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Connecting the people of St. Mark's, Issue 5 2017



St. Mark's Parish (Church of Scotland) Stirling is a Registered Scottish Charity
(Charity Number: SC005432) CCL No: 317644

**View from
(another) Manse
with Ellen Larson Davidson**

Presence of Presents / Present of Presence

Christmas is coming! Who has a countdown to Christmas morning? Or counting down to Boxing Day when all the chaos can be packed away for another 11 months? Excitement is building to PRESENTS!

This year, the countdown to Christmas holds a bit of bittersweet emotion for me. Like so many people I am finding within the celebrations and glad tidings, there is loneliness and missing loved ones who are far away or not present. In our house, Daddy won't be present on Christmas morning again. But his presence is felt even when he's not physically there, and photos along with our Huggable Heroes (aka Squishy Daddy) help us remember.

My favourite name for Jesus and the description of what Christmas is all about is EMMANUEL - 'God is with us' (Isaiah 7:14 & Matthew 1:23). Jesus became a human and 'moved into the neighbourhood' (John 1:14, MSG). The belief God loved us so much to journey through this life WITH us humans - the ordinary, everyday people struggling through highs and lows - helps me face the lonely, isolating times of life. God is WITH us, WITH me. This precious present of presence has held me during some crazy times of life.

I love that God is with me, but lately I have also been grateful that YOU and the communities, tribes, groups are with me too. I have seen the beauty of presence over the last few years. I am humbled by the presence I see among us. WITNESS - being alongside others - is vital in communities and families (in the multiplicity of their realities). I know not everyone in the communities I live and move believes as I do, but I have felt the love and care of presence among so many. I am heartened when I see people reaching out to the lonely, the hurting, the hopeless, the bereaved, the aching, the downtrodden, the forgotten in communities. I have hope for our presence with each other. I believe as a follower of Jesus I can show 'God with us' to others when I reach out and am present with another. It is powerful to be WITH another person especially when they need it most. I have seen Jesus, Emmanuel, 'God with us,' the true gift of Christmas alive and well in our community.

This Christmas I hope amid the presence of presents under the tree each of us would remember the precious present of our presence, our being with each other, family, friends, neighbours, extended community, the whole of humanity. In the church we celebrate the birth of Jesus, God with us, but we also remember our gift of being with the other. May the blessing of 'witness' be yours and may you be a living gift for others. Peace and Joy for Christmas.

Ellen

A Letter of Introduction from your Probationer Deacon.



My name is Claire Herbert and I graduated this summer with a BD in Theology from Glasgow University. I live in East Kilbride where I am mum to Ewan (16), Amy (15), Adam (11) and Lauren (9). My wonderful husband Craig has the job of caring for all of us while I am on placement and at university. He also leads self management courses for the MS society and finds

time to train cute puppies like this one for Guide Dogs!



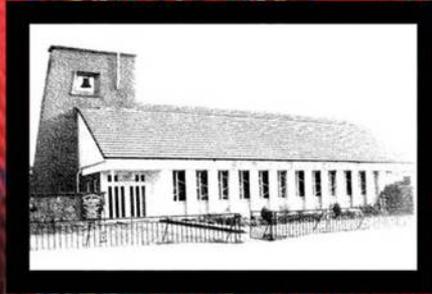
I grew up in Dunblane where my parents and siblings still live. My great grandparents and Aunt Chrissie Howieson lived in Raploch where I was a childhood visitor.

I was self-employed as a holistic therapist for ten years before responding to God's call in 2011 to train for the Diaconate. My training journey has taken me to east end of Glasgow in Garthamlock and Craighend, the more rural Strathaven and Chapelton, grand buildings of Wellington Church in Glasgow and just this summer I was locum in St Johns Renfield Church next to Gartnavel Hospital. My 15 month placement here at St Marks will mark the end of my training in December 2018.



I'm creative and love crafts. I recently took up knitting, after encouragement at diaconate council to be involved in Prayer Shawl ministry. So if you see me out and about, please come and say hello. I pray we will be an encouragement one another in the year ahead.

St. Mark's Parish Church



Scots Night



Wednesday 29 November
6.30 - 8pm
Church Halls
Everyone Welcome

Scots Singalong **Scottish Fare**
*with dancing and a chance
to show off your talents!* *In aid of*
CHURCH FUNDS

Pay at the door
£4 per person

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Chicken & Rice Soup

2 pints (1.2L) Water
½ pint Chicken stock
2 Chicken breasts, cubed
1 Chicken stock cube
3 Carrots, chopped
1 Onion, chopped
3 Celery sticks
2oz (65g) Uncooked white rice
Salt and pepper to taste.

1. In a large saucepan over high heat, combine 2 pints of water and the chicken stock and bring to the boil. Add the chicken, carrots, onion, celery and stock cubes and reduce heat to low. Cover and simmer for about 15 minutes or until the vegetables are soft.
2. Add more water as necessary. Add the rice and allow to simmer for another 15 minutes or until the rice is tender. Add salt and pepper to taste.

Serves 4

Finding a new minister: important steps on the way

1. The election of a nominating committee

After the Sunday morning service on 3rd December 2017, we will be electing up to 13 people to serve on the 'nominating committee'. It will be their task to find a new minister, guided by our interim moderator, Ellen.

The kirk session has drawn up an 'electoral register' for this election. All of St Mark's members are on it, plus 6 people who worship regularly with us and who applied to the kirk session to have their names added.

Everyone on the register can not only vote, but can also be elected onto the nominating committee themselves. The committee is not only asked to find the minister, but will be the 'faces of St. Mark's' that the possible candidates will meet. So it would be good to have folk on the committee who are involved in different aspects of the life of the congregation.

Please think seriously about being willing to serve yourself. And if you know someone who you think would be a good contributor to the committee, please ask them in advance if they would be willing to stand, and then put their name forward at the meeting.

2. Discussion and vote by the kirk session

For every vacancy in a congregation of the Church of Scotland, the kirk session is now required to hold a discussion and a vote to decide whether to allow the nominating committee to consider applications from candidates who are in a civil partnership or same sex marriage.

This took place, in public, at our kirk session meeting on 9th November. The decision made, by five votes to three, was to not allow the committee to consider such applications.

David Russell (Session Clerk)

News from the Property Committee

St Mark's Property Committee has been dealing with some big issues over recent months. You might be interested to hear what has been going on.

John and Hugh discovered some *cracking on the outside of the church* at the east corner. After some discussions with our Presbytery representative on the General Trustees they arranged for a structural engineer to come and have a look. He discovered that there are also fine cracks in the front wall of the church (behind the communion table). The General Trustees have agreed to pay for these cracks to be monitored by the engineering company, possibly for as much as a year before we know whether anything is actually moving.

The representative of the company that maintains our fire extinguishers announced that we should have a fire alarm system in our church when he last visited. This seemed a little odd to us so we checked things out with the Safe Buildings Officer at Church of Scotland HQ. He said that as someone had raised the question we should get an *independent Fire Risk Assessment* carried out. We had one done about 7 years ago (and were not particularly impressed with the outcome) and subsequently had done them ourselves, following Scottish Government guidance on the process.

After getting estimates we agreed on one firm and the assessment was carried out, then we received the report and a debrief. This was a very useful exercise (and he only charged us £200). We learned a lot and we also realised that there is some work we need to do to ensure that we meet current fire safety standards. The big thing will be getting the electrical systems in the church and halls

certificated. Arthur Macdonald from the General Trustees came along to our meeting when we talked through what we have to do and he was extremely helpful. We have work to do but we know how to go about it and to apply to the Trustees to help us pay for it.

These are the big things - there are lots of other things getting done on a weekly basis, largely thanks to Hugh and John. They did a big clear out of the church and halls recently and we used Niall "***Central Van Man***" to take all the stuff away - that worked really well and we can recommend Niall to anyone who needs help with a clearout. Just ask me for his number.

Fiona Russell

Did you miss the Summer Appeal?

We normally distribute Summer Appeal envelopes around July but this year became rather hectic and we forgot to send them out at the correct time. Your Gift to God envelope is enclosed with this newsletter and I would be grateful if you could be generous with your Christmas donation - this is our big fundraising event for the year.

Fiona Russell, Treasurer

Children's Remembrance



On Friday 10th November, a Remembrance Service with a difference was held at the Village Square in Raploch. A service is held annually but for the first time it was led by local schools and nursery children.

Children from Raploch Nursery, Castleview Primary, Our Lady's Primary, Raploch Primary and Wallace High School participated. They were supported by the Noise Choir, Big Noise musicians; David & Veronica and of course, the Drip Road Churches.

During the service, we sang non-traditional songs written to Nursery Rhyme tunes which everyone recognised. Instead of the traditional trumpet, Simone from Wallace High played the trombone.

Highlights from the service were: the Makaton Choir, drawn from the nursery and all three primaries plus additional helpers, who signed for "Do you know where I find peace"; the young people from Big Noise who played the Lament, "Hector the Hero" which brought tears to the eye; and the Noise Choir singing "The King's Shilling".

Following the service, adults and children moved to St. Mark's Halls to enjoy well-earned refreshments, (it was bitterly cold!) while the Makaton Choir headed for Castleview Primary for their warm up and refreshment.

Jean Porter

Scottish Shortbread

4oz (125g) Butter

2oz (55g) Caster sugar, plus a little to finish

6oz (180g) Plain flour

1.Heat the oven to 190C/375F/Gas 5.

2.Beat the butter and the sugar together until smooth.

3.Stir in the flour to get a smooth paste. Turn on to a work surface and gently roll out until the paste is 1cm/½in thick.

4.Cut into rounds or fingers and place onto a baking tray. Sprinkle with caster sugar and chill in the fridge for 20 minutes.

5.Bake in the oven for 15-20 minutes, or until pale golden-brown. Set aside to cool on a wire rack.



Sunday 3rd Dec. Bereavement Service 3 p.m.

Tuesday 5th Dec. ST. MARK'S @ Sainsbury's 5.30 p.m.

A "Christmas Celebration" for all ages.

6.30 p.m. meal together in the café.

Wednesday 13th Dec. AFTERNOON CAROL SERVICE

2 p.m. Tea & mince Pies afterwards

Sunday 17th Dec. LESSONS & CAROLS 10.50 a.m.

With special guests CLACKMANNAN SILVER BAND

Retiral Collection in aid of STRATHCARRON HOSPICE

Friday 22nd Dec. RAPLOCH PRIMARY SCHOOL

CHRISTMAS CELEBRATION 9.45 a.m.

Hosted by St. Mark's FAMILY & FRIENDS WELCOME

Sunday 24th Dec. NATIVITY SERVICE 10.50 a.m.

A service for all the Family

FAMILY CHURCH 7 p.m.

A "Christingle" Service for all ages.

WATCHNIGHT SERVICE

11.15 p.m. Community Carol Singing

11.30 p.m. Watchnight begins



Monday 25th Dec. CHRISTMAS DAY

Please note this service is at 11 a.m.



St. Mark's Parish Church of Scotland: Stirling is a Registered Scottish Charity (Charity Number SC005432)

Office Bearers

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Treasurer:	Mrs Fiona Russell	01786 470159
Property Convener:	Mr Hugh Stewart	07831 631972
Gift Aid Convener:	Mr Eddie Mann	07856 254101
Hall Convener:	Mr John Murie	07583 914619
Safeguarding:	Mrs Lynne Swanston	07918 626177
Church Office:	(not permanently manned)	01786 470733

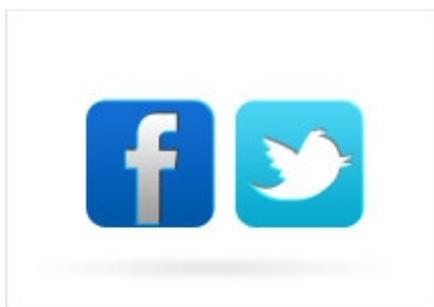
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to:


info@stmarksstirling.org.uk

NEXT ISSUE DEADLINE: 21st January 2018

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www.stmarksstirling.org.uk

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