden of loss and damage falls most heavily on people living in poverty, especially women and children.

We acknowledge the commitments made through the Lambeth Declaration in 2015. Now, because of the gravity of our situation, the impact of climate change around the world, and the inequality of its effects, we seek to strengthen those commitments. We commit to respond to this challenge by:

- Reflecting deeply in prayer, meditation and worship to discern how to care for the earth and each other, and to encourage our respective communities to do the same.
- Making transformational change in our own lives and in the lives of our communities through individual and collective action.



- Being advocates for justice by calling on governments, businesses and others who exercise power and influence to put into effect the Paris agreement; to make the transition to a just and green economy a priority; and to commit to science-based targets that are aligned with a healthy, resilient, zero-emissions future.

We remind governments of their commitments made in Paris in 2015 to limit global warming to 1.5 degrees, and of Article 17 of the Universal Declaration on Bioethics and Human Rights to protect the environment, the biosphere and biodiversity. We call upon them to take the urgent action needed to avert the loss, damage, and forced migration threatened by climate change.

We look to governments to work together and with others to create a positive vision for 2050 where addressing climate change is not just an opportunity to stop burning fossil fuels, but also: to achieve cleaner air and water; to reduce food wastage; to ensure a just and equitable sharing of the earth's resources; and to protect the habitats we share with all other life on whose health we also depend.

Across our doctrinal and political differences, we know that we must change our ways to ensure a quality of life which all can share, and we need to provide hope for people of all ages, everywhere, including future generations. To offer hope in the world we need to have confidence that those in power understand the vital role they have to play at the Glasgow COP26. Our collective energy and prayers will be with those working for a successful outcome.

**Date for your diary:** The Guild invites you to a Christmas Social afternoon to be held in Stichill Church on 8<sup>th</sup> December at 2.30pm. Jim Smith will give a presentation on the Sights and Sounds of India, followed by a festive tea. This is an open meeting for the congregation and it would be helpful if you can let Sophia or Lynda know how many are coming for catering purposes.

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

**Church of Scotland Charity No. SC000958**

## **Letter from Self Help Africa – November 2021**

To all at Kelso Country Churches

Thank you for helping to sow the seeds of a bountiful harvest for farming families across Sub-Saharan Africa with your generous donation of £341 (including gift aid). You're providing quality seed, tools and livestock – alongside training in climate-smart techniques, nutrition education and business skills. Because of you, farmers like Alamenesh in Ethiopia can grow more and earn more from their land, improve their nutrition, and build more resilient livelihoods.

*'After the nutrition training, we improved our food production and our family meals. Now we grow different crops on the home garden to feed our families and to sell at market' says Alamanesh. 'We used to boil potato as the main daily food, but now we include fruit and beans. We have a more balanced diet and are feeling better and doing well.'*

Your harvest prayers and offerings help to create lasting change that will improve lives for generations – we really appreciate your continued support and generosity!

## *Bells on Christmas Day*

Henry Wadsworth Longfellow was filled with sorrow after the death of his wife in a fire in 1861. The Civil War broke out the same year, and it seemed this was an additional punishment. Two years later, Longfellow was again saddened to learn that his own son had been seriously wounded in the army of the Potomac. Sitting down at his desk one Christmas Day, he heard the church bells ringing. It was in this setting that Longfellow wrote these lines:

*I heard the bells on Christmas Day  
their old familiar carols play,  
and wild and sweet the words repeat  
of peace on earth, good will to men!*

*And thought how, as the day had come  
the belfries of all Christendom  
had rolled along the unbroken song  
of peace on earth, good will to men.*

*Till, ringing, singing, on its way,  
the world revolved from night to day.  
A voice, a chime, a chant sublime  
of peace on earth, good will to men!*

*Then from each black, accursed mouth  
the cannon thundered in the south,  
and with the sound the carols drowned  
of peace on earth, good will to men!*

*It was as if an earthquake rent  
the hearth-stones of a continent,  
and made forlorn the households born  
of peace on earth, good will to men!*

*And in despair I bowed my head;  
“There is no peace on earth,” I said;  
“For hate is strong and mocks the song  
of peace on earth, good will to men!”*

*Then pealed the bells more loud and deep.  
“God is not dead, nor doth he sleep!  
The wrong shall fail, the right prevail,  
with peace on earth, good will to men.!”*

