



# St John the Baptist Scottish Episcopal Church Perth

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December and January 2020-21

# Letter from the Rector

Dear Friends,

As we approach the season of Advent once again, we do so very differently this year. However, in this time of waiting and expectation, it's still important to remember the seasons in the Churches year. We will mark that by four Advent reflections being offered to you, this will come your way by email or by post for the four weeks. I do hope that you will use these meditations and prayers to reflect upon your own spiritual journey, as we wait to celebrate the birth of our Saviour once again.

As a diocese and Province, indeed the Church all over, during this pandemic we are having to find new ways of being and sharing the gospel of love and the story of Jesus Christ. This has made us I believe highly creative as we tap into technology and learn to be Church in the modern world and society that we live in today.

My thanks go to all of you once again for your patience, in what at times has been a very difficult and trying time as we have tried to share our mission and worship through our community at St. John's. It has been a pure joy, as I'm sure you will agree to be back in our building worshipping together again, all be it in a very different way. My heart has rejoiced in seeing you (masks and all) and to those of you that I have still to see, please be assured of my prayers and love for you all.

Christmas, when it comes upon us will be different this year, but like everything else, well for the time being, we just have to get on and accept what is becoming the new normal. In the meantime, I urge you all to reflect upon this time of waiting and expecting, a wonderful holy season a time to stop and ponder the mystery of our faith and into the celebration once more of our Saviours birth.

I leave you with this thought from Monsignor Charles Pope:

Late autumn and early winter are times of great seasonal change. The leaves turn brilliant colours, then fade and fall. Shadows lengthen as the days grow shorter and colder. Holidays and the warmth of summer are distant memories, and we are reminded once again that the things of this world last but a moment and then pass away. Even so, we look forward as well. Christmas can be a wonderful time of year. Likewise, the winter ahead has its delights. Few can deny the mesmerizing beauty of falling snow and the childlike excitement a winter storm can arouse. Advent draws us spiritually into this season of change, longing, and expectation. As the days grow shorter and the darkness increases, we light candles on our Advent wreaths and remember that Jesus is the true light of the world, the light that shines in the darkness. These lit candles also symbolize our ongoing commitment to come out of the darkness into God's own marvellous light.

Wishing you a holy and happy Advent time into the joy of Christmas once again.

With love,  
Canon Graham.

## Letter from the Curate

Dear Friends,

As I look out over the garden on a dreich morning, I am reminded of a Jane Austen remark. 'Who can endure a cabbage bed in October?' I do know what she means - in November too! It is a depressing sight. On the other hand, the sun has just come out and I am reminded by Keats that autumn is the close bosom-friend of the maturing sun, filling all fruit with

ripeness and plumping the hazel shells. As we, along with plants and animals begin preparation for what could be a testing winter, I feel uplifted by the bounty of autumn.

My opening greeting to you in this letter also brings joy. It reminds me of the loving support, patience and encouragement you have offered me since I began my happy placement and subsequent curacy at St John's. And so, this letter, whilst I cannot thank you all face to face, is a means of expressing these things. Although I have already thanked Christine for the glorious array of flowers at the service for my ordination to the priesthood, it is thanks to you all she was able to enhance the existing beauty of St John's at such a pivotal, privileged moment in my life.

What has been less uplifting, was the order of priorities in part of the UK where some churches were allowed to reopen only after car showrooms, and garden centres. Rev. Marcus Walker observes, 'Religion was classed as a 'leisure activity'. For us Christians, the worship of God is life-giving and transformational, it informs who we are at our very core. It is the very opposite of inessential. It is of our essence'. There are all sorts of activities that the government likes churches doing: operating foodbanks, looking after the homeless. But this good work does not come out of nowhere. It comes bubbling up from the worship that we share together. It is the vital overflowing of a love that grows and builds among people who pray together'.

And throughout this pandemic our church has been steadfastly prayerful – again in many new ways. That our church has reopened for gathered worship is also good news - albeit under strict compliance with government rules. For some this has not been comfortable whilst for others a source of deep joy. What lies ahead in terms of gathering in St John's is unknowable for now but we can reflect with gladness on all the quiet, wonderful pastoral work that's taken place since March, in many new ways for sure, always with loving concern for the other both within the congregation and for those beyond - a privilege to witness.

Good news has just broken - a preliminary analysis has shown the first effective coronavirus vaccine has been produced. Bless, the scientists and bless us, dear Lord!

As we move on towards Advent, bare brown trees, etched against a winter sky, leaves falling rustling, ground hard and cold, remind us to prepare for Christ's coming: remind us to prepare for the time when the soles of his feet will touch the ground, when he will become one of us to be at one with us.

With my loving prayers as aye,

Annie



## Weekly Services

The church building is now open for weekly services on Wednesdays at 8.30 am and Sundays at 10.30 am. Weekly services are still available via the church website. [www.episcopal-perth.org.uk](http://www.episcopal-perth.org.uk) or a link on our Facebook page.

There is also a weekly prayer meeting on Zoom. For further details please contact Rob Mackay at the church office: 01738 634999.

# Instructions for using Zoom

## Using Zoom

For those who haven't used Zoom before and would like to join these meetings go to your AppStore and download Zoom, which is free. If you have told the Judy/Church Office for the AGM or Rob Mackay for Evening Prayer you wish to 'join' (i.e. attend), you will receive in good time an email like this:

### Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84381022286?pwd=WVQ4cVdmVXZMTHdqakxyaURCRzM4UT09>

Meeting ID: 843 8102 2286

Passcode: 676362

One tap mobile

+442039017895,,84381022286#,,,,,0#,,676362# United Kingdom

+441314601196,,84381022286#,,,,,0#,,676362# United Kingdom

Dial by your location

+44 203 901 7895 United Kingdom

+44 131 460 1196 United Kingdom

+44 203 051 2874 United Kingdom

+44 203 481 5237 United Kingdom

+44 203 481 5240 United Kingdom

Meeting ID: 843 8102 2286

Passcode: 676362

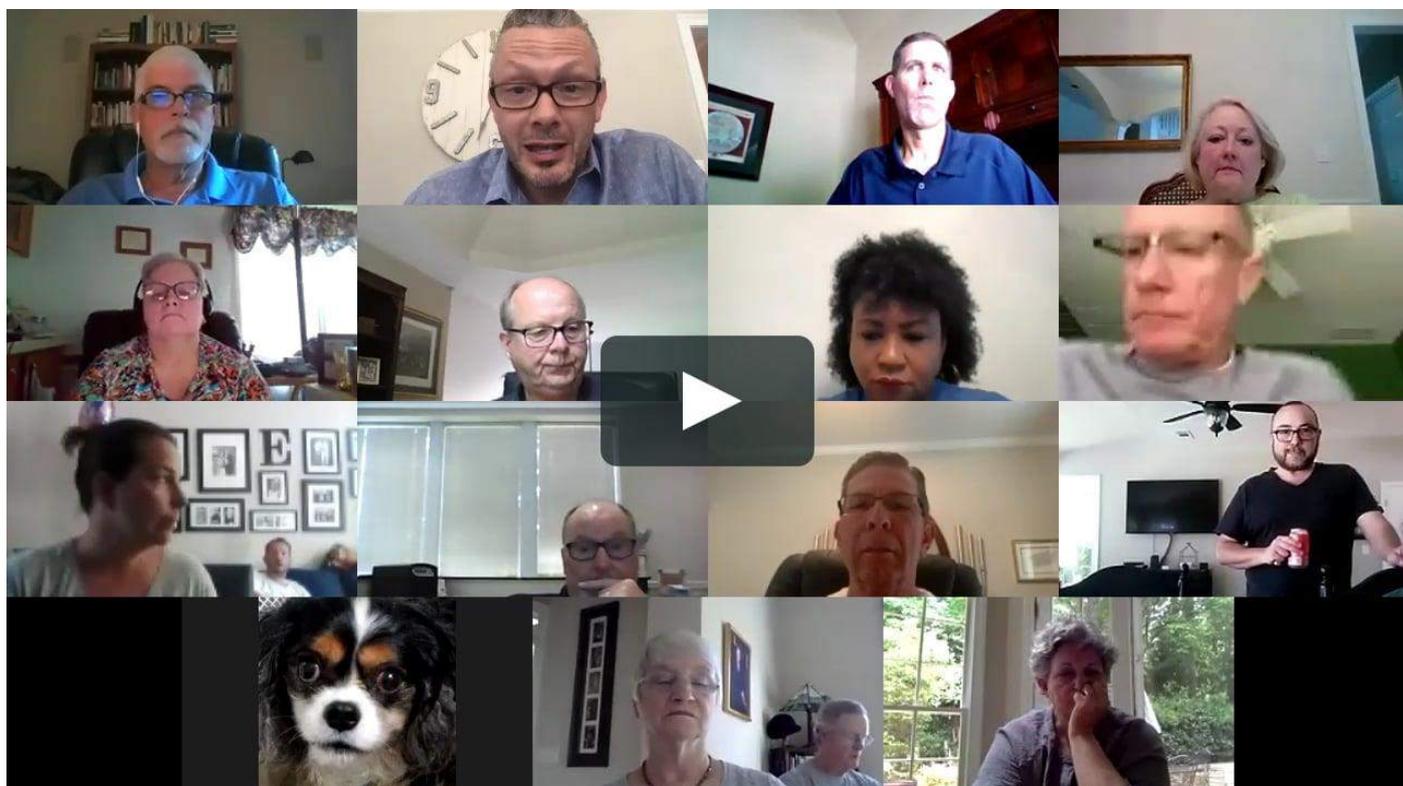
Find your local number: <https://us02web.zoom.us/u/kVnfT6QCX>

About 5 to 10 minutes before the meeting is due to start, open your email and click the <https://> link at the top. This will open your Zoom and a blue Join box. Click it. If you are a few minutes early a screen may say *Waiting for the host to start this meeting*. When the meeting is opened, you will be invited to 'Join with video'. Click it. For a moment you will see yourself full-screen before you are reduced to a small box in one corner. To position yourself in the 'Gallery' of attenders click on

top right or top left of your screen (it varies from laptop to ipad). Other icons appear if you click top right of your screen including a Mute icon. The host may ask you to mute or unmute yourself.

## JOINING BY LANDLINE

If you are joining by landline only, 5 to 10 minutes before the meeting is due to start dial one of the UK numbers given in your email, replacing the +44 prefix with a zero as usual. You will hear: *Welcome to Zoom*. If you are the host, press the host key. If you are a participant please enter the meeting ID and the hash key. It may also say again *If you are a participant just press hash*. If you are little early you may hear *The meeting has not started. Please wait or try again later*. The host will know when another number has joined and will ask you to identify yourself by name.



# Thank you!

Dear Friends at St John's,

Thank you all for the lovely cards, beautiful bouquet of flowers and good wishes to mark our 68th Wedding Anniversary.

It was a very kind gesture and much appreciated by us both, especially as it was the first service collectively in church for six months and first Sunday for Annie to celebrate.

A memorable St Luke's and truly Blessed Day.  
Jean & John Parrott



## Rotary Calendar 2021

A few members have been asking me if the Rotary Calendar which we have sold over the past three years gaining some income for St John's, would be available for 2021. I'm afraid the quick answer is "No"!

When the first lockdown took place it was clear to Perth Kinnoull Rotary Club that the production and marketing of a 2021 Calendar would face

significant difficulties while the restrictions for Co-Vid19 remained in operation. A decision was therefore taken not to proceed with a 2021 Calendar.

My apologies for not informing St John members earlier. If in the new year the club decides to proceed with a 2022 Calendar I will let the congregation know.

Bishop Bruce

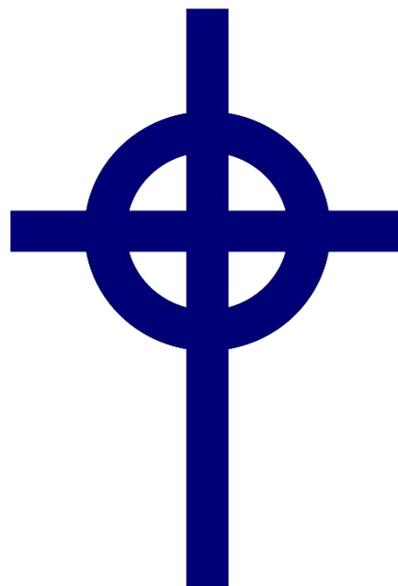
## Thanks

Val and her family wish to thank Graham and their friends at St John's for the lovely cards, kind words of condolence and offers of help which they received following John's death.

To know that we had your support and prayers was a great comfort.

Thank you and best wishes,

Val Fox



# Bookshelves

Dear David,

First of all congratulations on keeping Quest going. From experience I know it's never easy at the best of times and must be a nightmare when there are no social activities.

The thing that has interested me during the past few months has been 'Bookshelves'. Deprived of the joy of wandering round Waterstones we all became obsessed with the contents of the shelves that TV personalities had in their own homes. I confess to freezing my TV to try and read the titles. Were they carefully curated? There was a dreadful suggestion from an interior decorator that they should be colour coordinated. What a thought. Might work for the old Penguin groups but a disaster if you were trying to locate an old friend.

Then there has been the discussion about books we should read. Quite different from those you want to read, particularly as you get older and your list gets longer and you may not reach the end of your list. Personally, I was ready to take up arms on behalf of *Three Men in a Boat* but was beaten to it by writers to *The Times*. It has long been the book I would take to a desert island. In the early days of the church book group we had an evening reading extracts from our favourite books and that was mine. I was very young when I found it in my Grandmother's bookcase. I even have it on my Kindle in case I ever have to be parted from my bookshelves.

Kindles are always controversial. Books always win for me but my husband and I would have welcomed them for holidays when our cases always contained more books than clothes but I always wonder how many people will now be deprived of new discoveries in villas, cottages and hotels where people would have left behind their holiday books. Those holiday delights seem ancient history.

Perhaps some members of the congregation have some personal favourites or recommendations. At the moment I am reading an interesting history of a Jewish family entitled “House of Glass” by Hadley Freeman. It’s not a book to cheer one up but is most thought-provoking. Some things never change and anti-semitism seems to be reported more frequently and I do like to intersperse reading fiction with non fiction .

Just a few thoughts, David. They may prove useful. Hope your own reading (and writing) are proving enjoyable.

My best wishes to you both.

Sonia



# Sunday Lectionary

## **November 29 Advent 1**

1 Corinthians 1.3-9, Mark 13. 24-37

## **December 6. Advent 2**

2 Peter 3.8-15a, Mark 1. 1-8

## **December 13 Advent 3**

1 Thess.5. 16-24, John 1.6-8,19-28

## **December 20 Advent 4**

Romans 16. 25-27, Luke 1.26-38

## **Christmas Day**

Isaiah 52. 7-10, Luke 2 {1-7}8-20

## **December 27 1st Sunday after Christmas**

Galatians 4. 4-7, Luke 2. 22-40

## **January 3 Epiphany**

Ephes. 3. 1-12, Matt 2.1-12

## **January 10 Epiphany 1**

Acts 19. 1-7, Mark 1. 4-11

## **January 17 Epiphany 2**

1 Cor. 6.12-20, John 1. 43-51

## **January 24 Epiphany 3**

1.Cor 7. 29-31, Mark 1. 14-20

## **January 31. Epiphany 4**

1 Cor. 8.1-13, Mark 1. 21-28

# Christmas Service Dates

**Wednesday 23<sup>rd</sup> December** – 8.30 am Holy Communion, Prayer Book.

**Wednesday 23<sup>rd</sup> December** – 6.30 pm Advent Evening Prayer on Zoom, this will include extra time for a reflection and some sharing together.

**Friday 25<sup>th</sup> December**, Christmas Day 10.30 am – Eucharist.  
Booking with Judy very important for this service – this service will also be Livestreamed.

**Sunday 27<sup>th</sup> December** – 10.30 am Eucharist.  
Booking again required – this service will also be Livestreamed.

I hope this gives choices to folks as we share a different Christmas together this year. This decision considers cleaning etc and time between each service which we have to adhere to. Therefore we will not hold a Midnight Eucharist this year.



# Christian Aid

## **Locusts, coronavirus and climate change – Ethiopia's 2020 crisis**

Do you recall singing Kathy Galloway's carol *When out of poverty is born* on Advent Sunday, 2019? We were responding to Christian Aid's invitation to sing, with many others across Scotland, in solidarity and hope. This year we hope to sing the carol again during Advent – at least we hope Rhiannon will sing it on our behalf!

As we celebrate Emmanuel, we celebrate a love that builds hope. We've seen that locally, in the way so many people have responded with kindness to neighbours during the covid-19 crisis. But that is not the only crisis – there is also the climate crisis.

### *Locusts in Ethiopia*

When I heard that a swarm of 40 million locusts can eat the same amount of food in one day as 35,000 people, I couldn't believe it – these small stick-like creatures eat so much? But it is true. Since last summer, the unusually warm temperatures and heavy rainfall have let the desert locusts in Ethiopia thrive. Crops and land have been devastated. The region, already impacted by the coronavirus epidemic, will suffer major food insecurity if the locusts, not seen on this scale for decades, are not eradicated.

Women like Borgodo Tsoke, a widow and mother of five, witnessed plagues of locusts larger than ever before. 'The locusts suddenly came out of nowhere and ate every green plant in their path. They left us nothing useful,' she said. Borgodo's crops were so quickly destroyed that she didn't know if anything would grow again.

Christian Aid has been supporting farmers like her to battle the locusts, using hand sprayers to kill the young hoppers before they swarm – a vital intervention in such near-perfect locust breeding conditions. The Scottish government's humanitarian fund has also helped, giving the farmers drought resistant seeds to boost the harvest.

The work in Ethiopia is one example of how covid-19 has impacted much of C Aid's work this year. Rowan Williams reflected in his sermon for Christian Aid's AGM in November on the loss at very deep levels: many unexpected deaths; loss of jobs; loss of confidence and loss of trustworthiness in what we hear and read. But the pandemic has also given us an opportunity to re-consider what really matters; not just at a practical level, but what we really value. We are all, he said, rooted in the whole world, like Christian Aid. Loss may drive us deeper and incline us to ask what our legacy is, and to appreciate that the deepest reality is generosity and compassion.

In that spirit, this Advent, let us at St John's help Christian Aid create a better life for many farmers, like Borgodo in Ethiopia.

[www.christianaid.org.uk/appeals](http://www.christianaid.org.uk/appeals)

Elaine Cameron

As the Christian Aid website says:

*'Love never fails. Even when crisis threatens, love builds hope.  
Love builds hope in some of the world's toughest places.  
Love builds resilience in some of the world's fiercest climates.  
In the face of disease, drought and darkness, hope remains.  
This Christmas we stand with our neighbours near and far in crisis.  
With hope, we build foundations of love that will transform lives.  
Our traditions may look different in this year of social distance, yet love is never distant.  
Love calls us to action.'*



# Aberlour

Dear Rev. Canon Taylor and all at St. John the Baptist Episcopal Church,

I hope you and your loved ones are well.

Throughout 2020, Aberlour's services have continued to provide care and support for the most vulnerable children and families in our society. However, our whole fundraising focus since March this year has been to raise money for our Urgent Assistance Fund in the hope that we could keep up with the increased demand brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Our Urgent Assistance Fund has been providing emergency cash grants to families with children for a number of years to buy essentials such as food, electricity and nappies. Last year, we awarded a total of 376 grants. Since the beginning of lockdown, we have awarded over 2,250 grants, totalling more than £546,000.

We also helped to provide laptops and internet access so that children could continue with their studies while being home schooled and continued our support to unaccompanied young refugees who often arrive in Scotland with nothing. Sadly, the number of applications we're receiving to our fund is not slowing down. Even with the extension to the furlough scheme, more people continue to face job uncertainty or redundancy. Pushing more families into crisis and leaving children cold and hungry.

This year, more than ever, families across Scotland need your support to help them survive winter. The support of St. John the Baptist's church will help families feed their children and keep them warm. It really will make a difference.

We've updated our Christingle toolkit, which I've attached to this email, to reflect the current COVID situation. I've also attached a prayer card that we ask you to share with the members of your congregation. If you would like a speaker or video to integrate into your online Christmas services, please let me know.

From every one of us at Aberlour, and from the families that we will be able to help because of your support, thank you very much once again.

With best wishes,  
Abby Parkhouse

# Christmas Day

The date of Christ's birth has been disputed down the ages and remains a mystery. Matthew suggests 4 BC (King Herod) and Luke AD 6 (Quirinius, governor of Syria). The other two gospels do not mention Christ's birth at all nor does any other book of the New Testament. Both dates are fraught with difficulty. Aspects of the Christmas story such as the descent from David, the flight into Egypt and the virginity of Mary can be traced back to Messianic prophecy in the Old Testament. There the Hebrew word means 'young woman', whereas 'parthenos' in the Greek translation means virgin; the virginity of Mary was essential since Christ was regarded as the son of God. Bethlehem, the star, Wise Men, inn and manger, shepherds and so forth, have a symbolic value but no basis in historical fact. A later accretion is the ox and the ass, first recorded in an extant text of the eighth century AD.

We cannot know the year of Christ's birth, nor can we know the calendar date. The 25<sup>th</sup> December was the Winter Solstice in the Roman calendar. The Roman festival of the Saturnalia was held in midwinter and was a time of revelry and the giving of presents. The Christians turned this festivity into a celebration of Christ's birth. This was convenient since it was ninth month since the Vernal Equinox, which came to be the date of the Annunciation. But the first recorded celebration of Christmas on December 25<sup>th</sup> took place in Rome in AD 336. Eastern churches have always had January 7<sup>th</sup> (by the Gregorian Calendar) as Christmas Day, since they follow the old Julian Calendar. But in the West and more recently founded churches, 25<sup>th</sup> December has been enshrined as the date of Christmas and is now, in the secular world, a public holiday.

It was not always so. Under the Commonwealth, Cromwell directed that celebrations of Christmas should be banned, since it was considered a time of drunkenness and misbehaviour; he also banned theatres and dancing round the maypole. He wanted shops to be open as usual on Christmas Day, but this was largely ignored in England (but persisted in

Scotland well into the twentieth century). No wonder the return of Charles II in 1660 was greeted with much rejoicing.

The Christmas story has given rise to the most wonderful art and music in the same way as have the legends of Greece and Rome. It is truly inspirational but it is not the essence of our Christian faith which is contained in Christ's life (God made Man) and the Resurrection.

David Willington



Mary Willington: Loch Polney, Near Dunkeld

**From the Registers – Eternal Rest**

Iain Swanney: 12<sup>th</sup> July 1947 – 2<sup>nd</sup> November 2020

# Contact Information

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Lay Reader	Mr Rob Mackay		
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<b>Church Activities</b>			
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Flowers	Christine Bracewell	552817	
Magazine	David Willington	813787	
Fellowship	Jean Hendry	623603	
Buggy Club	Eunice McPherson	552337	
Young Church	Jean Hendry	623603	
Links	Ruth Harris	621379	
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# From the Editor

Thanks very much for everyone's contributions to this issue and to those who helped prepare it for printing and distribution. Please hand in or email all items to David Willington for our February and March issue by

## Sunday 17<sup>th</sup> January 2020

[www.scotland.anglican.org](http://www.scotland.anglican.org)

[www.standrews.anglican.org](http://www.standrews.anglican.org)

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