

NORTH LEITH PARISH CHURCH MAGAZINE

December 2022

Dear Friends,



The four weeks of advent leading up to Christmas is a time of preparation with different aspects of the Christmas message of 'hope, peace, joy, and love. The manger is brought out, with Mary and Joseph and baby Jesus, the shepherds, the angels. A Christmas tree stands tall decorated with gleaming symbols of our faith and a growing excitement fills the air as each week the children ask, 'how many more sleeps?'

If only we could keep that childlike sense of anticipation and excitement that something wonderful is coming. The Christmas message has not changed in over 2000 years, unfortunately somewhere along the way the 'good news' of God being with us has been exchanged for the commercial aspect and stress that Christmas has become for so many.

In asking the question 'what do you hope for this Christmas,' we may encounter the following responses: 'I hope I'm not alone,' 'I hope we don't fall out this year,' 'I hope dad comes home for Christmas,' 'I

hope I can afford it,' 'I hope we get back to normal as soon as possible.'

The Christmas message is not supposed to be one of loneliness, of fallouts, brokenness, debt, and excess, but one of worship and adoration, of sharing and giving, of light coming into this dark world, and an invitation to be part of a huge family that is fully inclusive, welcoming, and eternal. Can you consider celebrating Christmas this year in the spirit with which it was given, as a gift of love, of hope, of joy and of peace from God to us all?

'For to us a child is born, to us a son is given. And he will be called Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.' Isaiah 9:6

May each and every one of you have a Blessed Christmas.

Your friend in Christ

Karen, Interim Moderator



Q. What do they sing at a snowman's birthday party?

A. Freeze a jolly good fellow

South West Coast Path



In the November magazine Anne did an excellent job of outlining my walk of the 630 mile SWCP from Minehead in Somerset to Poole in Dorset.

In 2018-2019 it had taken 27 days to cover the first 470 miles as far as Dartmouth in Devon. I was all set to complete it in April 2020 but Covid intervened. So it was in September of this year that Margot and I set off for the south coast for me to cover the final 160 miles. That part of England is one which neither of us had visited before. Margot had insisted that she wanted to have a proper holiday and not merely act as my chauffeur. Fair point.

We based ourselves at three different locations along the route. To minimise Margot's driving I would use buses where possible or stay at intermediate points to avoid long-distance toing and froing. We began with two nights in a B&B in Paignton near Torquay. Then Margot moved on to a house in

Beer, Devon where we'd rented a house for 5 nights. Meantime I walked as far as a B&B in Starcross. In Beer we were joined by two of Margot's friends. Together the three of them enjoyed local walks and some of the sights while I proceeded along the coast.

This part of the south coast is characterised by towns and villages such as Exmouth , Lyme Regis, Weymouth and Swanage with steep cliffs in between - picture Beachy Head or the white cliffs of Dover although most in Devon were red or grey in colour but some white ones in Dorset. There are a few sandy beaches but most are shingle including the 20 mile Chesil Beach. In many places the cliffs are being eroded and there was plenty of evidence of rockfalls and landslides, necessitating path diversions. My average walking distance each day was 16 miles depending on where I was staying and where the buses ran. Distances varied from 7 to 22 miles.

I am often asked "Do you meet many other people when you are walking?" Usually my answer is "No!" Of course there are lots of people taking a local stroll along the prom or walking their dog at one village or another. Or I may see a long-distance walker or two with their rucksacks. In that case it may be just a nod or a quick exchange about how far we are headed. However on this occasion my encounters with fellow walkers were one of the most memorable aspects of the trip.

On the second day of this section (29th of the whole walk) from Torquay to Starcross first I met Rob and we walked together for about 90 minutes in the morning. Then later I put Paul right when he was about to take a wrong turn (as I had already done a few minutes before) and we went all the way to Starcross together. Rob and Paul were both regular SWCP walkers and lived in the area so we were able to share our experiences of walking the path.

Our final accommodation was a flat in Weymouth owned by our niece and her husband. On the day I was heading for

Weymouth I had stopped to look at the map when another walker came along and we soon fell in to walking together. He was just out for a local walk, not carrying a bag or anything. As we chatted we shared quite a bit of our back stories but the most interesting fact did not emerge until the end. George had studied geology at Cambridge and mapped rocks on a field trip near Oban so he had some familiarity with a little bit of Scotland's coast. He had been an RE teacher for 20 years before becoming an Anglican vicar. His rural parish is in the Sherbourne area. Late in the conversation and just as he was about to turn away to complete a loop he mentioned that his brother lived in Edinburgh. I asked what he did and he said that he was a former teacher who now taught people to ride bicycles. That sounded like someone I knew. I showed my surprise "Does he live in Madeira Place?" "Yes!" came an equally surprised reply. I know his brother Sam to see although I had forgotten his name until George reminded me. And his wife Jen is in Margot's book group in Leith. At this point we took photos and I noted his email to send my blog in due course. I love coincidences like that and it wasn't the only one I was to experience before the end of the walk.

My final encounter with other walkers occurred on the penultimate day on the way to Swanage. As I approached Bindon Hill I could see 7 or 8 people up ahead. This hill was a monster, one of the steepest, longest climbs on the whole SWCP. Coming early in the day I was fairly fresh so just went for it, continuing relentlessly until the top. The people ahead of me had stopped by a gate. I discovered that they were all together and had stopped briefly to regroup and have a short break. I reached them just as they were setting off again. I was to spend much of the rest of the day in their company. I went a bit further than the most basic pleasantries of "Fine day!" by inquiring "Going far?" One replied that they were heading for Swanage. "Me too" I acknowledged and we took it from there. I was to discover that they were a group of friends - most of whom had met at Exeter University. Numbering 7, for the past 26 years they had met for a long weekend to walk

the SWCP. 2022 would see them complete it for the second time. It was fascinating to learn of their backgrounds, how they came together as a group and past experiences on the SWCP. This made the miles slip by easily. In fact, a bit too easily. Passing through a military firing range (closed for the weekend) yellow posts directed walkers away from a crumbling cliff edge but the posts also indicated various paths through the range. As the shoreline veered south we carried on along another path. At some point approaching a viewpoint on Povington Hill and engrossed in conversation someone said "Aren't we getting a bit far inland?" Consulting the map we discovered that we were well inland. This was not a coastal path diversion as, with wishful thinking, we initially hoped. It was decided that it would be best to head directly back to the coast and a route was identified. It wasn't downhill all the way as we had to go up and over an intervening ridge and across a ploughed field before returning to the SWCP at Kimmeridge Bay. The others had planned a lunch stop at the village of Worth Maltravers but their lunchtime seemed to be receding from a hopeful 1330 to a more likely 1530. If that were the case arrival in Swanage before dark could not be guaranteed. One, whose boots were giving him trouble had already decided to opt out and proceed to Swanage by taxi after lunch; one by one the others realised that this was the best decision. They would return to Worth Maltravers in the morning for the final 14 miles to South Haven where the SWCP ended. I was a bit disappointed to be losing their companionship just as the difficult final 7 miles lay ahead. We said our goodbyes and I pressed on.

Later, safely settled in Swanage I set off to look for a place to eat. It was Saturday night, a holiday weekend and the town was busy. I had noticed a small Italian place on my way through the town centre earlier but now it was packed as was a fish and chip place next door. I was thinking that I might have to settle for a takeaway when I spotted a modest Indian restaurant on a corner opposite. There weren't many customers but some tables seemed set in expectation of larger groups with reservations. I entered down some steps and

asked for a table for one. At first the Asian lady seemed to hesitate, then gestured to an incongruously positioned little table with a single chair right in the middle of the relatively small dining area. I nodded appreciatively and sat down. I ordered a beer and a curry. Both arrived relatively quickly. I had just begun my meal when I became aware of someone at the window in the street above. He was waving; at me! It was Carl, one of my walking companions from earlier. He came in and beat me to asking the obvious question "What are you doing here?" Before I could proffer the obvious reply he told me that his group had booked a table for the evening. Gradually in ones and twos the others appeared and registered the same reaction of surprise and amusement. As it sank in that this was a wonderful coincidence they insisted (to the restaurant manager more than to me) that I join their group. They tried to explain that their group would now be 8 people as they helped move my table alongside those set for them. I returned to my meal while the waiter struggled to take their multiple orders for drinks, starters and mains. It was a most enjoyable evening. As I only had 7 miles left to walk the following morning I did not demur when invited to join them for a nightcap at the Ship Inn nearby later. A most memorable day.



The following day I completed the final 7 miles to Poole before lunch and Margot met me there with a celebratory green garland. It seemed strange that a project which had begun in 2018 was now complete, and with that the inevitable question, “What next?”

If you would like to read my blog of the entire walk you can find it beginning at <https://southwestcoastpathblog.wordpress.com/2018/06/16/south-west-coast-path-getting-started/>

SEASON'S GREETINGS

Another Christmas comes along
To jolly up old winter's song
And fill our days with much ado
A busy time for me and you.

Another festive season's here
Carols, candles, Christmas cheer
Remembering our dear Lord's birth
His life, his message - Peace on Earth

Another year draws to a close
A joyful sign – a Christmas rose
And lengthening days as well appear
To usher in a brand New Year.

*Written by Norma A. Macarthur
for Christmas 2022 and New Year 2023*

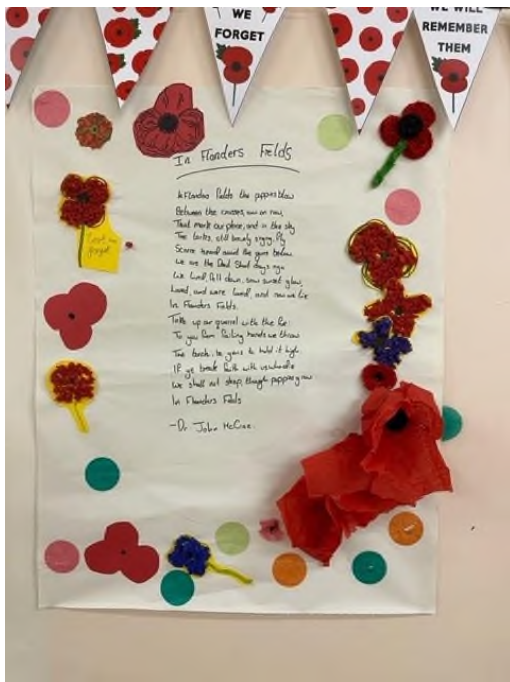


Remembrance 2022

It was lovely to see some of the girls and their parents from 142nd Rainbows, Brownies and Guides at our Remembrance Service this year.



The guides made a couple of poster for the halls.



Q. What happened to the man who stole an advent calendar? A. He got 25 days

Upcoming Worship Services

Thursday 8 December at 1pm: LCT Lunchtime service at North Leith

Sunday 11 December at 11am: Christmas Gift service, gifts for the Citadel children and families.

Sunday 18 December at 11am: all-age service of Lessons and Carols, this will be a joint service, at north Leith, with Newhaven and South Leith members.

Sunday 25 December at 11am: Christmas Day service.

Christmas Eve: no service in our church but here are services in the other churches which you would be very welcome to attend:

4pm: all-age service and 11.30pm: watchnight service, at *Newhaven*

6pm: Christingle service and 11pm: watchnight service, at *South Leith*

Sunday 1 January, 2023: there will be no service at North Leith on New Year's Day, all welcome at South Leith or Newhaven.



For many years North Leith has provided support and goods to Fresh Start. Recently the boot was on the other foot as Fresh Start was able to provide household goods for one of the Foodbank clients who was in desperate need of a washing machine. Not only was this provided, but also a cooker and a vacuum cleaner much to the surprised delight of the client who was greatly moved by the kindness shown to him by the Foodbank and Fresh Start volunteers.

Donations for the starter packs are always welcome and are in more and more demand in the current cost of living crisis: cleaning products; crockery and cutlery; curtains; food; pots; kitchen utensils; single or double bedding; small electrical appliances; toiletries and towels.

If you would like to support the annual Cookers for Christmas appeal please speak with Ellen Lowe.

Christmas Donations

Over November / December congregational members will have contributed as usual to the Seafarers' Christmas bags, the Citadel children and families Christmas gifts, Fresh Start Cookers for Christmas appeal and, this year, the special appeal for warm clothes for people on the ship MV Victoria currently housing Ukrainian refugees.

Many thanks are due to all who have donated so generously.

In addition, from funds especially set up for such purposes (the Robertson, Husband Bequest and Gavin funds) money has been donated to the Bethany Christian Trust Welcome Centre for the homeless, the Citadel Children and Family services, the appeal for Christmas hampers for New Scots (refugees and other immigrants living in and around Edinburgh) and the Foodbank for vouchers for food and electricity to help with current cost of living increases. These donations have totalled £2,150.

It may be considered particularly appropriate therefore that the annual **North Leith Christmas Appeal** this year is for a charity working overseas and the Session has chosen the British Red Cross Afghanistan Crisis Appeal.



Afghanistan is in dire crisis, please help if you can.

“Over 24 million people in Afghanistan – more than half the population – currently need humanitarian assistance just to survive. 95% of people don't have enough to eat, and 11 million people are in danger right now because of food insecurity.

The country's economic collapse has sent food prices soaring, healthcare is difficult to access, and millions have been uprooted from their homes due to conflict or extreme weather.

When the earthquake struck in June it caused even more devastation. Over 1,000 people lost their lives and thousands more were injured or

made homeless. The earthquake also damaged and destroyed vital infrastructure like schools, health centres and water networks.

Afghanistan was already on its knees – years of conflict, poverty, and the disruption caused by the pandemic had taken such a huge toll on the country's people. But the recent conflict and change of government, followed by the earthquake and the worst drought in 27 years, have tipped the country over the edge."

The appeal will be open through December and into early January. (For individual anonymous donations up to £30, tax can be claimed through the Gift Aid small donations scheme, if you are giving over £30 please use a gift aid envelope if you can.)

Church family

Please remember to update us with any changes of contact details: postal address, phone number, email address; and any changes that may affect giving by Gift Aid.

**Thank You, Creator God,
Eternal Christ,
Reconciling Spirit
for the transformative power of Emmanuel, God with Us.
Amen**



Q. How does good King Wenceslas like his pizza? A. Deep pan, crisp and even