

NORTH LEITH PARISH CHURCH MAGAZINE

December 2023



Dear Friends,

As we go to print who would have thought that here I am as your Interim Moderator two years down the line. It has been an interesting and challenging time with the journey that we have all been on and we will continue this very blessed and interesting journey.

Unfortunately, there is not much to update you on moving towards our New Parish as we are still waiting on The National Church Offices and Presbytery to come back to us with answers, to several questions.

I would like to take a moment to wish you a very Merry Christmas. During this season, we will be celebrating Hope, Peace, Love and Joy; I pray that all four of these would fill your life in every way this Christmas and beyond. This Christmas, as in all previous years, we celebrate “Emmanuel” (God with us). Without Christ’s presence

among us we would be lost. Through God's presence working within us we are being healed, transformed, reconciled, and made whole. I pray you all have a fantastic Christmas.

Your friend in Christ

Karen, Interim Moderator



A POEM FOR PEACE

Peace it is a gentle thing
depicted as a dove
Peace it is out on the wing
the surest form of love
it is so dear...let nothing fear
or no-one take for granted
in precious soil with tears and toil
the seed of peace was planted
it spread its roots and fragile shoots
at times its needs are nourished
to take its hold with flags so bold
and many nations flourished
out of the mud...the darling bud
has harnessed hope's abundance
a shining light, the climate right
and no need for redundancy
its branching alms and leafy balms
should firmly grow and grow
we'll guard the realm
with every helm
for peace comes dropping slow
may faith the gift so heal the rift
in a world wise to secure

that peace can be a life-like tree
the price would well assure...

From a Sparkling Collection by Norma Anne Macarthur



From John Tait, Locum Minister

Hello Everyone

As you know I have been serving as Locum Minister of North Leith Parish Church since February this year.

I continue to enjoy working with all the folks in the congregation. Sharing with you all on our journey towards our New Parish is a privilege and I am seeking to do all I can to enable a spirit of hope and expectation to be held on to under God's guiding and God's love, despite the hold ups and frustrations along the way.

There have been and continue to be many experiences and situations that I treasure as I get to know people in North Leith and make links from my nearly 40 years as a Minister in Leith.

Joint services each month continue to be a great opportunity to get to know one another across the three congregations and to experience worship in different settings and with innovative styles and content. I encourage you all to continue to be part of those services taking the chance to talk to folks you don't know.

As we move towards our new parish I would encourage all of you who have not been in Church for a while to come along during Advent and Christmas, as we begin a new year in the Christian Calendar.

May I wish you all a Happy Christmas and I hope to see you all at our Christmas Service at 11.00 am on Sunday 24th December.

God bless you all.

John

Update from 142nd Units

The Rainbows

The Rainbows have enjoyed games, crafts, and badge nights. We have had several new girls start as well as seeing some girls move on to Brownies. In the next few weeks, there will be lots of crafts.

Glitter, sparkle and magic 🧑🏻‍🎄🧶

The Brownies

Another busy year, currently we have a full unit of girls. Girls enjoy working for badges, doing crafts and making new friends. Ella and Ellen were both in the junior gang for the Edinburgh Gang show and enjoyed their time performing on the stage at the Festival Theatre.

The Guides and Rangers

Whilst still a small number of girls attend, they enjoy friendship, badge work and new adventures. We have some Brownies due to move up after the Christmas Holidays which the girls are looking forward to. For the 2nd year running Lucy was in the main gang for Edinburgh Gang Show, we all went along to support her.

Michelle receiving her 40 years long service award at Girlguiding Edinburgh Annual Gathering on 26th November 2023.



Thank you to the girls who took part and attended the Remembrance Service and to those who created artwork for display in the church.

Mary Dawson joining the girls at remembrance parade November 2023
Mary, who is 100 years old, served in the Royal Navy.



Artwork and poppies made by the girls for the remembrance service





In November the church was the venue for the Citadel Arts Group's latest production, *The Ghosts of North Leith*, a play of stories based on lives of people buried in the old Coburg Street graveyard. Some of characters included Robert Nicoll, poet and campaigning journalist, Nelly Gladstone, antislavery campaigner (and ancestor of Prime Minister William Gladstone), Lady Anne Macintosh, fervent Jacobite commander. The play ran for three evenings, was well attended and was well received by critics.

Here is part of a poem written by Robert Nicoll (1814 Perth – 1837 LeithTrinity)

*THE braw folk crush the poor folk down,
An' blood an' tears are rinnin' het;
An' meikle ill and meikle wae,
We a' upon the earth have met.
An' Falsehood aft comes boldly forth,
And on the throne of Truth doth sit;
But true hearts a' – gae work awa' –
We'll mak' the Warld better yet!*

A Memorable Christmas *from Jimmy Hudson*

Some of you know that some years ago I lived with my family in Israel working for the Church of Scotland, teaching at Tabeetha school.

Israel/Palestine, the land of the Bible. The land of Bethlehem and Nazareth.

The scene of the first Christmas but so much in our thoughts for other reasons in 2023.

In 1979 we spent our first Christmas there.

Margot and I and our children Kirsty and Kieran then aged two and 4 months were living in the big city of Tel Aviv on the shore of the Mediterranean.

Israel is a predominantly Jewish country and Tel Aviv is its most Jewish city - there are very few churches there, but there was one which we went to.

Around the beginning of December, the minister of the church asked if we would like a Christmas tree - the church had been offered trees free. We said yes.

A few days before Christmas our tree was delivered to the apartment where we lived.

It wasn't like any Christmas tree I'd seen before - it was a coniferous tree but that's about the only thing it had in common with the trees we would find here in Edinburgh.

There was one problem - it was too long - a 10 foot tree in an 8 foot ceiling apartment - simple you may say, just cut a bit off.

Well I wasn't about to cut the top off, so it would have to be the bottom - it wasn't that wide in diameter but I had no saw or anything else.

Then I had an idea - the only thing I had that vaguely resembled a saw was a bread knife with a serrated edge - there was nothing else for it - it took a bit of work but soon the tree was short enough to fit upright in the living room. At home in Edinburgh we have a special device to hold our tree in place - In Tel Aviv I had to improvise. The city is built on sand dunes so any waste ground is covered in sand - so,

equipped with a plastic bucket and my daughter's spade for the beach I filled the bucket with sand and brought it home to stand the tree in.

Someone was able to lend us a set of lights and we made decorations to cover the straggly frame of our tree.

Christmas Eve wasn't cold by Scottish standards but it was a wet and stormy night as we headed off on the bus to the Christmas service at church - we were sort of pleased that the weather had played its part by trying to appear wintery.

I don't know about you but in our family Christmas is a day when lots of people get together and travel from all over. That Christmas in 1979 was going to be different - we knew that all our family in Edinburgh and Belfast would be missing us, particularly our two small children and we were certainly going to miss them - I suppose we might have begun to feel a bit sorry for ourselves.

To make our day a bit special we had invited two American friends, Dave and Lynne to have Christmas dinner with us. Lynne was very pregnant and as things turned out she didn't make it to dinner - she gave birth to Jonathan on Christmas morning.

So that was a wonderful present - a baby born on Christmas day.



But there was one more surprise for us before the day was over.

In Israel we did not have a TV - we relied a lot on BBC World Service radio not only for news but for quite a bit of entertainment. One of the shows I listened to regularly was presented by the Irish presenter, Gloria Hunniford. Her show was called "A taste of honey, Irish style."

She played all sorts of Irish music from old ballads that my parents would enjoy to traditional folk music to Bob Geldof and U2.

At that time my sister Susan belonged to a choir called the Corrymeela singers.

Corrymeela is a community working for peace in Northern Ireland, not unlike the Iona Community. I knew that the singers had been working on recording an album.

It so happened that Gloria Hunniford's weekly radio show fell on Christmas day. She had to be a bit inventive to find some Irish music with a Christmas connection.

She announced her final record by saying something like "and now on the day when we remember peace on Earth, here is a song called Pollen of Peace by the Corrymeela singers" - I was thrilled to hear this connection with home coming over the airwaves - I'd never heard the song before - so I was amazed when the second solo verse was sung by a voice that I recognised immediately. The song was all the more significant with Susan singing the words - that was the most special part of a truly memorable Christmas.

So however you are spending this Christmas, whether your loved ones will be with you or far away, savour the special little things that happen which will make it memorable.

And may the man whose birth in Bethlehem we celebrate at Christmas, the man called the Prince of Peace, bring blessings to you and all whom you love this Christmas time and throughout 2024.



Upcoming Worship Services

Sunday 3 December at 11am: Christmas Gift service, gifts for the Citadel children and families.

Sunday 10 December at 11am: Joint service, at North Leith, with Newhaven and South Leith members.

Sunday 17 December at 11am: service of Lessons and Carols,

Sunday 24 December at 11am: Christmas 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*



FreshStart is currently not accepting goods as they continue to reorganise their warehouse space.

They are still running their annual **Cookers for Christmas Appeal**. With the current cost of living crisis, referrals for white goods (cookers, fridges, washing machines etc), which we would consider essentials, have increased by 50%. Replacing appliances which have broken down can put enormous pressure on family budgets and many cannot cope.

If you would like to help families this Christmas through this appeal please see Ellen Lowe.

Christmas Donations

Over November / December congregational members will have contributed to the Citadel children and families Christmas parties and Fresh Start Cookers for Christmas appeal. (This year there have not been collections for gifts for seafarers as in past because, as you may remember being reported earlier in the year, the Sailors' Society who organised these gifts no longer employ and support port chaplains.) Again this year the Robertson and Husband Bequest funds have been used to donate money 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.

The annual **North Leith Christmas Appeal** this year is for a charity working at home and the Session has chosen the Thistle Foundation, a local charity which helps disabled and other disadvantaged people and groups, and people who are going through a particularly challenging time.

“Imagine being told you are living with a chronic and enduring health condition. People may be faced with a lifetime living with pain, sleeplessness, low energy, inability to carry out basic daily tasks, low mood etc – just not, or barely, able to cope. Many such people are not able to access the support that they so badly need.

This Christmas, with your help, Thistle can do more to ensure that no one experiencing a health crisis gets left behind.”

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

At the end of October we were very happy to celebrate with Mary Dawson her 100th birthday. Mary received a bouquet of flowers and

cake & 'fizz' were served in the hall after the Sunday service. Many congratulations once more to Mary.

Deaths

We are sad to record the following deaths since the last magazine:

Edith Carnie, 13/03/23

Jemima Robertson, 12/05/23

Tom Scott, 22/05/23

George Borthwick, 30/05/23

Eileen Doig, 25/08/23

Gary MacDonald, 25/10/23

We give thanks for their lives and remember those who miss them most at this joyous Christmas time.

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.

Happy Christmas to all our readers.

